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Hope in Confinement:
Towards a Pedagogy of Restorative Hope

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

Hope in Confinement: Toward a Pedagogy of Restorative Hope By Sarah F. Farmer

This dissertation explores the question, “What does it mean to be human in contexts that are dehumanizing and seemingly hopeless?”. *Hope in Confinement* offers an analysis of the nature of restorative hope and proposes a pedagogy of restorative hope that takes seriously the insights of women along the incarceration continuum. Understanding the challenges that impede hope in the lives of Black women on the incarceration continuum helps us interrogate the purpose and function of hope in the lives of those who experience confinement.

Beginning with a brief illustration of the difficulties that women face on the incarceration continuum, the work provides an interdisciplinary overview of hope scholarship that undergirds current perspectives on hope by examining theological, psychological, pedagogical, and practical aspects of hope that resonate most with the themes that emerge in these women’s conception of hope. Concrete illustrations from women on the incarceration continuum that help enhance the concept of hope for and from those whose humanity face serious threats are provided. It is argued that restorative hope is a way of seeing, knowing, being, and doing that promotes authenticity, connection, and resiliency. In conclusion, it is shown that these insights on hope provide clues about what pedagogies of hope offer in carceral settings and subsequently might offer in non-carceral settings.

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INTRODUCTION

I describe hope as perseverance. I describe hope as learning how to understand. I describe hope as happiness. I describe hope as serving others. There's a great reward there. It's not monetary. It's not anything that humans give you. It's something that transpires in your heart. And you know that it's not without any hope or benefit or a need for accolades or anything like that. I can't really explain that, but hope is all of that to me.

—quote by Eden, a returning citizen

Eden's description of hope, her insights about its multi-faceted nature, and her articulation of hope as relational, affective, epistemological, and fundamentally priceless in a person's life illustrate this research's primary concerns. *Hope in Confinement* offers an analysis of the nature of hope and proposes a pedagogy of restorative hope that takes seriously the insights of women along the incarceration continuum. Understanding the challenges that impede hope in the lives of Black women on the incarceration continuum helps us interrogate the purpose and function of hope in the lives of those who experience confinement. Even more specifically, this dissertation explores the question, "What does it mean to be human" in contexts that are dehumanizing and seemingly hopeless? Those who experience confinement often experience situations that are both dehumanizing and hopeless; their pursuit of hope represents a human longing that, when grasped, can reveal new insights about the quest for hope and humanity. Thus, my assumption is that we can begin to answer this question by looking through the lens of hope and examining the ways those who have experienced confinement convey and manifest hope in their lives.

Dehumanization robs incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women of happiness, love, service. Yet this research reveals a compelling claim of hope—it's not anything that humans give you. It's something that transpires in your heart." This raises the question, how and from whom do humans receive the gift of this multi-dimensional experience of hope? I approach this research with the assumption that hope can actually re-humanize those who have experienced circumstances that have sought to destroy their humanity. Thus, my language of restorative hope re-stories and re-members bodies that have been depersonalized and dismembered through their entanglement with the criminal justice system.

Throughout this research, I use the language of “incarceration continuum” rather than simply incarceration or post-incarceration. I identify an incarceration continuum—a range of entry points that exposes and entangles people with the criminal justice system. Prior to incarceration, it includes policing, courts, poverty, school-to-prison pipeline, and untreated forms of abuse.¹ All of these circumstances facilitate entry into the criminal justice system. Further, while women released from prison have lower recidivism rates than men, those who do recidivate usually do so because of drug or property offenses. Probation and parole violations, such as not paying a parole fee, also become an easy entry back to prison. The continuum also includes both the intentional and unintentional ways in which people have sought to survive in a racist, classist, sexist society, which complicates the path for those who already face diverse forms of trauma, making them more likely to be sucked into a pipeline to prison. Thus, my broader interests really seek to shed light on challenges before, during, and after incarceration since these challenges are similar at the different entry points along the continuum; however, I have mostly limited my focus in this dissertation to the periods during and after incarceration. Trying to engage with the narratives of women in-depth prior to their incarceration was outside of the scope of this research. By focusing on during and after incarceration, I was provided with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the prison context and challenges faced immediately upon their return to society.

To make this argument, I will first offer a brief illustration of the difficulties that women face on the incarceration continuum. Then, I will provide an interdisciplinary overview of scholarship concerning hope that undergirds current perspectives on hope. This review of literature examines theological, psychological, and pedagogical aspects of hope that resonate most with the themes that emerge in the women’s conception of hope. Building on previous literature, I will provide concrete illustrations from women on the incarceration continuum that help enhance the concept of hope for and from those whose humanity faces serious threats. Overall, I argue that these insights provide clues of what pedagogies of hope offer in carceral settings and subsequently might offer in non-carceral settings. The next sections of this

¹ Erica Meiners, *Right to Be Hostile: Schools, Prisons, and the Making of Public Enemies*. (New York: Routledge, 2007); Erica Meiners and Maisha Winn, *Education and Incarceration* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

chapter will contextualize the incarceration crisis for Black women, offer an overview of my chapters, then conclude by outlining my research methodology.

Contextualizing Black Women and the Incarceration Crisis

The high rate of incarceration in the United States raises national concern. Reports show that while the United States only contains 5 percent of the world's population, it has about 25 percent of its prisoners—close to 2.2 million people.² In April of 2012, CBS News aired a special entitled “Incarceration Nation” that highlights the vast rate of incarceration within the United States.³ As indicated in the CBS special, more than 50 percent of inmates return to prison once released. The CBS special highlights the lack of effective resources available to prevent people from imprisonment. Further, the lack of programming that responds to the needs of those both before, during, and after incarceration entraps many into a cycle of recidivism.

In 2008, the Pew Center on the States released a shocking report that confirms the racialization of the criminal justice system. According to this report 1 in 9 Black men between the ages of 20 to 34 were behind bars; 1 in 15 Black men over the age of 18 were behind bars. This stands in stark contrast to the 1 in 106 White men behind bars. Additionally, 1 in 100 Black women aged 35-39 were behind bars while 1 in 355 White women were behind bars.⁴ Between 1980 and 2010, women in prison increased in number by 646% exceeding the 419% increase rate of men during that time.⁵ Even more so, the rapid increase of female incarceration sounds a clarion call for the nation to respond to the needs of women, specifically Black women.

² "Incarceration Nation," *American Psychological Association* 45, no. 9 (October 2014): 56.

³ CBS News, (2012, April 22), “The cost of a nation of incarceration,” Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445_162-57418495/the-cost-of-a-nation-of-incarceration/.

⁴ Pew Center on the States’ Public Safety Performance Project, *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008* (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, February 2008), 5-7.

⁵ Marc Maeur, "The Changing Racial Dynamics of Women’s Incarceration," (Washington D.C.: Sentencing Project, 2013), 9.

Research reveals that Black women have a 1 in 18 chance of being incarcerated some time in their lifetime, versus White Women who have a 1 in 111 chance and Latina women who have a 1 in 56 chance of being incarcerated in their lifetime.⁶ Other reports claim that Black women ages 18 to 19 are three times more likely to be incarcerated as White women.⁷ Also, while women from all demographics exist in prison, women offenders still disproportionately come from impoverished backgrounds and lack adequate education and marketable skills. In particular, Black low income incarcerated women still experience the burdens associated with gender, race and class; their status as offenders adds another dimension to their treatment or maltreatment.

What complicates the burdens associated with race, class, and gender is the invisibility of Black women on the incarceration continuum. The narrative of why women end up in prison coupled with discovering adequate ways to rehabilitate women in prison remains largely obscure. Gender specific life histories that impact women on all intersections of the incarceration continuum include but are not limited to physical abuse, sexual assault, substance abuse, sexual abuse, sex work, post-traumatic stress disorder, being the sole caregiver of children, and sexually transmitted diseases. For example, attempts at emotional and physical survival oftentimes become an entry point on the pathway to incarceration for women. Research recognizes the link between child sexual abuse and girls' delinquency and the link between girl's delinquency and later criminal behavior. Instead of adequately addressing the victimization of women, society criminalizes their survival strategies.⁸ The cumulative impacts of poverty place African American women, in particular, at greater risk for all these hope-draining experiences.

To be clear, my articulation of the social challenges women face assumes that the crisis of hope reflects a larger crisis—that of “lockdown America.”⁹ Being identified as a “prison nation” is really an

⁶ Thomas P. Bonczar, *Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001*. (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003), 1.

⁷ E. Ann Carson and Daniela Golinelli, “Prisoners in 2012: *Trends in Admissions and Releases, 1991-2012*,” (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013), 25.

⁸ Meda Chesney-Lind, “Trends in Women’s Crimes,” *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime*, Edited by Meda Chesney-Lind and Lisa Pasko, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2004), 100-101.

⁹ Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*. New York: Verso, 1999.

indictment against how America treats the least of these, particularly those who experience economic marginalization.¹⁰ Often referred to as the “prison industrial complex,” scholars have attempted to show that a select few actually benefit from the confinement of others, making incarceration a profit-driven enterprise.¹¹ In light of the way America locks up those who are the most vulnerable to incarceration at alarming rates, I propose that America itself is complicit in maintaining the structures that undergird social death. In other words, through practices of alienation and exclusion from society, incarcerated populations are subjugated to a process of becoming dead to society.¹²

Not only America broadly, but the church (and other religious institutions) are also complicit in maintaining structures that lead women to experience a moral death, whereby women are in a perpetual state of trying to prove they are “good,” “innocent,” “worthy” or “not a sinner” in the midst of their struggle for survival. In this sense, the church has often served as an accuser of women rather than advocate, forcing them to constantly prove their innocence. In her book *Voices from American Prisons: Faith, Education and Healing*, Kaia Stern identifies the role Protestant Christianity plays in not only the development of prisons but in the perpetuation of a “spirit of punishment.”¹³ Her analysis is helpful in describing the ways women experience a crisis of hope due to their faith challenges. Stern argues that Protestant Christianity’s understanding of grace is rooted in Augustine’s notion of original sin. According to Stern, there is a perpetual partnership between sin and grace that highlights the primary purpose of grace as an antidote to the sins of the undeserving.” The “fall from grace” narrative, which serves to justify the condemnation of “sinners,” condemns those who are incarcerated.¹⁴ Stern’s objection to this traditional understanding of grace is that it targets certain groups, while failing to acknowledge that all people are sinners.¹⁵ Overall,

¹⁰ Tara Herivel and Paul Wright, eds., *Prison Nation: The Warehousing of America's Poor*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

¹¹ Eric Schlosser, "The Prison-Industrial Complex." *The Atlantic*, December 1988.

¹² Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13.

¹³ Kaia Stern, *Voices from American Prisons: Faith, Education and Healing* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 61-62.

¹⁴ Kaia Stern, 63-65

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 63-65.

this moral death reinforces a moral stigma that feeds into hopelessness and despair about the possibilities of change.

Social and moral death often extends into other forms of internal death such as a death in hope, meaning, identity, faith and courage. Women are not only confined by the prison, but sometimes commit their own internal (emotional and mental) and external suicide (physical) because they cannot recover from the sense of loss they feel. Thus, by looking at the variety of crises women on the incarceration continuum, I am also looking at the interlocking web of social, psychological, physical and spiritual deaths experienced along the continuum. A sense of life-and-death urgency drives my research. It states in clear terms that Black women's lives matter, whether they are incarcerated or non-incarcerated, rich or poor, Christian or non-Christian. Restoring a sense of hope is not only important but necessary in order for the cycle of incarceration to be broken across the generations.

Ultimately, the lives of Black women matter not only during and after their incarceration, but before their incarceration. The issues that women struggle with pre-incarceration and continue to struggle with even after their release create a high-risk for recidivism. The fact that women enter into the criminal justice system with these severe yet sometimes preventable physical, social, psychological, maternal, and spiritual challenges reveals that we are still a society that is much more content with masking root issues than trying to address them.

As an African-American woman and a practical theologian who teaches religious education, I attest to the fact that a gap in scholarship on African American women who are or have been incarcerated exists within practical theology and pedagogical discourses on religious education. This gap reflects a larger trend in criminological studies. Whereas much research exists about men in prison, very few studies adequately tend to the concerns facing women, particularly Black women, in prison. Further, studies that do focus on women tend to center around women's entry into prison or the need for gender-sensitive programming. These studies do not engage the theological nor pedagogical lens this research seeks to engage.

Thinking about hope in diverse contexts bolsters both our theorizing of hope as well as our pedagogical practices within the discipline. Hope functions as a dominant theme in theological discourse.

Theologians from Germany, Black theological traditions, Womanist traditions, and Latin American traditions have articulated diverse understandings of hope in relationship to suffering in the world. In particular, hope discourse is concerned about God's activity as well as human activity in the world amidst war, unjust regimes, oppression, racism, classism, and sexism. Suffering provides a fruitful context to explore the nature of hope. Yet, these conversations on hope have not previously included the voices of incarcerated women. My research, then, creates a space for incarcerated women, particularly African American women, and offers an opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of hope in the lives of women along the incarceration continuum.

I define restorative hope as a way of seeing, knowing, being, and doing that takes seriously the present and future possibilities for both one's personal life and the ongoing existence of the world. Pedagogies of hope in the prison context provide a critical resource to combat the dehumanizing context of the prison. I am not just talking about education *about* something; I am talking about education *for* something or education with a purpose. The term that most adequately describes the education I refer to is a pedagogy of restorative hope. Restorative hope pedagogy is a broad-based learning rooted in how we see, know, do and be in a world whose hope is in constant crisis. Restoring hope relates to practices that build a greater sense of value in who one is and who one is becoming, relational connections among and between others, and resilience.

This dissertation, then, is aimed at educators and people of faith. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and my personal experiences teaching in the prison, *Hope in Confinement* examines the narratives of formerly incarcerated women in order to better understand ways to sustain hope and contribute to the knowledge base on effective educational practices for marginalized populations. I explore the question, "What are educational practices that educators can employ to respond to the urgent needs of incarcerated women who have to navigate the difficult terrain of hopelessness within and after incarceration?" I take interest in exploring how these educational practices of restoring hope extend and translates into a wide variety of educational settings—both within the prison as well as within congregational settings.

While the primary focus of this research is not around recidivism, it is important to name that criminologists highlight education as a major tool to reduce recidivism.¹⁶ Further, for many scholars, the “where we are” for women on the incarceration continuum deals predominately with one’s ability to desist from crime. In *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, Criminologist Shadd Maruna, reveals a significant insight—the “where we are” can be measured by how returning citizens see and speak about themselves in relation to the future. Maruna never uses the language of hope; yet, his research wrestles with some of the same dimensions of my research. I would even go as far as to propose that his characterization of a “redemption script” falls into the category of hope-talk. In his seminal ethnographic research with male inmates in Liverpool, England, Maruna uses life story interviews to explore how those released from prison can transform their lives and desist from crime. Maruna interviewed over 50 male inmates, comprised of both active offenders and desisters. Desisters, or those who no longer committed criminal acts, constructed a self-narrative that redeemed the past and articulated a meaningful future. Maruna categorized these narratives as a redemption script. On the other hand, active offenders focused on immediate pleasures and needs. They lacked agency and could not articulate a meaningful future. Even more specific, his use of life story interviews suggests that how one interprets and subsequently stories their life shapes their behavior. In other words, people can desist from crime and experience a future with hope in spite of the social, economic, and political barriers that exist. Hope builds on the idea of envisioning and articulating a meaningful future as well as a meaningful today. I would even venture to say that hope contributes to reducing recidivism, particularly because of hope’s ability to enable people to see alternate possibilities. One of the major objectives of this research was to explore concrete educational practices that educators can employ within the prison context as well as explore the potential of education to intervene within prisons and serve as a resource to sustain hope. This research project therefore sought to:

¹⁶ CBS News, April 22, 2012.

- Explore how formerly incarcerated women define and employ hope in their lives during and after their incarceration;
- Identify specific practices within the prison that build hope and promote agency in the lives of incarcerated populations; and
- Identify and construct a pedagogy of hope that promotes holistic transformation in the lives of women on the incarceration continuum.

Because this dissertation sought to mine instances of God's Divine intervention in the life of human experience, it finds its home within the discipline of practical theology. Yet, I am also keenly aware of its interdisciplinary nature. Thus, I say this dissertation is more broadly placed at the intersection of hope discourse and transformative pedagogy within contexts of marginalization. I argue that hope must be seen as a holistic act that requires attention to the ways we see, know, be, and do in the world.

I draw on experiences teaching in the prison. Prison education, particularly with the emergence of new possibilities for the Pell Grant, is becoming more popularized. For my context, my teaching has mainly been associated with theological education. I have an ethical responsibility to limit and censor what I share; thus, some details may be lacking in an attempt to respect privacy and anonymity. With that said, this dissertation draws on close to six years' experience engaged with prison education; however, it is more heavily rooted in my teaching and co-directorship within the Certificate in Theological Studies Program at a prison in the south. Teaching *Exploring Spirituality and Identity through the Arts* and *Perspectives on Hope* coupled with observations of other classroom teaching experiences provide a robust portfolio in which to draw upon to illustrate my claims.

In 2010, I taught my first course at a state prison for women in Georgia. This course entitled, *Lyrics on Lockdown, The Moral Responsibility of Education, Not Incarceration*, helped shape my dissertation topic and questions. Following this course, I taught two other courses—*Exploring Spirituality and Identity through the Arts* in 2012 and *Perspectives on Hope* in 2014. These two courses gave me concrete understandings of engaging questions around hope and art in the prison context. On top of this, the year or so of experiences gained from my time as co-director of the Certificate in Theological Studies Program at

a prison also provided indirect insights and considerations for my ongoing pursuit to understand hope with populations in confinement. Overall, these experiences helped shape this research in direct and indirect ways. In my research design section, however, I focus primarily on my experience teaching the *Exploring Spirituality and Identity through the Arts* course in 2012. I draw many of the examples I use directly from this course. Further, several of those who participated in the research study as interviewees were students in this course.

My qualitative research focuses on 10 formerly incarcerated women in the state of Georgia. Nine of the participants are African American while 1 is Caucasian. Although race is such a salient driving force in my conception of restorative hope, it is important to note that women who are not Black also experience some of the same challenges. Exploring the distinctions and similarities between race-related crises is less important to this research project; rather, acknowledging and naming these challenges holds even greater value. While this study could be expanded to invite participants across the nation to participate, I limited this research by selecting research participants within the state of Georgia. I will discuss more details of this later in the chapter.

One fundamental challenge in writing this dissertation lies in naming the multiple and co-occurring challenges that Black women on the incarceration continuum face. By naming these physical, theological, psychological, social, or maternal challenges, I risk re-ascribing the stereotype that all Black women in prison are poor, uneducated, and from “bad” homes. This is not the case. Women in prison, even those who are Black, come from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds. My small sample size, in fact, consisted of women who challenged these stereotypes.

For example, many of the women I interviewed matriculated through the Certificate of Theological Studies Program. This means they had to meet particular criteria; namely, all the women had to have a GED and no disciplinary reports six months before entering the program. Some of them had education far beyond their GED with both college and professional degrees. Their level of education varied along with their demographical background. Some came from poor financial beginnings while others came from a two parent home that enjoyed all of the benefits of having easy access to social and financial capital. In the

larger prison context, however, there is no guarantee that women graduated from high school or earned their GED. Neither would I be able to make assumptions about their infractions. These two criteria alone preclude the type of woman I interviewed. If I had the opportunity to recruit women from a different sample pool, my data may have included a more representative and diverse range of experiences. Thus, important to my research is understanding that the women I worked with may or may not fit perfectly into any one category. To clarify my discussion of hope, I now provide an outline of the chapters in this research.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 1, I argue that multiple challenges—physical, psychological, social, maternal, and theological—create internal and external conflicts that cause incarcerated women to face an existential crisis of hope. Responses to these crises ultimately dictate their life orientation. I use the language of crisis to piece these seemingly incongruent selves together. The term crisis refers not just to a traumatic situation but also one’s response to that situation. A crisis may impact one person negatively while that same crisis impacts another person positively. Psychologist Erik Erikson, for example, uses the language of crisis to describe the psychosocial conflicts a person encounters throughout their lifecycle. For Erikson, crisis is not negative, but refers to the significant psychosocial development taking place that introduces new possibilities as well as new vulnerabilities as one navigates to a new stage of life.¹⁷ Successful development represents a person’s ability to negotiate these conflicts, thus developing ego strengths that contribute to a productive sense of personal identity.¹⁸ In other words, crisis presents an opportunity for growth or failure. Those who manage to navigate the circumstances well develop a sense of self that is coherent while those who fail to navigate circumstances well develop a sense of inadequacy and incompetency.

Erikson’s understanding of crisis gives me language to understand the crisis of hope along the incarceration continuum. I use the term crisis to encompass the way hope can waver amidst the adversities

¹⁷ Donald Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development*. 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), xx.

¹⁸ Erik H. Erikson, “Eight Stages of Man,” *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1963), 247-268.

of life. Oftentimes, when women face challenges, their hope may be placed in a state of crisis. When hope is in crisis, women must navigate between holding on to hope or losing hope amidst their difficult circumstance. Hope may wane, be stagnant, or get stronger. To overcome the crisis of hope does not necessarily mean one has to embrace an unrealistic dose of idealism. Some realism about their challenges and its impact on their lives is healthy. Nevertheless, the response to circumstances determines whether one will move toward internal well-being or forms of internal despair and death. The presence of caring others or their view of a caring God may also have a direct impact on how women experience hope. Crisis does not delimit hope; it makes the need for hope more pressing and urgent. It makes the capacity to hope a fight rather than a given. Hope, in this sense, is not a luxury; it is a gift. The crisis along the incarceration continuum forces women to wrestle with the very foundation of hope: can I have a meaningful and fulfilling life amidst the internal and external conflicts I currently face?

Black women, particularly poor Black women, on the incarceration continuum often find their hope in crisis because of and in relation to the physical, social, psychological, maternal, and faith-based experiences they encounter. What is clear from the lives of women on the incarceration continuum is that they have learned how to survive; their resiliency laughs in the face of insurmountable odds. Yet, in the same moment that someone might demonstrate great resiliency and strength, they may also demonstrate great weakness and despair. For example, a woman may be really hopeful as it relates to opportunities to get a job or participation in a particular program, but may not be as hopeful about her relationship with her children. Circumstances can easily disrupt their experience of hope, placing hope in crisis. Why such disparate selves or narratives of the self? How do we begin to characterize what is taking place?

In my descriptive analysis of these challenges in Chapter 1, I attempt to illustrate how the incarceration continuum works. These challenges are crises to hope, causing women on the incarceration continuum to wrestle with the meaning of life. Furthermore, the “collateral sanctions” or restrictive laws and policies faced by returning citizens curtail their opportunities, diminish their life direction, and prohibit

women from escaping the pipeline to prison.¹⁹ Women on the incarceration continuum face many of the same difficulties before, during, and after incarceration, which broadens the conversation and draws direct connections between justice and hope on the continuum. If these physical, psychological, social and theological crises to hope are not addressed at some point during the incarceration continuum, women risk being recruited into an unending cycle of incarceration.²⁰ For Black women with limited resources, it is difficult to overcome these challenges without comprehensive accessible resources. Namely, the very real challenges that women face are often what facilitate their entry into the criminal justice system.

While Chapter 1 explores some of the major challenges that cause women to wrestle with hope, Chapter 2 explores some frameworks for the hope-specific questions that might emerge as women fight to maintain a sense of hope and dignity despite external and internal threats to hope. This chapter draws on interdisciplinary resources from theology, psychology, and pedagogy that lay a theoretical foundation for my exploration of hope. In particular, I explore the eschatological, political, praxis-oriented and embodied notions of hope that are prominent in theological scholarship, constructions of hope in psychology, and pedagogical literature on hope rooted in the black experience, critical pedagogy, and prison pedagogy. I briefly explore how the insights of women on the incarceration continuum contribute to these conversations and offer new insights for discussing hope within the prison context. I chose these resources because they are critical sources to reflect on what women say and to frame hope as a holistic endeavor that encompasses personal and social transformation.

To be human is a journey rather than a destination. Hope provides a lens of possibility in which one can express and live into their humanity. Within restorative hope, the language of human potential and possibility dominates the language of human brokenness. Even when people feel they have arrived at who they will be, something unexpected could take place that calls into question their sense of humanity. In response to some of the pervasive challenges identified in Chapter 1, Chapter 3 explores restorative hope

¹⁹ W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Charles E. Lewis, Harold Dean Trulear. "Introduction," *Ministry with Prisoners & Families: The Way Forward* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 8.

from the lens of formerly incarcerated women's experience while in prison and upon their release. I explore incarceration as a series of rituals that function as negative human markers upon one's humanity. Restorative hope, on the other hand, counters human confinement's propensity to promote a fragmented, degraded, stripped sense of being; instead, restorative hope is rooted in human hope, which moves toward a valued sense of self that is always in the process of becoming more resilient, more authentic, and more relational. Ultimately, the research reveals that incarcerated women highlight authenticity, connection, and resiliency as key to their experience of hope.

Building on Chapter 3, Chapter 4 explores the practices that flow from a being that is authentic, connected, and resilient. These practices include seeing, knowing, and doing. Resourceful and priority-driven seeing, for example, opens up possibility in the midst of adverse circumstances. The practice of knowing is a process of adjusting through God's Divine presence in contexts that are dark and by drawing on resources from the past, present, and future. Lastly, ways of doing refer to a generative praxis whereby women find ways to be generative citizens in spite of their incarceration. This ability to bounce back marks a major ingredient of hope. This theme of being able to see, be, know, and do "in spite of" the circumstances signals a stick-with-it-ness that resonates with both how women experience hope and what contributes to hope in carceral settings.²¹

Building on Chapters 3 and 4 that explore ways of being, seeing, knowing, and doing, Chapter 5 explores hope through the lens of pedagogy. In what ways does hope pedagogy provide a framework for re-humanizing people who have been in circumstances that are confining and dehumanizing to a person's sense of humanity? The language of possibility also marks what it means to be human within restorative hope pedagogy; I argue for pedagogical spaces that value who people are and challenge them to be who they are called to be. I counter wrong-until-proven-right pedagogical approaches that privilege rational

²¹ Important to understand about the redemptive sequence, however, is its heavy reliance on a "tragic optimism," whereby the men reached back into their past to redeem their criminal selves rather than wrestling with that old self. In this sense, the redemptive script lacks the critical consciousness, personal accountability and self-reclamation that restorative hope explores. Shadd Maruna, *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001), 54.

knowing at the expense of other forms of knowing. Instead, I argue for a generative praxis that views hope as a way of acting upon one's self and the world. I argue that restorative hope pedagogy is a holistic approach to teaching and learning that creates space for authenticity, connection, and resiliency.

The conclusion summarizes the major claims of my research: that hope is holistic, concerned about the here-and-now as well as the not yet, and ultimately creates sites of appearing, becoming, and communal encounter that facilitate authenticity, connection, and resilience. Further, I claim that some of the new questions and challenges that emerge from a pedagogy of restorative hope have implications for settings outside of the prison, particularly theological settings. With these implications, I recommend some directions for future research. Overall, the intersection of hope and pedagogy in carceral settings offer great insights for ways of interpreting and making meaning of hope during difficult circumstances. These discoveries hold great promise for re-envisioning the purpose of education and how we might employ humanizing hope-filled approaches to pedagogy within and beyond carceral settings.

Exploring Critical Emancipatory Qualitative Research Design and Methods

Hope in Confinement invited formerly incarcerated women, some of whom participated in an “Exploring Spirituality and Identity through the Arts” course that I taught at a local prison in Georgia in the fall of 2012, to be research participants/co-researchers. This study explores incarceration, hope, and critical emancipatory pedagogy. While it is grounded in the relationships between these specific areas, it addresses issues that apply to numerous marginalized populations. Although my research may be generalizable to incarcerated women of all backgrounds, I focus my conclusions specifically on Black women on the incarceration continuum. In particular, the aim of this research is to examine the concept of hope from the perspective of women on the incarceration continuum, and to use their insights about hope to construct a pedagogy of restorative hope.

My approach is both critical and emancipatory in nature. In order to gain a sense of their everyday social reality, I explore how the women understand what it means to be in confinement. Then I explore their

concepts of hope and how these concepts are operationalized or practiced in their everyday social reality. As the women and I analyzed their own responses, my hope is for this to become transformative for them as well as provide transformative data as it relates to Black women. As such this research suggests changes to the pedagogical practices within education, particularly religious education, while at the same time contributing to knowledge within theological education more broadly. Its intended aim to be both transformative and hope-building requires a dynamic process of action and reflection from and with those on the incarceration continuum.

This section describes and justifies a “Research as Praxis” (RAP) methodological paradigm, which uses critical emancipatory qualitative methods that include: semi-structured interviews and a focus group. I will show that the way I engage the women throughout the research process is itself part of the critical emancipatory nature of this research. Furthermore, this section will summarize how the research navigates the four movements in action research, which are to plan, observe, reflect, and act, while at the same time incorporating practical theological reflection.²² Ultimately, because I wish for my research itself to be a transformative site that mediates hope, the action research methodology and the emancipatory research methods are ideal. At the same time, despite my attempts to follow through with an action research methodology, I encountered real challenges. Thus, not only do I lay out my ideals for enacting an action research methodology, I also name the challenges I faced in fulfilling these aims. By exploring these ideals along with these challenges for doing an action research methodology along the incarceration continuum, I hope to illuminate the future possibilities for this type of work.

Research Methodology that Builds Hope

²² Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart introduce these moments in action research as critical for the cycle of action and reflection. Planning involved intentional and strategic thinking about engaging a transformative project; this was manifested in my decision to teach in the prison. Acting was the actual fulfillment of that project. Observation was the data collection process. Reflection was both the end and the beginning of the cycle; it enabled me to consider, interpret and explain what had been done in order to improve and plan for next steps. How I integrated these four movements in my own research is outlined in detail below. Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, eds., *The Action Research Planner*. 3rd ed. (Victoria: Deakin University, 1988), 22-25.

Engaging people in a way that observes, writes about, talks to, and then completely isolates them from the rest of the research process reinforces domineering, self-seeking research in favor of the academy rather than the community. My inquiry intends to produce new knowledge in the academy, but not at the expense of those who share their lives with me. Instead, my research intends to mediate hope by a process that invites women to research with me.

What does it mean to decolonize and thus humanize research? In their anthology, *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn raise this question.²³ This progressive yet transgressive question challenges qualitative inquiry that places researchers at the center and communities on the periphery. Humanizing research, instead, builds relationships of dignity and care and engages in dialogic consciousness-raising for both the researcher and the participant.²⁴ I value qualitative research because of the challenges that come with negotiating relationships, evaluating intended aims, and paying close attention to a researcher's own impact throughout the research process. Consistent with Paris and Winn's concept of humanizing research, selecting action research as my methodology reflects my attempt to both decolonize and humanize research with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated populations.

My methods move beyond previous research on hope because of its intentional engagement of women on the incarceration continuum, who shape and substantiate the content for this research. Its privileging of the narrative of women on the incarceration continuum, for example, reflects black theologians and womanist theologians who value and use particular narratives as a starting point for theologizing. Building on this liberationist move, I not only use the narrative of women on the incarceration continuum as the starting point for my conceptualization of hope but their analysis as critical to my construction of a restorative pedagogy. Psychologists emphasize the inner self, which provides an essential lens from which to examine the internal workings of a person as they navigate various challenges that could

²³ Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn, "Preface," *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities* (Washington, D.C.: SAGE, 2014), xiii.

²⁴ Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn, "Preface," xvi.

destroy hope. Action research requires rigorous heartwork of both its participants and the principal investigator. Latin American theologians emphasize hope as active engagement in history today in order to create a new tomorrow. Similar to Latin American theologians, this research examines ways to improve the world, particularly for those most susceptible to incarceration, by mining wisdom from those who have been most impacted by incarceration. In this sense, their direct engagement in this collaborative endeavor is liberative praxis. They not only have a chance to be active participants in building a hopeful future for women on the incarceration continuum; they are actively building a hopeful future for themselves.

I approached this research with the aim of transformation for myself, women on the incarceration continuum, and communities impacted by the incarceration epidemic. Inviting formerly incarcerated women to analyze their own perceptions of hope challenges notions that equate researcher with knowledge-bearer and researched with knowledge-receiver. In the tradition of Paulo Freire, I understand that transformation emerges from a theory of transforming action; thus, I do not see incarcerated women as mere hope activists but include their reflection and action upon my research as part of the process of transformation.²⁵ As co-researchers, formerly incarcerated women become the subjects of their own inquiry and partners of accountability in my analysis. Furthermore, putting our analyses in conversation with each other enables a more robust rendering of hope as well as a space for all researchers to experience transformation.

Needless to say, several challenges exist with measuring “hope,” especially when it needs to be completed in a limited time frame with limited access and limited resources. In one sense, because I asked direct questions about the concept of hope, women quickly identified what hope meant for them and how it functioned in their lives; this made the coding process much easier. On the other hand, because I wanted themes to emerge from the data rather than simply placing my themes on the data a priori, I sought to see which words were used the most in the dissertation and if any major patterns emerged from their responses to the interview questions.

²⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 126-127.

Hope is a subjective experience, thus difficult to capture in objective ways. Hope is not tangible; it is an internal experience that can be expressed and manifested in external and communal ways. At the same time, there are concrete ways that scholars have identified hope. These include viewing a person's agency as well as their ability to set and reach goals.²⁶ Thus, I looked for instances where women demonstrated agency, optimism, high confidence in their capacities and positive expectations about present and future moments to add to my understanding of how hope functioned in their lives. Those things that seemed to pose threats to who they are or who they desire to be as well as their children became important considerations in contextualizing adversity and understanding the challenges that placed hope in crisis.

For example, the issue of maternity emerged. This was a theme I never anticipated using as a lens by which to analyze hope. Yet, this theme became a major way to talk about how women view their identity and possibilities as well as how women view the future. I realized maternity was deeply embedded in how women view hope and was larger than biological motherhood, which led me to reconsider generativity as a major aspect of how to think about hope. Another emergent theme from the data is the "burden of proof" concept where women always felt the need to prove they are "good" or not criminal, or productive. Their ability or avenue to prove themselves to be "productive citizens" became a major way for them to experience hope, thus re-focusing my attention on a "wrong-until-proven-right" way of understanding life on the incarceration continuum. These are just two examples of how the data helped drive my analysis and interpretation of major concepts in this research. Overall, because my analysis was data-driven, it went from concrete and descriptive to a more abstract understanding of the concepts in this research.

By situating my research within an action methodology framework, I intend to destabilize notions that research should be neat, fixed, and predictable; instead, I embrace the messy, dynamic, unpredictability of research methodologies that seek to build hope. In particular, the aim of action research is transformation; transformation in itself is difficult to measure, and it is difficult to create the environment in which transformation is a given. As a result, action research depends on social contexts and human interactions

²⁶ Carl Richard Snyder, "Hypothesis: There is Hope," in *Handbook of Hope: Theory, Measures, and Applications*, ed. Carl Richard Snyder (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2000), 3-21.

that are not static but always changing. Yet, it is this dynamic messiness that reflects real life circumstances in which the desire for hope and transformation is both desirable and necessary. Thus, it is important to note that my understanding of action research in this context is within an understanding that this is the first step within a larger process that seeks to engage women more directly in the work being done around restorative hope pedagogy.

Situating action research in this larger process is particularly important because of the challenges I encountered with trying to fulfill an action research methodology. I engaged the qualitative methods of doing interviews. Following the interviews, I held a focus group where I shared some of the insights I gathered from them and my interpretation of these insights. In this sense, the focus group functioned more like member checking than it did as a space where we could do critical analysis of the data. One major challenge I faced in getting the focus group and even the interviews is the varied schedules of the women. To get several women in the same space was difficult, and we did not have the amount of time needed when they did meet to do the critical analytical work needed. Thus, limited time to complete this research ultimately prevented me from allowing the women to provide the substantive feedback needed to raise new questions. Instead of conducting several feedback sessions in the form of a focus group, I only conducted one focus group. Also, while I stayed in conversation with one or two of the interviewees about my research throughout the process, I did not have an opportunity to provide them with my manuscript so they could provide edits or offer suggestions. In this way, my project falls short of participatory action research. As a result, my future research intends to build on these insights and look for new opportunities to do action research methodology along the incarceration continuum.

Research Paradigm as Critical Emancipatory Praxis

My critical pedagogical theoretical framework informed not only the content (*what or who*) of my research; it also informed *how* I did research. Embedded within a critical emancipatory framework, my research paradigm falls within the paradigm of “Research as Praxis” (RAP), which is a re-articulation of Participatory Action Research (PAR). At its core, RAP seeks to create a research process that is inherently

critical and emancipatory in nature. Moving beyond simply interpreting the world, it seeks to change it. Moving beyond researching people, it invites research participants into the research process *with* the researcher; they not only provide information about their world, they also help to actively interpret their world in order to engage personal and social transformation.²⁷ This research process assumes that those with whom I research are active participants in their world. RAP represents the interplay between research, teaching and activism. It relies on three primary principles: 1) “radical participatory democracy,” 2) “collective action for transformation toward a better world,” and 3) “commitment to work for social justice in solidarity with marginalized communities.”²⁸ Ultimately, these three principles recognize the research participants as subjects who impact the construction of knowledge and who can act upon their world to make it a better place.

Action research enables me to create a critical emancipatory research process that places the expertise of women on the incarceration continuum as essential to re-conceiving the concept of hope and constructing more efficient pedagogical practices in theological education. I embrace a participatory action research model that advocates for full participation of the research participants; this paradigm works best with the aims of my research. This movement toward action research with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated populations is somewhat unique in prison research literature.

The move toward participatory action research in prison is promising and provides useful resources as I seek to mediate hope and/or critical emancipatory pedagogy. To date, limited prison research exists, which use participatory action research as their methodological paradigm and/or research praxis. In order to find those resources, I turn to educational studies and community-based research, which rely on participatory action research to improve social services and educational programs and practices. The most notable participatory action research projects in the prison though few are critical for demonstrating the importance of research as praxis.

²⁷ Myriam N Torres and Loui V. Reyes, *Research as Praxis: Democratizing Education Epistemologies* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), 1–9.

²⁸ Torres and Reyes, 53–59.

Action research in the prison has not always included the inmates. Within one prison, for example, researchers undertook action research with prison nurses to evaluate an educational program in two prisons. Researchers sought to find concrete ways for nurses to provide equitable care to inmates. Prison nurses who participated in the action-learning project found it to be empowering; their participation created a greater sense of confidence, accountability and competence in their work within the prison.²⁹ While I value this action learning approach, expanding the approach to include inmates and officers would have provided a more holistic analysis of opportunities to ensure equitable health care services in the prison.

Inmate-initiated research also provides opportunities for change from the inside out rather than the outside in. An example of inmate-initiated research is found in the critical utopian action research (CUAR) conducted by Mette Bladt and Kurt Aagaard Nielsen on the notion of free space within a Denmark prison.³⁰ CUAR, a Scandinavian approach to action research, integrates critical theory with utopian thinking in a way that enables researchers to be critically aware of problems in the world and actively engaged in responding to those problems through research findings. CUAR operates from a future workshop methodology that seeks for participants to co-operate in the making of an alternative future. This methodology consists of a phase where researchers explore what's wrong, where researchers explore what the world could be like, and where researchers make concrete proposals to enact. change³¹

Using future-creating workshops, the action research project employed utopian thinking so that inmates could imagine and enact concrete changes in the prison. By placing the dreams and visions of inmates within the Denmark prison system as the focal point of research, this project recognized that the inmates' insights and ability to partner in implementing the research agenda was not only paramount but also critical for effective change within this prison. Although Bladt and Aagaard Nielsen do not use the term hope to describe utopian thinking, their description of utopian thinking aligns with my definition of

²⁹ C. Bennett, J. Perry, and T. Lapworth, "Supporting Prison Nurses: An Action Research Approach to Education," *British Journal of Nursing* 19, no. 12 (2010): 782–783.

³⁰ Mette Bladt and Kurt Aagaard Nielsen, "Free Space in the Processes of Action Research," *Action Research* 11, no. 3 (2013): 371.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 370-371.

the primary objective of hope—that is to imagine the future differently.³² In addition to interpersonal and personal development, the action plan developed by the collaborative work of inmates and researchers influenced the institutional praxis in concrete ways such as: 1) establishing a course for incoming inmates, 2) creating a magazine from the inmate union, and 3) expanding the vehicles of communication within the prison.³³ Ultimately, action prison research studies emphasize the role of the inmate, researcher or other researchers as change agents within their context.

James Ward, Di Bailey, and Siam Boyd employed PAR methodology to learn about self-harm in the prison from the perspective of inmates. The purpose of their research was to integrate the experience of service users with staff development.³⁴ The working partnership between the university professor, research associate, and inmate enabled knowledge to flow in the academy, in the mental health profession, and across the inmate population about self-harm practices in the prison. This research ultimately confirms that prison-based PAR can be possible, welcomed, and beneficial to raise awareness and improve service delivery within the prison.

Deborah Drake discovered the limitations and complexities of doing PAR amidst vast power dynamics. Her project, conducted in three maximum-security prisons in New England, used prison staff to collect data from inmates on their experience of imprisonment. Significantly, their work demonstrated the capacity for action-inspired research to build supportive and communicative environments between prisoners and staff. The authors also acknowledged the messiness of action research, particularly when those in power remain blind to the ways their power negatively impacts others. Prison officers became critically aware of their role in the prison but did not link their new awareness with a responsibility to transform their practices. While Drake acknowledges the potential of action research to instigate change, she also acknowledges the limitations of prison-based PAR. For example, restructuring in prison leadership

³² Ibid, 380.

³³ Ibid, 380.

³⁴ James Ward, Di Bailey, and Sian Boyd, “Participatory Action Research in the Development and Delivery of Self-harm Awareness Sessions in Prison: Involving Service Users in Staff Development,” *Prison Service Journal*, no. 202 (2012): 20.

led to a discontinuation of the project, limiting the ability of prison staff to fully act as researchers. Drake concludes that the interventionist nature of this research undermined the integrity of the elements of participation.³⁵ One of the strengths of this study is its emphasis on the pedagogical dimensions of action research. It also raises questions about how participatory one can be in a hierarchal setting. Prison officers had the chance to engage in self-learning that provides a site to mediate between a pedagogy of the oppressed (i.e. prisoner or non-prison staff) and a pedagogy of oppressor (prison staff). The recognition provided ample opportunity for prison staff to improve their service delivery. Ultimately, prison-based action research can emphasize injustices endemic to the prison but become difficult when there is no opportunity to change those injustices.

Even research that seeks to be unrestrained can sometimes find itself in chains. The action research of Fine and Torre in a college-in-prison program for women, for example, witnessed the unspoken chains that kept specific topics, comments, and concerns on lockdown, specifically for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. These women enacted internal censorship as a way to protect themselves.³⁶ Throughout the research, Fine and Torre raise a question that I raised throughout the duration of my research--What role do researchers play in bearing witness and giving voice to the issues that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women dare not speak publically? Their conclusions about PAR also pose a challenge to any community-based research project that fails to acknowledge a participatory process and recognize the co-constructive process of knowledge that takes place when doing research.³⁷

Within the few United States-based examples of PAR within the prison, there seems to be a heavy reliance on working with officers. This is significant for several reasons. First, it begs to question whether participatory action research within in the prison can ever fully be “participatory” for incarcerated

³⁵ Deborah Drake, “Researching Prisoner Experiences with Prison Officers: An Action Research-Inspired Approach,” *Action Research* 12, no. 1 (2014): 103.

³⁶ Michelle Fine and Maria Elena Torre, “Intimate Details: Participatory Action Research in Prison,” *Action Research* 4, no. 3 (2006): 258–259.

³⁷ Michelle Fine, Maria Elena Torre, et al, “Participatory Action Research: From Within and Beyond Prison Bars,” in *Working Method: Research and Social Justice*, eds. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (New York: Routledge, 2004), 104.

researchers. Secondly, as experienced in my own attempts to do PAR in the prison, it can be difficult to garner support from the officers or prison due to lack of staff support, lack of warden support, or unclear guidelines within the prison about how research is to be conducted. Ultimately, the need for PAR within the prison is great and will need to overcome several barriers before this type of research is more widespread.

Previous research fails to incorporate women on the incarceration continuum into the bulk of the research process; therefore, these methods fall short of being critical and emancipatory. The innovation in action research methods vis-à-vis existing prison research reflects a movement away from treating women on the incarceration continuum as object-researched and moves toward treating them as subject-researcher. This repositioning of the researcher reflects subjects' ability to exercise agency in creating new knowledge. This movement toward partnering with women is risky because it limits my control as a researcher. We, not I, are partnering to create new knowledge, which raise a whole new set of questions and makes it especially important for me to be honest about my own positionality throughout the research process.

This research tries to counter positivist notions of social inquiry that assumes an objective reality that we can come to know by empirical data.³⁸ Unlike positivism, I believe that reality is socially constructed; thus, we cannot come to know society simply through empirical methods. Instead, we gain a deeper understanding of the world through hearing how people make sense of their worlds. Becoming more aware of the world is the first step to transforming it.

Throughout my data collection process, I not only listened to understand how people interpreted their world, I was also critical of the prevailing social conditions and structures that influence reality, thus considering the complex relationships that exist between power, human interests, social control and knowledge. This research pushes beyond interpretation to identify particular practices that may be implemented in response to the issues that prevail in society. In this sense, I adopt a "pragmatic epistemology" that is located at the interplay of theory and practice. I assume that one comes to know and

³⁸ Gareth Morgan, ed. *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 393.

simultaneously construct their own reality by acting on their beliefs. Pragmatic epistemology assumes that participants who become critically aware of their environment are better equipped to employ concrete practices to change their environment, thus building a hopeful future through engaged research praxis. In other words, knowing that my interview participants have agency, I seek “to stimulate critical self-reflection among human agents so that they can freely choose whether and how to transform the world.”³⁹

This research privileges the voices and experiences of women who are or have formerly been incarcerated or in constrained facilities to understand how they perceive themselves in the world and the ways that art can inspire hope and agency in their lives. This research ultimately assumes that the narratives revealed through formerly incarcerated women are ways of knowing that possess deep truths that can enrich society and contribute to pedagogical practices. I find this RAP approach useful because it challenges the prevailing assumptions that undergird theories and policies. By spotlighting the voices of those who have often been excluded from the discourse, I hope to provide useful insights that will transform how society perceives populations in confinement as well as opportunities for research participants to transform how they perceive themselves in the world.

Qualitative Research Design

The aim of this research is to explore the concept of hope with and from the perspective of women on the incarceration continuum. The research design is informed by a critical emancipatory research paradigm that guides the entire research process. In this section, I describe the assumptions I bring to my research while simultaneously describing the more practical ways in which I actually do the research. Overall, I demonstrate specific ways this research seeks to meet its aims by exploring my selection of research participants, recruitment strategies, sampling frame, research methods, and establishing the trustworthiness of the study.

³⁹Chris Argyris, Robert Putnam and Dina McLain Smith, *Action Science* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985), 71.

Movements in Qualitative Action Research: Plan, Observe, Reflect and Act

Throughout my research, I assumed that the women who have been incarcerated possess instructive knowledge for communities of faith about how to counteract mass incarceration and the pitfalls that accompany reentry. I also assumed that I possess tacit knowledge that guides my pedagogical practices within the classroom. Action research simply attempts to make tacit knowledge explicit, so that I, in conversation with others, can reflect on it and improve it.⁴⁰ This creative, co-editorial dynamic allows active interplay, transmuting embodied knowledge into embodied practices that eventually lead to emergent theories.⁴¹ This study, then, couples my own pedagogical practices in the classroom with the operationalization of hope in the lives of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, exploring each in greater depth, with hopes that it will lead to social transformation.

In order to examine the implicit theories at work in practice, action research engages a cyclical process of action and reflection rather than a linear process. This action-reflection model assumes that transformative learning can take place at any phase in the research; in order to capture that learning, action research values and integrates consistent reflection throughout the research process. This research, in particular, employs Kemmis and McTaggart's four moments in action research—planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.⁴² These moments are cyclical in nature and embedded in each phase of the action-reflection research process.

Planning the Project

The action-reflection cycle began long before I even conceptualized this project during a co-teaching experience in a women's prison. I did not begin teaching in the prison with the intent to plan an action research project; yet, the research project emerged from the prison context. My first experience teaching in the prison was both revelatory and transformative. I co-taught an inside-out course with another

⁴⁰ Jean McNiff, *Action Research: Principles and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 133.

⁴¹ McNiff, 135.

⁴² Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, 22-25.

doctoral student. We taught this course as an “inside-out” course, offering it as an educational studies course that undergraduates could take. Inside-out courses usually bring a groups of students from the outside to participate with students on the inside. Our course consisted of a group of Emory undergraduate students signed up for an educational studies course with incarcerated women who signed up for the course. We recruited from the larger population, which introduced a wide range of inside students into our course. In total, we had approximately 20 students.

I approached the development of the prison course and subsequent syllabi with my colleague from a detached outsider perspective that sought to raise the conscientization of the women in the prison. Our course entitled, *Lyrics on Lockdown: Education rather than Incarceration,*” examined the prison industrial context in three movements. First, we looked at a general overview of the criminal justice system. Then, we used the lenses of race, gender, youth, and class to explore incarceration. Lastly, we looked at various responses to incarceration such as art and restorative justice. Little did I know the type of power dynamics and unconscious assumptions I brought to my teaching would impact my subsequent research project. The assumptions that I held early on in my teaching experience were challenged, causing me to rethink my dissertation and my own vocation as a religious educator. The intense dialogue, frustrations, and questions during this course gave birth to new ways of seeing.

In particular, race-talk surfaced as a toxic conversation in the prison, namely because incarcerated women would have to defend their comments beyond the classroom space. The toxicity of the dialogue came to a head when three students dropped the course. The co-teacher and I went directly to the students to address why they no longer wanted to be part of the course. They boldly shared with us, “When you talk about race, you can leave the compound; we must stay. If our words are misunderstood, it can be taken outside of the class and become life and death situation for us.” Their transparency made my power, as the instructor, crystal clear; I could leave and they could not. My students and I had the power to bring questions to the classroom space that the inside students had to wrestle with after we left the prison. This experience highlighted the unique situation of confinement and became a major part of my inquiry. Further, within their prison subculture, they negotiated race differently. While the conversation on race were real to some,

others proposed that race did not matter because they were all behind bars. In fact, two of the students rejoined the class. One wrote a poem entitled, “We Are All Khaki” demonstrating how the identity of “inmate” sometimes supersedes even one’s ethnic and cultural identities.

On the other hand, when the students, co-teacher, and I used art as a pedagogical tool in the class to provoke dialogue, art allowed us to push the boundaries of conversations that may have typically been deemed toxic. Art helped mediate the space in a way where students felt non-threatened, open, and willing to take risks to express themselves. In other words, when we used art, we could talk about race in ways that we could not if we were simply engaging a dialogue on race. Students connected, shared, and exchanged narratives without much effort. For the first time in the duration of the course, it seemed that they could actually “see” one another. Thus, I embraced art as a valuable teaching tool for all teaching and learning environments.

Overall, I allowed the experience of teaching in the prison and the question around power that emerged in that context to challenge, interrogate, and enhance my dissertation topic and ultimately shape my research question. This experience, in particular, contributed to my research in two ways. First, it freed me to use art as a primary pedagogical approach in teaching both in carceral and non-carceral settings. It also influenced me to place art as central to my inquiry during the interview process. Second, this experience underscored the importance of deep reflection on teaching practices in the prison, particularly when one hopes to teach in transformative ways rather than perpetuating the confinement women already feel. Hope as a central concept in this project emerged rather organically. Because much of my teaching and training had been in both religious education and critical pedagogy, disciplines that talk about hope and transformation often, the language of hope seemed appropriate and necessary in this space that felt devoid of hope. As a result of my first experience in the prison, I shifted my research project from working with gangs to exploring the role of art and the concept of hope in the prison context. In this sense, this research project emerges from concrete teaching practice and in response to a desire to improve that teaching practice. This first teaching experience is not included in the dissertation itself rather in the iterative process that helped shape the direction for this research.

Planning the project consisted of reviewing the literature so that I could have a grasp on the scholarship of the interlocking themes of art, incarceration and critical emancipatory pedagogy. After reviewing the literature and reflecting on my experience teaching in the prison, I was able to re-conceptualize pedagogical practices in the prison in a way that was authentic to me and the women with whom I worked.

Acting on the Project

The next movement in action research is acting on the project, as manifested through my continued engagement in the prison. According to the insights received from co-teaching my first course within the prison, I created another course, *Exploring Identity and Spirituality through the Arts*, which used art as a lens to explore spirituality and identity. In particular, I introduced different mediums of art—drama, dance, visual arts, creative writing, and spoken word poetry. These different mediums challenged them to take risks while also encouraging them to embrace the medium that felt most germane to who they were. Please refer to the Appendix E to see my syllabus. The course integrated theories of psychosocial identity and practices of art as a means for the women to examine perceptions of self. The dialogical model of the course was an attempt to discover with the women as opposed to doing research on or to them. Thus, the themes that excited and frustrated them are the themes we highlighted in class discussion, art projects and homework assignments. I allowed my course to evolve according to the generative themes that emerged during the class. Within the course, hope emerged as a primary theme and influenced the formulation of the research instruments used to gather data.

Observing the Project

Observing the project, another moment in action research, is the process of data collection. It required me to pay close attention to what took place in the classroom, during the interviews, and during the focus group to help draw conclusions that will improve practices. In particular, this research uses the

insights derived from the knowledge of formerly incarcerated women to suggest concrete actions for the faith community and offer suggestions for pedagogical practices in educational settings.

My work as an instructor inside the prison setting enabled me to be an “insider-researcher” as I myself attempted to employ participant observation in the classroom environment. Nevertheless, despite my position as an “insider-researcher,” the prison environment proved limiting. Without the proper permission to pursue a feasible research agenda, I had to give up my ambitious goals of engaging those in the “inside” through interviews and focus groups. Instead, I decided to conduct interviews and focus groups with formerly incarcerated women. Shifting my research agenda enabled me to consider more participatory ways of engaging the women in the data analysis process. Ultimately, teaching the course and the data collection process provided opportunities for me to further develop this action research project. The planning, acting and development of a plan contributes to the final moment in action research—reflection.

Reflecting on the Project

While reflecting on the project is located as the final step in the process of action research, reflection is embedded throughout the project and informs how I plan, act and develop a project. Within an action research paradigm, I draw on practical theology to bridge theological reflection with critical pedagogy. In particular, I use a practical theological lens to examine the data. Practical theology uses a dialectical model that interchanges between practice, theory and critical reflection. By using qualitative research in general, and an action research paradigm in specific terms, the findings of the research pose challenges and serve as a corrective for faith communities, exhorting them to be more faithful in their witness.⁴³

Practical theology, according to Swinton and Mowat, has four primary tasks—to be critical, to engage in theological reflection, to explore the interplay between practices in the world and practices within the faith community, and to enable and enact more faithful practices.⁴⁴ In my estimation, more faithful

⁴³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 252.

⁴⁴ Swinton and Mowat, 5–9.

practices emerge when we are open to learning from people, places, and situations that reflect diversity and pluralism. The learnings that take place in this research project reflect diverse and pluralistic understandings of living in the world, thus contributing to our capacity to be faithful. All of these tasks fall into a model of practical theology that emphasizes “faithful performance.” Practical theology seeks the faithful performance of the gospel while simultaneously exploring God’s encounter with humanity in the midst of one’s lived reality.⁴⁵ My research has implications beyond the church. Nevertheless, as a practical theologian, I locate myself in the dialectic tension, where I serve as a mediator between practices in congregational communities and practices outside of congregations. Swinton and Mowat expound on the practical theologian as mediator. They posit the following:

The mode of action that is engaged by me as a practical theologian is therefore seen to be meditative, seeking to mediate between the practices of the Christian faith and the practice of the world. Action, within the horizon of the practical theologian, is never action for action’s sake, but always action in the service of revelation and mediation of the gospel.⁴⁶

This quote reflects my desire for the gospel message of hope to be inherently embedded in my pedagogical practices. Moreover, I assume that the women also possess messages of hope that can enhance and challenge my own perceptions and practices.

In addition to using practical theological methods as a means of reflection, the dissemination of this research through presentations, articles and my dissertation also becomes a site of critical dialogue and reflection. Colleagues, advisors and community members are able to immerse themselves in the data and engage in dialogue about the research findings.

Cycling Back: Research beyond the Dissertation

It is important to note that my cycle of critical praxis continues beyond the dissertation write up. While I report on my work in the prison, highlight the voice of formerly incarcerated women from my data, and provide recommendations for action, I also understand that the voices and transformative agency of my

⁴⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 258.

co-collaborators have to be part of the solution of mass incarceration in a dynamic way. As a result, my future research seeks to collaborate with formerly incarcerated women to plan, act, observe, and reflect on their suggestions. In this sense, this project is still evolving and searching for ways to make emancipation both the process and product of research. Ultimately, this dynamic interplay between reflection and action is a continuous process that extends far beyond the present.

Research Participants, Sampling Frame, and Recruitment

My research brought together women with a multiplicity of experiences in order to do justice to the nuanced ways in which hope functions or is malfunctioning in the lives of incarcerated women. My interview participants consisted of ten women, ranging in ages from their late twenties to late fifties. One of the ten women was white while all others were Black. There was also one woman who identified as Nigerian. I deviated from interviewing only Black women when presented with the possibility of having a white woman who participated in my course emerged. Having her perspective on the promises of art and the challenges of hope in a carceral setting outweighed her race. Nevertheless, exploring whether or not she faced similar challenges to the Black women also remained as a primary consideration throughout my analysis. Because many of her experiences mirrored the other women in my study, her voice added to the diversity of experiences from incarcerated women.

On the other hand, the women represent diverse experiences of incarceration in terms of sentencing lengths, reasons for incarceration, state and facility of incarceration, and degree of participation or non-participation in prison programming. I also selected women from a wide array of educational backgrounds, ranging from no diploma to advanced professional degrees. I was particularly interested in interviewing women who appeared to “have it together” as well as those who visibly struggled with issues around employment, housing, substance abuse and relationships. Having women from diverse incarceration experiences enables me to explore the consistencies and inconsistencies with the meaning and functions of hope in the lives of those who experience confinement.

For the purpose of this study, I invited formerly incarcerated women above the age of seventeen to participate. Women who were previously incarcerated could provide rich descriptions and provide robust information that populations who never experienced incarceration would not be able to offer. As a result, I employed purposive sampling, which enabled me to select subjects that met specific criteria. Purposive sampling requires the researcher to select research participants the characteristics most pertinent to the study. Purposive sampling led to a snowball effect, where women would identify other women who fit the criteria and would be interested in participating in the research.⁴⁷

Recruitment represents a challenge when researching vulnerable populations, particularly populations who have been incarcerated. Incarceration carries a stigma. Many people who get out of prison do not want to be associated with that stigma. As a result, in order to recruit women, I worked with an organization called Women In Transition (WIT). WIT is a program that emphasizes mentorship, friendship, gaining life skills, and advocacy for all women. While this program recognizes that all women are usually in transition, there is a special emphasis on inviting formerly incarcerated and newly released women into the program in order to assist their reentry process. The director of the organization suggested several women who might be interested in the research and gave me their contact information so I could invite them to participate. All women who participated had to provide verbal consent. Additionally, these women usually recommended a friend so that I was able to meet my goal of interviewing 10 women.

Qualitative Action Research: Research Methods, Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study aimed to pay close attention to the narrative identities of formerly incarcerated women. Narrative identities refer to the stories women construct about themselves in order to define themselves to self and others.⁴⁸ Within these socially-constructed identities, I was interested in how their concept of hope impacts how they see themselves in relation to God, self, and the world. My research intends to shed light

⁴⁷ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 230–243.

⁴⁸ Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, eds. *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*. 1st ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 4.

on the resilience of those in confinement as well as to identify concrete understandings and practices that inform that spirit of resilience. This qualitative research employs the following research methods to gather data—participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups enabled me to understand how women discuss and experience hope in practice. Data also includes poetry and a drawing submitted by a formerly incarcerated woman, which I draw on minimally in depicting their understanding of hope in Chapter 4.

Participant Observation

For the purpose of this research, I use participant observation as data in two distinct ways. First, I use my journal and field notes from the course I taught in prison. These writings provide detailed descriptions of my personal and interpersonal experiences of teaching in a women's prison. Because I am interested in improving my pedagogical practices, field notes serve as a means to document the activities and dialogue that took place in the class sessions. Furthermore, these experiences represent great opportunities to explore and enhance pedagogical practices with populations in confinement. These field notes provided a way to corroborate the findings that emerged from the interviews and focus groups.

Interviews

While I do not discredit my own knowledge, I approached my interviews with the understanding that the previously incarcerated women possess expert knowledge. As collaborative researchers, we create together. The recognition of us creating knowledge together serves to decentralize power and blur the line between the “researcher” and “researched.” By presenting their analysis as well as my analysis, it allows the women to be co-collaborators in the research process. It places both of our analyses in dialogue, providing a richer understanding of how the women make sense of their own lives.

The research process required me to plan, conduct, transcribe, and analyze interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to collect and analyze the findings in order to identify salient themes related to hope, freedom and the role of art in pedagogy. I also used the themes identified in the interviews and focus groups

as a comparative tool with the themes pervasive in the artwork submitted by the research participants. After the interviews, I transcribed them in a way that deleted my questions, and allowed the interviewee to make any corrections to the transcribed interview (as requested). I next solicited the interviewees' analysis of their own responses, and responded to their analysis by dialoguing with them about my analysis.

For the purpose of this qualitative action research study, I used an inductive approach to analyze the data. More specifically, I employed a thematic content analysis on the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups using the following four steps: (1) identifying emerging themes and patterns throughout interviews/focus groups; (2) highlighting recurring words, symbols, phrases, and interactions throughout interviews/focus groups; (3) comparing and contrasting themes, patterns, words, symbols, phrases, and interactions with data from focus groups and art; and (4) interpreting the results of the data in conversation with the research participants.⁴⁹

While doing interviews may be more time-consuming than other methods of data collection, semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to gain in-depth perspectives about hope, formerly incarcerated women's experiences of incarceration, and their use of art during incarceration. It also allowed me to ask probing questions that led to more potent insights.

Focus Groups

Focus groups, another method of data collection I used, enabled me to delve deeper into questions that emerged as a result of the interviews. Like the interviews, the focus group participants responded to questions designed to explore their concept of hope and freedom while in confinement, engage in art as a form of questioning and answering, and helped me analyze some of their own responses to the questions asked. Unlike the individual interviews, focus groups gave an opportunity for the synergy in the group to enhance or lead to new information.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ John. W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 179–212.

⁵⁰ Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 19.

For the focus groups, my analysis examines critical incidents and key concepts that emerge from the data. For critical incidents, I asked the women to identify pivotal events and experiences during their incarceration that shaped their understanding of hope. This framework provided an opportunity for me not only to name key events, but also to understand why these specific events and experiences are so essential to their perspective on hope.⁵¹ Additionally, analyzing key concepts that emerged from the focus groups allowed me to explore the core ideas and experiences that help inform how hope is defined and operationalized. For example, in order to partner with the women in data analysis, as a closing activity in the focus group, I invited focus group participants to identify any key concepts or important lessons that they learned from the focus group. The key concepts identified by the research participants served as a point of departure as I identified key concepts in my own data analysis.⁵² Both of these analytic frameworks allowed the data to speak for itself rather than me overshadowing the data with preconceived theories.

Class Art-ifacts

In addition to participant observation, interviews, and focus groups, the research participants were invited to submit any art they completed in the *Exploring Spirituality and Identity through the Arts* class I taught as research data for us (as co-researchers) to analyze and interpret. I allowed interview and focus group participants to complete art during the interview or submit art they completed and thought was valuable to this research. I used their own analysis of the art as well as themes that emerged throughout the art as an analytic framework to understand hope and the role of art in critical emancipatory pedagogies. Furthermore, I mined comments from class evaluations to bolster the research findings. Ultimately, both the art submitted from class, in the interviews, and during the focus group as well as comments from class evaluations were used to corroborate findings from the focus group and interviews.

⁵¹ Krueger and Casey, 125.

⁵² Ibid., 125.

By the end of my research, I had gathered and collected data in the form of field notes (from participant observation), audio recordings, transcripts, class evaluation and art-ifacts. NVivo, data analysis software, helped me manage large collections of data and simplify the data analysis process. Throughout the data analysis process, memos tracked my logic and provided clarity for how I arrived at my conclusions. The purpose of memos is to provide a transparent analytic trail that others can follow.⁵³ This ensures accountability and contributes to the trustworthiness of the research. Ultimately, the research methods, data collection and data analysis feeds into a larger qualitative research paradigm that invites diverse ways of knowing, encourages dialogue, creates sites of reflection, decentralizes power, and welcomes creative transformation.

Qualitative Rigor: Establishing Trustworthiness

Critical emancipatory qualitative action research challenges the traditional rules established for objective inquiry; it embraces new language and new ways of understanding how to define and measure rigor.⁵⁴ While I do not employ positivist notions of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, I employ Guba's construct to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.⁵⁵ Qualitative researchers carry a greater burden of demonstrating rigor in their research because of positivist traditions that assume all research should be neutral, objective, and generalizable. The term "trustworthiness" as opposed to "validity" more accurately describes the intent of qualitative action research. Guba's construct is based on four key criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are identified.

The first criterion—credibility—is used to demonstrate rigor in this research study. The study sought to understand and interpret hope and the role of art in teaching from the perspective of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women; thus, the formerly incarcerated women (as co-researchers) are the

⁵³ Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 157

⁵⁴ Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren, "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research," *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 151.

⁵⁵ Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), 295–296.

primary ones who can determine whether or not my results are credible. I use the term credibility, as opposed to internal validity, to acknowledge that this research is credible from the perspective of formerly incarcerated women. Establishing internal validity is an insufficient way of describing what takes place in qualitative action research. Internal validity assumes that one can predetermine and portray a causal relationship. For critical emancipatory researchers, determining cause and effect relationships is impossible because reality is constructed; human interactions between researchers impact this social construction of reality. These constructs could reflect contexts of oppression, particularly when thinking about incarcerated women.⁵⁶ Moreover, one may seek to identify a causal relationship without taking into account the many internal and external factors that contribute to the outcome and lends itself to an alternative explanation.

I try to avoid that pitfall by establishing credibility. I have sought to establish credibility in several ways—through prolonged engagement, verbatim quotes, triangulation, and member-checking.⁵⁷ I demonstrate prolonged engagement in prison contexts in direct and indirect ways throughout my tenure as a doctoral student. For example, I have taught two courses in a women's prison. I have also taught students who were working in the prison context as chaplains. All of these experiences helped me to establish rapport with the interview participants and gain a deeper understanding of prison culture. Additionally, throughout my writing, I have used verbatim quotes. These quotes allow me to highlight the voice of the women as co-researchers and experts in this project. I have employed data triangulation by collecting and analyzing interviews, focus groups, class evaluations, and art in order to corroborate the results from my research.

The participatory nature of my research depended solely on the member-checking employed in this research. Member-checking allowed the research participants to enhance or challenge the data analysis and research findings as co-researchers in the project. Member checking happened in two ways. First, it happened through a focus group in which I presented insights that emerged from the data. They could challenge or affirm these interpretations. Further, I stayed engaged in informal conversations with the women throughout the process. These informal conversations provided valuable ways to check and fine-

⁵⁶ Kincheloe and McLaren, 151.

⁵⁷ Lincoln and Guba, 301–316.

tune my interpretations of the data. While these invitations and attempts at both formal and informal participatory processes could have been better staged and integrated throughout the research process, I did make every effort to engage women in formal and informal dialogue to receive feedback that could be integrated into my overall analysis. Overall, these strategies seek to provide credibility and demonstrate the trustworthiness of this project.

Transferability is the second criterion I use to demonstrate rigor in this research study. Positivist traditions use external validity to describe the extent that the results from one research project can be applied to other situations. Qualitative research, however, can never be fully generalizable because the research intends to discover meanings from unique people and contexts, which make it virtually impossible to apply to other situations and populations.⁵⁸ The concept of transferability acknowledges these limitations in qualitative research. Transferability, then, provides a “thick description” of the research site, research problem, and the research context so that another researcher has detailed information to make a decision whether or not the study is transferable.⁵⁹ In this study, I establish the criterion of transferability through data appropriateness, reflexivity, and by providing a detailed description of the study. I employ data appropriateness through purposeful sampling, whereby I provide a description of the co-researchers who participated in this study.⁶⁰ Not only do I provide descriptions of the research participants, but I also provide a detailed description of me as the researcher by keeping detailed notes and describing the process I undergo as a researcher. This researcher reflexivity assumes that I cannot separate myself as the researcher from the research context. These detailed accounts consist of entries from my journal made while teaching in the prison as well as the field notes taken during interviews and focus group discussions so that comparisons can be made and decisions about transferability determined.

⁵⁸ Andrew K. Shenton, “Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects,” *Education for Information* 22 (2004): 69–71.

⁵⁹ Shenton, 69–71.

⁶⁰ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3 ed (Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications, 2002), 230–243.

The third criterion—dependability—is also used to demonstrate rigor in this study. Positivists use the term reliability to describe the ability for research to be repeated and yield the same results. This term is problematic in qualitative research because the phenomenon under scrutiny is always changing. My use of the criterion of dependability discards notions that I can observe and measure the same thing twice; instead, I assume that dependability emerges when the researcher takes into account the research context and the changes that occur during the research process as well as how those changes ultimately influence the results of the data.⁶¹ In order to ensure dependability, I employ triangulation, reflexivity, and a data audit trail. Through reflexivity, I provide a detailed description of the rationale and implementation of the research design as well as evaluating the effectiveness of my inquiry.⁶² The data audit trail is a detailed account of the research process so that my advisors and others can see how I reach my conclusions.⁶³ All of these strategies seek to acknowledge the ways that changes in the research process can influence the results of the data. The strategies used to determine transferability also help establish the last criteria of confirmability.

Confirmability, the last criterion, refers to the degree that the results of the data can be confirmed or corroborated as the experiences of the research participants rather than the biases of the researcher.⁶⁴ Unlike positivist approaches to ensuring objectivity, I recognize that my biases influence the data results; thus, I establish confirmability through reflexivity, data audit trailing, triangulation, and critical corroboration. Reflexivity and data audit trailing, as explained in the other criteria, make my research process transparent so others can evaluate the process and the means by which I arrived at my research findings. I use multiple data collection methods in order to corroborate my research findings. Triangulation helps reduce the biases I bring to the research.⁶⁵ I use critical corroboration, which explores varying

⁶¹ Shenton, 71.

⁶² Ibid, 71–72.

⁶³ Lincoln and Guba, 316–318.

⁶⁴ Shenton, 72.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 72.

theories, to either confirm the results that emerge from the data or to allow the research findings to challenge the theories that contradict the data.

While Guba's construct helps to establish the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, the transformative aspect of this research is the most accurate way to establish the trustworthiness of the project. Action research does not centralize the academy as my sole community of accountability; instead, my community of accountability is also the women on the incarceration continuum who seek to make hope a reality in their daily life. In this sense, transformation holds more value for them than proving the rigor of my research. In other words, it is much easier to demonstrate how my research falls within an academic research model than to prove that my research has intervened in the world to create new realities. As a result, I include additional strategies that provide emphasis on establishing trustworthiness for action research. These strategies converge with the strategies highlighted in Guba's construct of establishing trustworthiness.

I invited critical voices to provide feedback and offer suggestions for improvement. These voices include 1) "critical friends" or colleagues who are familiar with my work and can provide constructive feedback (as evidenced in presentations in front of my colleagues on my preliminary data); 2) my own self-critical and self-validating voice (as revealed through reflexivity); 3) advisors who can provide academic validation to ensure my claims enhance theological education (as indicated through the process of receiving feedback and making edits based on their feedback) and 4) teachers who can provide professional validation about the knowledge claims and emergent theories I propose (as evidence through conversations with teachers in the public school sector).⁶⁶ Invitations ranged from formal presentations requesting feedback to informal conversations over dinner in which I solicited feedback.

To demonstrate the integration of theory and practice in the research represents another way to ensure trustworthiness in action research. This integration is reflected in the four movements of planning,

⁶⁶ Richard Winter, *Learning From Experience: Principles and Practice in Action-Research* (Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1989), 46-55.

acting, developing, and reflection in this model of action research. In addition, with the understanding that action research is not predictable, I also embrace the risks associated with creative transformation.

All of the criteria outlined in this chapter, for qualitative research in general and action research in particular, reflects a desire for my research to demonstrate rigor. At the same time, the field's definition of rigor can be in direct tension with action research. Thus, my own definition of rigor is the research's ability to impact change, which cannot necessarily be determined by the end of the research write-up. Nevertheless, I hope, both in the way the research process is carried out and in what this research produces, enacts and enables personal and social transformation. This personal transformation does not have to start with the research participants; I hope it starts with me.

Ethical Considerations

Working with formerly incarcerated women required me to be diligent about ensuring the ethical integrity of my research. Emory's Institutional Research Board helped me establish this integrity by ensuring that my consent forms, recruitment strategies, and other procedures were ethical and did not cause any undue harm to the participants. Namely, not only did I obtain informed consent from the research participants, I also emphasized the voluntary nature of the research so that participants understood that they could choose to withdraw at any time during the research process. (See Appendix for Verbal Consent forms and interview protocol).

Research Reflexivity: Searching from the Inside Out

Accounting for myself in this research demonstrates the understanding that there is no purely objective or neutral way of presenting research information. Thus, by locating myself, I hope to enhance the trustworthiness of this research. D. Soyini Madison captures the need for acknowledging one's positionality in qualitative research. She writes: "When we turn back on ourselves, we examine our intentions, our methods, and our possible effects. We are accountable for our research paradigms, our

authority, and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation.”⁶⁷ This accountability acknowledges the researcher’s subjectivity and their presence as part of the research context.

Instead of false attempts to be a detached objective observer, I embrace my own subjectivity and the ways my positionality as a researcher fuels my research questions. For some of the women, I did not have to work hard to see myself in them. I am keenly aware of the close proximity of my life experiences with the “cradle to prison” pipeline that many Black adolescent girls and women find themselves. Although I have never been arrested, I grew up in some of the same contexts of confinement that characterize this pipeline. While incarcerated women come from varying socio-economic backgrounds, I am hyperaware of the ways poverty compounds the chances of incarceration for Black women.

As a researcher who sees myself in incarcerated women, I discard attempts to create an us/them dichotomy that feeds into the Othering of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. I locate myself in the discomfort of negotiating my multiple selves in the midst of this research process.⁶⁸ These spaces require active self-introspection and ultimately become a resource for gaining better data and adding to the rigor of the research process. Even as I locate my own positionality as a researcher, I draw on Keisha Green’s “Double Dutch Methodology” to describe the ways in which I have to navigate my multiple selves during the research process.⁶⁹ Throughout the research process, I questioned the interlocking identities I brought to the research and the ways they informed my research questions, research methods, data analysis, and dissemination of the data. As an outsider in one sense and an insider in another sense, I sometimes found the lines blurred. My genuine interest to see transformation in multiple layers kept me connected to the progress of the women with whom I researched.

⁶⁷ D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 14.

⁶⁸ Michelle Fine describes this process as “working the hyphen,” whereby researchers intentionally locate themselves and become transparent about the way their own social location influences the research process. Michelle Fine, “Working the Hyphens: Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research,” *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 70–71.

⁶⁹ Keisha Green, “Doing Double Dutch Methodology: Playing with the Practice of Participant Observation,” *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, eds. Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 147–160.

As a Black woman, this research extends beyond abstract definitions of hope to the very concrete well-being of Black women. This desire to see and explore well-being with Black women is also directly connected to my notion of hope as holistic and multi-dimensional. Hope must take into account the integrating elements of life that make well-being possible. While I can clearly identify with some of the women, it is critical that I do not overshadow or trivialize the uniqueness of the women's experiences by over-identifying with the women. This move toward romanticizing the experiences of incarcerated women is characterized by what has been identified as the "ethnographer's infatuation," where deep contradictions are overlooked or glossed over.⁷⁰ To guard against this posture, I am always reminding myself of the complex nature of humanity. This paradoxical and complex understanding of human nature allows one to take a posture of realism and take seriously the way specific choices contribute to certain circumstances.

On the other hand, I recognize that while I see myself as an "outsider within," the women with whom I research may see me as an "outsider." Being a teacher, graduate student at a prestigious university, and non-incarcerated individual introduces power dynamics that may influence how the women perceive me. This jumping in between the lines, as insider and outsider, places me in a dynamic place on the positionality continuum. I am constantly negotiating how I see myself with how research participants see me with my role as a researcher/collaborative researcher.

In addition, it acknowledges that power dynamics exist between the researcher and the research participants. My research does not seek to work *for* the social justice of incarcerated populations; my research seeks to work *with* them. Nevertheless, I am hyperaware of the "class politics of translation," whereby my educational status grants authority and legitimizes the stories I tell through my research.⁷¹ With this in mind, I aspire to be a "worthy witness." A "worthy witness" is someone who is actively involved in the communities in which he or she has been welcomed as a researcher.⁷² Worthy witnesses

⁷⁰ Dwight Conquergood, "Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance," *Literature in Performance* 5, no. 2 (1985): 6-7.

⁷¹ Fine, 80.

⁷² Maisha T. Fisher, *Writing in Rhythm: Spoken Word Poetry in Urban Classrooms*. Language and Literacy Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007), 17.

exercise care when describing the actions of that community in order to preserve the integrity of the people in that community.⁷³

Transgressing the Boundaries: Challenges to Critical Emancipatory Prison Research

While my desire was to do an action research project, I faced several challenges to creating a research as praxis model that allows incarcerated women to participate in every phase of the research process. This challenge centered on my inability to gain access to the women needed to complete my study. I wanted to be sure that the women I worked with would be the ones guiding my research questions, helping me analyze the data, and ultimately discovering solutions for the problems they identified in line with a participatory action research methodology. Incarcerated women are wards of the state; thus, they do not have the power to give consent for me to interview them unless it has first been approved by the prison. Furthermore, incarcerated populations are considered “vulnerable populations” and require additional measures in order to fall within the ethical guidelines of human subjects’ research. As a result, many of my efforts to partner with incarcerated women as co-researchers were undermined by the very rules that seek to protect and/or maintain order. What an irony—the laws that sought to create boundaries to protect actually created walls; these walls served as a reminder that incarcerated women were behind real physical bars that even critical emancipatory research has to confront. Despite several attempts from me and my advisors to push beyond the prison bars of bureaucracy, my research became confined; thus, I had to utilize my imagination to think of other possibilities for the research project.

Limited access to incarcerated populations led me to pursue a different route. My movement from interviewing incarcerated women to interviewing formerly incarcerated women in my dissertation reflects these challenges. While I was not able to interview women in prison, many of the women I interviewed participated in the class I taught in prison; thus, their insights about hope as well as the use of art in the prison enrich the analysis of pedagogies of restorative hope. Further, time prevented me from engaging in

⁷³ Fisher, 17.

the numerous feedback sessions I initially intended. Instead, I had only one session where women were able to share their feedback and insights about some of the themes that emerged in the research. Not having extended conversations with these women places this research on the low end of the participatory scale of research as praxis.

With this said, I still believe in the transformative and emancipatory nature of action research methodology to build hope. These ideals have been incorporated into my research where possible. For example, you will hear the voices of women on the incarceration continuum throughout the pages of Chapter 3 in order to illuminate, in their words, their understanding of hope. Despite the challenges I faced in fulfilling the aims of action research, the voice of women on the incarceration continuum is no less powerful. Their voice, as presented in this research is a generative act upon the world.

Conclusion

Throughout this research, I, in conversation with women on the incarceration continuum, take a hard critical look at hope to see possibilities for how it might reshape our conceptions of hope as well as educational practices both in carceral and non-carceral settings. Through an exploration of responses to the prison context and subsequent challenges to hope, this research invites readers to ask hard questions of the criminal justice system and pedagogy at large. The enormity of the task only extends the bounds of opportunities for the participation of readers to unearth and place in conversation their own conceptions of hope amidst confinement.

CHAPTER I
HOPE IN CRISIS:
EXPLORING CHALLENGES ALONG THE INCARCERATION CONTINUUM

Introduction

Black women face many crises on the incarceration continuum; their challenges shed light on the underlying theme of stigma. Stigma refers to one's identity, both how others perceive them and how they perceive themselves. Negative beliefs emerging from stigma can be internalized to impact how women view themselves while simultaneously affecting how others perceive them. Stigma abnormalizes people by reducing them "from a whole and usual person to a tainted and discounted one."⁷⁴ This reduction of personhood is also a reduction of hope. These tainted perceptions rob women of the vision to see themselves or for others to see them in positive, hope-building ways. Stigma is compounded by the challenges that Black women already face along the incarceration continuum.

According to the research of Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan, stigma can be conceptualized in three ways—structural, social, and self. Structural stigma is manifested in the institutional barriers that exist when Black women seek to reintegrate into society, social stigma is manifested in how the community (including the faith community) labels and discriminates against them, and self-stigma is manifested in a woman's response and self-perception.⁷⁵ The structural, social, and self forms of stigma intersect and exacerbate the crisis of hope women encounter, placing the very existence of women in question. In other words, focusing on the multiple challenges faced by Black women on the incarceration continuum also offers an opportunity to look at incarceration through the unique lens of specific reasons why women struggle with existence and the threat of non-human-being-ness. The raced, classed, and gendered beings of Black women further complicate the already complicated situation of confinement, creating a crisis of hope that women continue to grapple with even after their release from prison. The next sections highlight physical, psychological,

⁷⁴ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 3.

⁷⁵ Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan, "Conceptualizing Stigma," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 363-85.

social, maternal and faith challenges women, particularly Black women, along the incarceration continuum encounter. Many of these challenges taunt Black women as they try to make sense of their lives.

Physical Health as a Crisis of Hope on the Incarceration Continuum

Poor health can have a direct impact on feelings of happiness, thus influencing experiences of hope. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists proposes that incarcerated women receive the same standard of care as non-incarcerated women, specifically when being treated for infectious diseases and mental illness; nevertheless, the practices within prisons suggest that there are severe disparities between the health treatment of incarcerated and non-incarcerated women.⁷⁶ These disparities reflect the larger disparities that Black women in general face. Challenges to sustaining hope emerge when women do not receive adequate care for chronic diseases, infectious diseases, substance abuse, and physical and sexual violence.⁷⁷ This section explores the multiple physical health challenges that women on the incarceration continuum wrestle with while trying to maintain a sense of hope.

Chronic Diseases

Chronic disease is no stranger to Black women. In fact, Black women, particularly poor Black women, sit at the top of many lists when it comes to chronic diseases. Hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes impact Black women at a disproportionate rate. Statistics show that 46 percent of Black women 20 years of age and older suffer from hypertension while only 31 percent of White women and 29% of Hispanic women in that age range suffer from hypertension.⁷⁸ Black women experience death from breast

⁷⁶ Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women. Committee opinion no. 535: Reproductive Health Care for Incarcerated Women and Adolescent Females, (Washington DC: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, August 2012), 120 (2 Pt 1):425-429.

⁷⁷ There are other concerns that emerge in the prison context such as hospice care; however, I choose to delimit the discussion in order to introduce rather than provide an exhaustive account of all the physical barriers to hope that exist on the incarceration continuum.

⁷⁸ Maria Guerra, "Fact Sheet: The State of African American Women in the United States," (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2013), 2.

cancer at a higher rate than white women even though white women are more likely to get breast cancer.⁷⁹ These statistics are even more staggering when incarcerated populations are examined.

In research done several years earlier, 40 percent of the total prison population reported a chronic medical issue, which is a much higher rate than among other Americans with similar ages.⁸⁰ Research shows that being overweight is the leading chronic medical condition in prison followed by hypertension, arthritis, asthma, obesity, and hepatitis. For women, these conditions are significantly more prevalent and more severe than they are in men.⁸¹ Inadequate medical treatment prior to incarceration, poor nutrition during incarceration, and limited access to health care after incarceration can make it difficult to both manage chronic illness and feel hopeful about physical health at every intersection on the incarceration continuum.

Infectious Diseases

Not only are women on the incarceration continuum at high risk for chronic illnesses but also infectious diseases. Many of the behaviors that lead to a women's incarceration are high risk behaviors for contracting and transmitting HIV, STDs, and other infectious diseases. Incarcerated women tend to have higher rates of STDs, vaginal infections, and abnormal Pap smears. One study indicated that more than three-quarters of newly incarcerated women had abnormal Pap smears, and over half had vaginal infections or STDs.⁸² These statistics are even more startling for Black women. African American women, for example, experience Chlamydia and gonorrhea infections at a rate 19 times higher than those of white women.⁸³

⁷⁹ Maria Guerra, 2.

⁸⁰ David Cecere, "Inmates Suffer from Chronic Illness, Poor Access to Health Care," In *Harvard Gazette* (January 15, 2009). <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2009/01/inmates-suffer-from-chronic-illness-poor-access-to-health-care/>.

⁸¹ Bingswanger, Ingrid A. "Chronic Medical Diseases among Jail and Prison Inmates." Society of Correctional Physicians, <http://societyofcorrectionalphysicians.org/corrdocs/corrdocs-archives/winter-2010/chronic-medical-diseases-among-jail-and-prison-inmates>.

⁸² "HIV in Correctional Settings," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/other/correctional.html>

⁸³ Maria Guerra, 2.

Everyone is potentially at risk for HIV/AIDS; nevertheless, statistics indicate that African American women have been infected at a disproportionate rate. Black women make up two-thirds of newly reported HIV cases in females and 34% of all female inmates.⁸⁴ Those who are at high risk for incarceration usually fall in the same population as those at risk for HIV infection.⁸⁵ Research shows that the prevalence of HIV is even greater in women's prisons than in men's prisons.⁸⁶ Incarcerated women are three times more likely to have HIV than incarcerated men.⁸⁷ Not only is there a high prevalence of women entering prison with HIV/AIDS, there is also a high risk for women to be infected with HIV/AIDS while in custody. Incarcerated populations are at a heightened risk for acquiring and transmitting HIV. Oftentimes, the correctional setting is the first place incarcerated women are diagnosed with HIV and provided treatment. Some researchers even suggest that effectively preventing and managing HIV/AIDS within the African American community depends on a coordinated effort to manage and treat this disease during incarceration.⁸⁸ Not having adequate care during incarceration and after incarceration, particularly for terminal diseases, can lead to a crisis of hope in which women can become apathetic or depressed about life.

Reproductive Health

Looking through the lens of reproductive health highlights a distinct gendered aspect of physical health in prison. Statistics show that approximately 6-10% of incarcerated women are pregnant.⁸⁹ Reproductive health takes seriously the needs of women before, during, and after pregnancy. Researchers

⁸⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2011. Rev ed. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2007. [Accessed 2/15/2015]. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/>

⁸⁵ Nina Harawa and Adaora Adimora, "Incarceration, African Americans, and HIV: Advancing a Research Agenda," *Journal of National Medical Association*. 2008 Jan; 100(1): 57–62.

⁸⁶ 1. LM Maruschak, "HIV in Prisons – 2004," (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Nov 2006), [Accessed 12/31/2007]. NCJ Publications No. 213897. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

⁸⁷ Anne S. De Groot, "Alarming Statistics About Incarcerated Women," In *HEPP News* 3, no. 4 (April, 2000). www.hivcorrections.org; HIV Education Prison Project, "Infectious Diseases in Corrections Report (Idcr)," In *HEPP News* 3, no. 4 (2000). <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/idcr/14>.

⁸⁸ Nina Harawa and Adaora Adimora, "Incarceration, African Americans, and HIV: Advancing a Research Agenda," *Journal of National Medical Association*, 2008 Jan; 100(1): 57–62.

⁸⁹ Jennifer G. Clarke, Megan R. Hebert, and et al., "Reproductive Health Care and Family Planning Needs among Incarcerated Women," *American Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 5 (May 2006): 834-39.

have associated substance abuse and commercial sex work, which categorize some incarcerated women, with higher reproductive concerns than other populations.⁹⁰ The same factors that put women at risk for infectious sexually transmitted diseases put women at risk for unplanned pregnancies, including lack of condom use, use of substances, and multiple sexual partners.⁹¹ As recommended by the Committee of Healthcare for Underserved Women, reproductive health includes prenatal care, access to contraception and abortion services in addition to other services needed to care for pregnant women throughout their pregnancy.⁹² With statistics that show that Black women are still four times more likely than any other racial group to die from pregnancy-related causes, suggesting that the ways women, particularly Black women, on the incarceration continuum are treated during pregnancy, labor, and delivery becomes a critical factor in hope.⁹³

Questions that emerge, for example, are what type of shackling laws exist in women's prisons.⁹⁴ Another question is what resources are available for post-partum depression, particularly when mothers must be separated from a newborn child? These concerns feed into both how a woman is physically treated by the criminal justice system as well as how a woman feels emotionally about issues related to giving birth and maternal incarceration. Not having a space to share these concerns can contribute to a crisis of hope. Further, the physical treatment of pregnant women who are incarcerated women centers on their criminality rather than their motherhood as a major part of their identity.

⁹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Women, Injection Drug Use, and the Criminal Justice System." http://www.thebody.com/cdc/women_idu.html.

⁹¹ Jennifer G. Clarke, Megan R. Hebert, and et al., 834-39.

⁹² Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women. Committee opinion no. 535: Reproductive Health Care for Incarcerated Women and Adolescent Females, (Washington DC: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, August 2012), 120 (2 Pt 1):425-429.

⁹³ Maria Guerra, "Fact Sheet: The State of African American Women in the United States," Center for American Progress cdn.americanprogress.org

⁹⁴ Shackling refers to the practice of restraining women during active labor and childbirth. This may include confining a woman's legs to opposite sides of the bed during child birth, which can increase the chances of physical damage to the woman. States have different laws concerning shackling but it is still a common practice.

Substance Abuse

The struggle with substances such as alcohol and drugs is a physical challenge that Black women on the incarceration continuum wrestle with daily. Studies indicate that 60% of women in state prison have a history of drug dependence. Only 1 in 5 women in state prisons and 1 in 8 women in federal prisons receive treatment for their substance abuse.⁹⁵ The increase in women's incarceration rates relates directly to harsher sentences for drug users. Even when treatment is offered while incarcerated, the stress caused by separation from families, violence from other inmates, and a loss in identity can counteract substance abuse treatments given in prison and cause women to relapse.⁹⁶ Substance abuse becomes a means to self-medicate or cope with trauma or stressors in life, particularly for women who are low-income and face multiple challenges. Interwoven into the actual abuse of substances is the trauma that predates substance use, the trauma that follows substance use, and the stigma associated with being part of a marginalized group.⁹⁷ As clearly identified by Mindy Thompson Fullilove et al., the labels of "crack whore and skeezer" are only surface-level images that hide the complex pattern of childhood sexual and physical abuse which continues during current crack use and sexual favors done in exchange for drugs, and follows women into the public and private rebuke of their failure to be "good" mothers.⁹⁸

The label of crack whore typically reflects a stereotype about Black women. Made clear by Renny Golden in the *War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Families They Leave Behind*, this crack whore stigma applied typically to poor women of color and was reinforced by a theatrics of punishment, whereby Black and Latino women became a spectacle who received punishment for not upholding "maternal integrity and family values."⁹⁹ In the late eighties and early nineties, the "social condemnation" of the

⁹⁵ The Sentencing Project, "Women in the Criminal Justice System: Briefing Sheets, " (Washington DC: Sentencing Project, May 2007), 6.

⁹⁶Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, "Substance Abuse Treatment for Adults in the Criminal Justice System." In *Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series*. (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005).

⁹⁷ Mindy Thompson Fullilove, E. Anne Lown and Robert E. Fullilove, "Crack 'Hos and Skeezers: Traumatic Experiences of Women Crack Users," *The Journal of Sex Research* 29, no. 2 (May, 1992): 275.

⁹⁸ Mindy Thompson Fullilove, E. Anne Lown and Robert E. Fullilove, 276.

⁹⁹ Renny Golden, *War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Families They Leave Behind* (New York, Routledge, 2005), 45-46.

pregnant crackhead fed into a theater of blame, where women who struggled with substance abuse were condemned and subsequently incarcerated in order to protect fetus and children who might be impacted by their addiction.¹⁰⁰ The theatrics of punishment and blame of the Black crack whore manifests in the outrageous increase of women incarceration between 1986 and 1991. African American women's incarceration in state prison for drug offenses increased by 828 percent, followed by 328 percent with Latino women, and 241 percent with white women.¹⁰¹ Incarceration, rather than other methods, became a means to deal with the disease of addiction.

Addiction, however, is more complicated. Substance abuse is often a symptom that points to underlying mental or interpersonal issues. A research study with 165 women who talked about their substance abuse needs in jail reveals the intersectionality of concerns for women in jail. Women who abuse substances were also more likely to express needs for mental health, family support, education, job training, and housing once released from jail. Researchers concluded that even if prisons provide substance abuse services, women may still return to drugs if other needs are not met.¹⁰² To navigate a crisis of hope, women must be able to find alternative ways to cope with the pain they experience. Not having alternative options available sustains hopelessness and despair for women on the incarceration continuum. Not only do they feel the emotional pressure, but also their bodies yearn for a substance, which makes them eventually sink into deeper depression.

Physical and Sexual Victimization

Some argue that the victimization of Black women is fundamentally different from those of white women. Research indicates that women of color are usually at higher risk of sexual assaults and that their experience is made more difficult because of race and class.¹⁰³ In particular, the perception that Black

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 46.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 46.

¹⁰² Sonia A. Alemagno, "Women in Jail: Is Substance Abuse Treatment Enough?". *American Journal of Public Health* 91, no. 5 (May 2001): 798.

¹⁰³ Victoria C Olive, "Sexual Assault against Women of Color," *Journal of Student Research* 1 (2012):1.

women are “unrapeable” is one of the stereotypes that place a burden of proof on Black women to prove they have been victimized.¹⁰⁴ This is further complicated by the burden to remain silent when victimization does occur, a burden that has rested heavy on the shoulders of Black women since slavery.¹⁰⁵ Two barriers in particular stand out. The first is the fear of confirming the Jezebel stereotype that Black women are promiscuous. The second is the expectation that Black women are strong and should be able to handle it on their own.¹⁰⁶ Lastly, there is a fear of betraying Black men into the hands of white authority. All three of these stigmas are damaging and impact the experience of Black women who have been victimized along the incarceration continuum.

In *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*, Beth E. Richie argues that women from marginalized communities who experience violence are more vulnerable in the face of a prison nation.¹⁰⁷ Based on the narratives of Black incarcerated women, women fall victim to “gender entrapment;” gender entrapment refers to the circumstances that compel women to crime in a hyper-punitive system that at the same time overlooks the conditions of extreme poverty and abuse that victimize and lead women on a pathway to crime.¹⁰⁸ While incarcerated, women remain at risk of sexual victimization by guards and other women. Richie locates Black poor women as “the most stigmatized, the least protected, and therefore in the greatest danger” in the larger context of the anti-violence and feminist movement, thereby bringing visibility to the victimization of poor Black women.¹⁰⁹

The impact of physical and sexual victimization on the incarceration continuum for women raises serious concerns for sustaining hope. Previous studies indicate that two in three incarcerated women in the US report sexual abuse and two in five report a history of childhood sexual abuse, which is twice the amount

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Carolyn M. West and Kalimah Johnson, "Sexual Violence in the Lives of African American Women," Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, March 2013.

¹⁰⁷ “Prison nation” refers to the conditions that surround abuse and the state policies and laws that increase social inequality and further alienate marginalized communities. Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 17.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Beth E. Richie, *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered, Black Women* (New York: Routledge, 21996), 1-15.

of sexual abuse reported with non-incarcerated women.¹¹⁰ When women have few options available, domestic and sexual violence can push women into poverty; poverty then contributes to a loss in job, inadequate health, and homelessness.¹¹¹ Upon release, women still struggle with the impact of abuse if they did not receive adequate support in prison.

Overall, when Black women on the incarceration continuum find themselves facing these multiple challenges, it is likely that an unspoken assumption looms in the air—Black women are somehow to blame for the challenges they face. This assumption contributes to a perception about the capacity of women to make healthy decisions for themselves with little to no attention on some of the structural reasons why these challenges disproportionately face low-income women of color. The burden of being a raced, classed, and gendered body seemingly invites an obligation to prove that one cares for their body, children, and overall health.

Psychological and Emotional Hope in Crisis on the Incarceration Continuum

Women experience a range of psychological and emotional trauma on the continuum. For many women, it is their response to their psychological and emotional crises that gave them a direct pathway to prison. For the purpose of this research, I would like to explore mental health, emotional trauma, grief and mourning, and incarceration itself as a few of the challenges women on the incarceration face on a daily basis that make hope difficult to sustain.

Mental Health Conditions

According to the Federal Bureau of Prison Statistics, people with mental health conditions comprise 64% of the jail population.¹¹² Mental health conditions are documented more among incarcerated women

¹¹⁰ JC. Johnson, P. Cohen , J. Brown et al. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 1999; 56(7): 607-08.; E. Richie and C. Johnson , *Journal of American Medical Women's Association*, 1996; 51:111-17.

¹¹¹ Cawthorne, 2.

¹¹² Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept of. Justice, 2006), 1.

than men.¹¹³ Approximately half of women on probation or parole experience mental illness; furthermore, women on probation and parole are twice as likely to experience mental illness as other women.¹¹⁴ Some studies even argue that because of the deinstitutionalization of mentally ill patients from the 1950's until now, there are more mentally ill men and women behind bars than in the hospital. This deinstitutionalization of mentally ill patients had good intentions—to treat mentally ill individuals rather than punish them. However, failure to sustain funding of community mental health programs led to the release of individuals who were not adequately treated for their condition.¹¹⁵

With the resurgence of incarceration and the disproportionate number of mentally ill people who are incarcerated, it appears that America has continued to punish rather than treat those who struggle with mental illness. Unfortunately, prison was never designed to be a mental health hospital nor have many officers and other staff been trained on how to work with people suffering from mental health conditions. Women who may or may not have received treatment for their condition in prison often leave with no options or plan for psychiatric aftercare. Needless to say, those who suffer from mental illness are more likely to return to prison than those who do not have a mental health condition.¹¹⁶ Those who do not return to prison may end up homeless.

Women on the incarceration continuum who struggle with mental illness may actually leave prison worse than they came while those who never had a mental illness may develop one as a result of their time in prison. Research shows that solitary confinement can actually worsen or produce mental health conditions in individuals.¹¹⁷ Some go as far as to describe solitary confinement as “a form of living death.”¹¹⁸ Negative effects can include suicidal thoughts, hallucinations, and irrepressible anger.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 4.

¹¹⁴ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Half of Women on Probation or Parole Experience Mental Illness." Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2012.

¹¹⁵ E. Fuller Torrey, Aaron D. Kennard and et al., "More Mentally Ill Persons Are in Jails and Prisons Than Hospitals: A Survey of the States" (Arlington, VA: Treatment Advocacy Center, May 2010), 2.

¹¹⁶ E. Fuller Torrey, Aaron D. Kennard and et al., 9.

¹¹⁷ Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and “Supermax” Confinement," *Crime & Delinquency* 49, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 130-131.

¹¹⁸ Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement : Social Death and Its Afterlives* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), xii.

¹¹⁹ Craig Haney, 133.

Grounded in a critical phenomenological approach, Lisa Guenther also argues that solitary confinement is beyond racial and gender violence, but is violence against the actual being. In a world where relationality is critical to humanness, the experience of solitary confinement threatens loss of self.¹²⁰ A general culture of fear among and between women can also contribute to a deterioration of mental health.¹²¹

For Black women, mental health issues are both gendered and raced. Black people with mental health conditions are more likely to be incarcerated than people of other races, particularly those who suffer from psychoses like Schizophrenia and Bi-Polar Disorder.¹²² Similar to treatment of Blacks, those with a mental health condition were more likely to be punished for violating the rules than those without a mental health condition.¹²³ They are also more likely to be abused or raped in jail than other women or men.¹²⁴

Upon release, the stigma of having been incarcerated presents great difficulties for the formerly incarcerated. People associate prison with danger while also associating mental illness with danger. To be perceived as a mentally ill recently released prisoner conjures up images that destroy hope rather than give it. To face incarceration stigma simultaneous with mental illness stigma creates additional barriers for Black women.¹²⁵

What does the mental illness of women on the incarceration continuum have to do with hope? Research supports the claim that hope is critical to recovery and management of mental health conditions.¹²⁶ Sustaining hope in the midst of great challenges is compounded when dealing with multiple co-occurring issues that exacerbate mental health conditions. Statistics, for example, show that those who have mental health conditions are more likely to have experienced some form of sexual abuse and more likely to use

¹²⁰ Lisa Guenther, xiii.

¹²¹ Holly M., Harner and Suzanne Riley. "The Impact of Incarceration on Women's Mental Health: Responses from Women in a Maximum-Security Prison." *Qualitative Health Research* 23, no. 1 (2013): 30.

¹²² WB Hawthorne, DP Folsom, DH Sommerfield, et al., . "Incarceration among Adults Who Are in the Public Mental Health System: Rates, Risk Factors, and Short-Term Outcomes." *Psychiatric Services* 63, no. 1 (2012): 26-32.

¹²³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 10.

¹²⁴ E. Fuller Torrey, Mary T. Zdanowicz, and et al. "The Treatment of Persons with Mental Illness in Prisons and Jails: A State Survey," (Arlington, VA: Treatment Advocacy Center, 2014), 5.

¹²⁵ Jason Schnittker, "The Psychological Dimensions and the Social Consequences of Incarceration," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 651 (January 2014): 134.

¹²⁶ Yvonne Darlington and Robert Bland, "Strategies for Encouraging and Maintaining Hope among People Living with Serious Mental Illness." *Australian Social Work* 52, no. 3 (1999):2.

drugs.¹²⁷ In other words, it is not just managing mental health conditions that make sustaining hope difficult; it is managing all the challenges simultaneously that threatens hope.

Emotional Trauma from Abuse

Some scholars report that as many as 90% of incarcerated women have experienced some form of victimization.¹²⁸ With many, coping with the impact of that abuse actually facilitates women's entry into crime.¹²⁹ As noted previously, this pattern of "entrapment" is particularly prevalent with poor Black women who come from poor neighborhoods.¹³⁰ After these experiences of trauma, women are more easily immersed in a cycle of re-victimization. If trauma is not adequately dealt with, women continue during and after prison to exhibit symptoms and behaviors of abuse victims. Some include internal behaviors that make women feel unworthy and withdraw from life or external behaviors that include aggression and unhealthy patterns in interpersonal relationships.¹³¹ Trauma theorists describe trauma as an organizing experience that has a profound impact on a person's identity and how they view life.¹³² The view of themselves is further complicated by the view that others have of people who have experienced sexual abuse.

Building on the common stereotypes associated with Black women, another image emerges in the media—that of the woman as liar. Grounded in Greek mythology, this image describes the curse placed by Apollo on Cassandra, a Greek prophetess, because of his failed attempts to seduce her.¹³³ Because of his curse, the town no longer heeded her warnings against pending doom. The "Cassandra curse" refers to the

¹²⁷ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 5.

¹²⁸ A. Browne, B. Miller, and E. Maguin, "Prevalence and Severity of Lifetime Physical and Sexual Victimization among Incarcerated Women," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 22, no. 3-4 (1999): 301-22.

¹²⁹ Meda Chesney-Lind and Lisa Pasko, *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime*. 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2013).

¹³⁰ Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

¹³¹ Dana D. DeHart, "Pathways to Prison: Impact of Victimization in the Lives of Incarcerated Women," (Columbia, SC: The Center for Child & Family Studies, 2004), 43-44.

¹³² Roger D. Falot and Maxine Harris, "Creating Cultures of Trauma-Informed Care (Cctic): A Self-Assessment and Planning Protocol," (Washington, D.C.: Community Connections, 2009).

¹³³ Marilyn Yarbrough and Crystal Bennett, "Cassandra and the "Sistahs": The Peculiar Treatment of African American Women in the Myth of Women as Liars." *The Journal of Gender, Race & Justice* (Spring, 2000): 627-632.

way patriarchal societies dismiss and ignore the concerns of women, particularly around issues of sexual violence against women.¹³⁴ Once again, the liar image plays over and over again when women and girls report sexual misconduct, sex workers report rape, and seemingly promiscuous women seek help because of sexual violence. Being considered untrustworthy as a result of victimization and then incarceration is a double stigma that women on the incarceration continuum must wrestle with. Restoring one's identity, then, becomes a critical component to restoring hope.

Incarceration as Trauma

Mapping the experiences of trauma that many women face before, during, and after incarceration does not take away from the fact that incarceration, itself, is a traumatic experience. While many incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people attest to experiences that have helped transform their life direction in a positive way during incarceration, other stories, even by those same people, talk about the ways that prison can be a life-draining, hope-stealing experience. In the words of Mika'il DeVeaux, "The experience of being locked in a cage has a psychological effect upon everyone made to endure it. No one leaves unscarred."¹³⁵ Mika'il DeVeaux, for example, talks about how traumatic it was for him to observe some of the bloody fights that took place while in prison. He writes:

I remain haunted by the memories and images of violence — violence I experienced, violence I witnessed, and violence that I heard or learned about. I can still see the murders I witnessed. I still see the image of a person being hit at the base of his skull with a baseball bat on a warm, sunny afternoon during recreation hours. The entire scene plays like a silent movie. He is smashed in the back of his head, crumbles, and falls to the ground. While he lays helpless on the ground, his head is smashed again and again until the sight of blood seems to satisfy his attacker. I watch as the perpetrator then calmly returns the baseball bat to the location where he had retrieved it and just walks away as if nothing had happened, while others entering the yard area walk around the lifeless body.

I can still see the rapid hammering motions of a hand plunging an ice pick-like object into the back of another person standing with his hands in his pockets. Perhaps he died as he was falling to the ground. The stabs were so powerful that the victim fell face forward, like the ground was preparing to embrace him with open arms. His hands were still in both of his pockets. No one rushed to his aid as he lay face down in the dirt. Instead,

¹³⁴ Marilyn Yarbrough and Crystal Bennett, 627-632.

¹³⁵ Mika'il DeVeaux, "The Trauma of the Incarceration Experience," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* (48): 257.

he was like a pebble that had fallen in a pond of people. The crowd backed away, like a hole in the middle of a circle growing larger and larger.¹³⁶

The physical violence and victimization experienced and observed by those in prison is all too common.

These memories, if not dealt with, continue to haunt men and women upon release from prison.

Further, a key term that can be used to describe this trauma for many is loss. With incarceration, people encounter multiple losses immediately—the loss of control, the loss of freedom, the loss of control in the care for children, the loss of heterosexual relationships, the loss of material possessions....and the loss of hope.¹³⁷ All of these losses have a direct impact on how one views the future. What does life look like without my ability to care for my child? What does life look like without being able to have physical contact with my spouse?

Returning citizens experience real trauma before and during their incarceration. Not dealing with this trauma during incarceration stifles the possibility for a hopeful life direction. Paying serious attention to the trauma that incarcerated people experience is not just about justice; it is about public safety. When trauma is not adequately dealt with, these unresolved emotions can easily manifest in seeking unproductive coping mechanisms or even returning to a previous criminal acts. With statistics that show at least 95% of incarcerated people return to the community, a concern for public safety and re-engagement in cycles of crime emerge.¹³⁸ Disrupting trauma during incarceration becomes just as important as meeting the social needs of returning citizens through employment and housing services post-release.

Grief, Mourning, and Transition

Within prison, transition is constant. Women are moved from facility to facility or released from prison. More permanent transitions like the death of loved ones take place while women are behind bars. Even when death happens to parents, there is no guarantee that the incarcerated women can be present at the

¹³⁶ Ibid, 265-266.

¹³⁷ Gresham M. Sykes, "The Pain of Imprisonment." In *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 63-78.

¹³⁸ Timothy Hughes, and Doris James Wilson. "Reentry Trends in the United States: Inmates Returning to the Community after Serving Time in Prison," (Washington D.C.: US Department of Justice, 2004), 2.

funeral. Executions may be scheduled or suicides attempted. Or even more commonly, women see peers get diagnosed with a severe sickness, and then die. Oftentimes, incarcerated persons in the dying process are treated with little to no dignity from correctional officers and staff.¹³⁹ Prisons do not hold funerals nor can women go to funerals to mourn the loss of loved ones. The lack of sufficient spaces to mourn contributes to a sense of hopelessness. This is further complicated by a stigma that strong Black women don't cry; those who do cry perceive themselves as weak or fear that others will perceive them as weak. In prison, the image of weakness is avoided at all costs for fear of being taken advantage of by other incarcerated women. Holding in this grief can exacerbate depression and other forms of mental illness rather than heal it.

One phenomenological study that sought to understand the impact of incarceration on grief and loss discovered that incarcerated women experience four dimensions of the lifeworld during their grieving process—temporality, spatiality, corporeality, and relationality.¹⁴⁰ Temporality demonstrates the inability to grieve until it feels real or they are no longer in shock. Spatiality refers to the lack of privacy that exists within prison, limiting the places available for women to feel safe and vulnerable enough to grieve. Corporeality represents the tendency for incarcerated women to bury their emotions rather than express them for fear of vulnerability or being treated as a suicide risk. This emotional blockage impedes the grieving process and can contribute to a sense of hopelessness or despair as women try to make sense of their loss. Relationality emphasizes that while women are not alone, they still feel lonely.¹⁴¹ This relational bankruptcy compounds a sense of isolation and creates an illusion that no one understands or is available to help. All four dimensions experienced during the grieving process threaten hope and bolster the need to understand what hope means and does for incarcerated women. The process of grieving for incarcerated women is heightened by lack of social support and feelings of powerlessness and guilt. This heightened

¹³⁹ Vernetta D., Young and Rebecca Reviere. *Women Behind Bars: Gender and Race in Us Prisons* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 139-152.

¹⁴⁰ Holly M. Harner, Patricia M. Hentz, and Maria Carmela Evangelista, "Grief Interrupted: The Experience of Loss among Incarcerated Women." *Qualitative Health Research* 21, no. 4 (2011): 454-64.

¹⁴¹ Holly M. Harner, Patricia M. Hentz, and Maria Carmela Evangelista, 458-461.

level of grief contributes to a tendency for incarcerated women to experience unresolved emotions that not only plague them during their incarceration but also upon their release from prison.

Social Crises of Hope on the Incarceration Continuum

While Black women have made major strides in many areas within the United States, they still face great disparities in the area of education, politics, employment, and health. Poor Black women face these disparities at a greater rate than middle-class and upper-class women. Being a raced, classed, and gendered body already feels like three strikes against you in an American society that still rewards submission and conformity to the status quo. For Black women on the incarceration continuum who cannot or choose not to conform, their experiences of social isolation lead to a social dislocation from institutions that is critical in providing social support. These experiences of social isolation, social dislocation, social stigma, and social marginalization can be mapped along a pathway to incarceration. This section explores the social barriers women face that can ultimately lead to a crisis of hope.

The Criminalization of Black Women: Fear, Social Violence and Stigmatization

When the government passes laws and policies that justify the disproportionate amount of Black bodies in lockdown, I am prompted to ask why. My response is fear. Fear sits at the root of the criminalization of Black women. We are a nation driven by fear. Fear guides our actions, interactions, and votes. Fear blinds us to the real, desensitizes us to the inhumane, and robs us of the capacity to be critical. What makes our fears so debilitating is that others profit from them.¹⁴²

The overexaggerated images and depictions of Black persons in the media feed these fears. I have described elsewhere how the oversensationalism of crime leads to a moral panic, which results in quick-fix reactive policies that harm rather than benefit those already marginalized.¹⁴³ The tougher laws on drug

¹⁴² Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things*. 1st ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), xi-xxvii.

¹⁴³ Sarah Farmer, "Criminality of Black Youth in Inner-City Schools: 'Moral Panic', Moral Imagination, and Moral Formation." *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 13, no. 3 (2010): 367-81.

crimes in the eighties, for instance, reflect a moral panic; the subsequent policies targeted low-income black communities, impacting both men and women already under pressure to survive and meet their basic needs. The same “war on drugs” and get tough on crime policies that sky rocketed the incarceration of Black men also yielded a significant increase in the incarceration rate of Black women. Some scholars even argue that the “war on drugs” was actually a “war on Black women.”¹⁴⁴ In particular, they provide evidence that demonstrates that Black women not previously involved in a crime-culture yet addicted to drugs bore the brunt of the punitive policies of the eighties.¹⁴⁵ Local politicians and lawmakers preferred confinement rather than aggressive policies and interventionist services to counteract drug addiction. Black women who seldom committed violent acts started being locked up for drug crimes, which had a direct impact upon the rate of women’s incarceration. As reported, women in prison increased in number by 646% between 1980 and 2010 exceeding the 419% rate of men during that time.¹⁴⁶

As noted in the introduction, the increase of female incarceration raises major concern. In the year 2000, Black women were incarcerated at a rate of six times that of white women.¹⁴⁷ During that time until now, the vast majority of women in prisons are incarcerated for drug offenses. Most recently, reports show a shift, where the rates of incarceration for African American women are declining while those for White and Latino women are steadily increasing.¹⁴⁸ Some speculate that the drug of choice for white and Latino women, methamphetamine, is at the heart of this change.¹⁴⁹ As stated in the introduction, even with the increase of white women incarceration, however, Black women still suffer from maltreatment and still represent a large majority of the population in women prisons.

In light of the fact that many women’s criminal involvement relates directly to a male partner, patriarchy and male dominance must be taken into account as a contributing factor to the crisis of hope. In

¹⁴⁴ Garry L. Rolison, Kristin A. Bates, and Mary Jo Poole, "Prisoners of War: Black Female Incarceration at the End of the 1980s," *Social Justice* 29, no. 1/2 (2002): 134.

¹⁴⁵ Garry L. Rolison, Kristin A. Bates, and Mary Jo Poole, 138-140.

¹⁴⁶ Marc Mauer, "The Changing Racial Dynamics of Women’s Incarceration," (Washington D.C.: Sentencing Project, 2013), 9.

¹⁴⁷ Marc Mauer, 10.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

research done with fifty Black women in a city jail, researchers discovered that the majority of the women left their homes at an early age due to domestic and sexual violence in the home. Unable to physically defend themselves, they ran away and were subsequently labeled as deviant or delinquent.¹⁵⁰ Instead of adequately addressing the victimization of women, society criminalizes the survival strategies of women and girls.¹⁵¹

Not only are black women criminalized in general, but the black female body itself is a contested site. The criminalization of the black female bodies stems from a long history of the bodies of Black women being managed, commodified, displayed, raped, and then discarded. Slavery stole the African understanding of the body as sacred; society objectified it and ascribed value to it based on its instrumentality. Embedded in media depictions is the seductive and hypersexualized Jezebel image that seems to justify the objectification of the Black female body accompanied by the sassy, tell-it-like-it-is, male emasculating Sapphire image that confirms that all Black women are loud and angry.¹⁵² Men, even Black men, have justified their treatment of Black women based on these stereotypes. Even more so, these images underlie the treatment of Black women evident in the criminal justice system. Captive to the stereotypes that media perpetuates about Black women, Black women's redefinition of our image is intricately connected to shattering the dichotomy that exists, whereby women have to either ignore their sexuality or be perpetually available.¹⁵³ The silencing of Black women's voice and overemphasis on Black women's bodies demonstrates a fracture of the Black women that need to be restored. Overall, the stigma produced by fear and enforced by policy leads to limited access to employment, housing, and other social services that are necessary for Black women on the incarceration continuum to survive.

¹⁵⁰ Regina A. Arnold, "Processes of Victimization and Criminalization of Black Women," *Social Justice* 17, no. 3 (41) (1990): 155.

¹⁵¹ Meda Chesney-Lind and Lisa Pasko, *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime*. 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2004.)

¹⁵² K. Sue Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of U.S. Social Policy*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-75.

¹⁵³ Gail Elizabeth Wyatt, *Stolen Women: Reclaiming Our Sexuality, Taking Back Our Lives* (New York: J. Wiley, 1997), 5-46.

Housing

Oftentimes, housing represents a challenge for Black women on the incarceration continuum before and after incarceration, mainly due to high rates of poverty. One report indicates that African American women, particularly those from disadvantaged neighborhoods, are evicted at higher rates than men. Some reasons are because of their low wages, but others center on gender.¹⁵⁴ In particular, Black women have more challenges with male landlords. One example cited by the report is the non-confrontational approach women might take to their landlord. For instance, if a woman falls behind on rent, she may be more non-confrontational and the landlord may feel taken advantage of and subsequently evicts the woman. Eviction has its own stigma and makes it difficult to secure safe and affordable housing, particularly for Black women from poor neighborhoods.

Many returning citizens expect to live with their family upon reentry; yet, families are not always prepared to receive them. When relatives or friends are unable to open their homes, returning citizens face other complications to housing, including discrimination and limited affordable housing and federal subsidy options.¹⁵⁵ Not only is obtaining housing important for women on the incarceration continuum, but where they live is important. Space and place matter for women on the incarceration continuum. Researchers emphasize the need to not only do different things but to be in a different place in order to maintain desistance from criminal involvement. For example, in *Criminal Careers in Transition: The Social Context of Desistance from Crime*, researchers explored the space, time, and activities of those who left crime behind. What they discovered is that the space one inhabits can become a key contributing factor in providing opportunities for criminal activities, which lead people to re-offend.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Matthew Desmond, *Poor Black Women Are Evicted at Alarming Rates, Setting Off a Chain of Hardship* (Chicago: MacArthur Foundations, 2014), 2.

¹⁵⁵ The Council of State Governments. "What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse." Justice Center, National Reentry Resource Center, http://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/focus_areas/housing.

¹⁵⁶ Stephen Farrall, Ben Hunter, and et al., *Criminal Careers in Transition: The Social Context of Desistance from Crime*, Clarendon Studies in Criminology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 159-163.

Unfortunately, many returning citizens have no choice but to return to that same community upon release. These communities are fraught with the “same old, same old.” This is of particular concern when recently released mothers receive children back into their homes yet are forced back to underserved or drug-infested neighborhoods, which helped facilitate their incarceration. When women are re-introduced into places and communities with a concentration of illegal activities, they may be more likely to re-engage in illegal acts. Not only are their lives at risk of offending, but the future life options of their children also face serious risks. They are released without any real attempt from society or the criminal justice system to re-route the pipeline to prison. For women to re-route the pipeline to prison is a “herculean task.”¹⁵⁷ The risks they face coupled with the risks their children face can be debilitating for mothers who actually do seek alternative possibilities for their life. In other words, feeling restrained to spaces and places that serve as constant reminders of a person’s offense can function as a mental trap and make it difficult to escape without physically moving elsewhere.¹⁵⁸ To be clear, physically moving elsewhere assumes women have options outside of where they currently live, which may not be the case. As women seek to survive from day to day, the mental prison from being physically confined to a particular neighborhood context may also hold hope captive.

Poverty and Unemployment

Poverty and unemployment are challenges Black women faced before prison; these same challenges are waiting for them when they return home. Black women, particularly low-income Black women, face barriers to employment. In a report by the National Partnership for Women and Families, data indicated that inadequate education, childcare, and transportation are the three most common hindrances to a women’s employment.¹⁵⁹ Even when women do obtain jobs, the need for progress can be seen in the persistent wage gap that exists, in which African American women are paid 64 cents for every dollar that

¹⁵⁷ Golden, *War on the Family*, 44.

¹⁵⁸ Stephen Farrall, Ben Hunter, and et al., 180-184.

¹⁵⁹ National Partnership for Women & Families, “America’s Women and the Wage Gap,” (Washington, DC: National Partnership for Women & Families., September 2014.)

White men make.¹⁶⁰ Some sources say that the wage gap is not due to inadequate education and training but discrimination, particularly when women have the same qualifications yet are still paid less.¹⁶¹

There is also an economic burden in motherhood. The Center for American Progress indicates that eight in ten guardians are women, and mothers who raise their children are twice as likely to be poor than fathers raising children. In other words, women are more likely to absorb the economic costs associated with raising children and pregnancy. To further complicate this dynamic between men and women, unexpected pregnancies may curtail educational and employment opportunities for women and not necessarily men.¹⁶² While women may be experiencing significant poverty, the burden rests on them to survive and be strong in spite of death-dealing poverty.

In *A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink*, Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress examine the financial insecurity that accompanies single motherhood.¹⁶³ This report indicates that more than 100 million of people in the US live on or over the brink of poverty; 70% of them are women and the children who depend on them.¹⁶⁴ In other words, one in three women are living in poverty or on the brink of poverty. These statistics on poverty, employment, and single motherhood demonstrate that real social factors exist that threaten woman's hope and may place them on a pipeline to prison.

To be clear, "Black" is often a code word for single mother. I draw attention to popular media sources as a way to shift the gaze to how the "blame-game" operates within the rhetoric of media even in contemporary society, placing single mothers at fault for the burden of raising their children alone. The blame game is reflected in Pulitzer-prize winning journalist George Will's comment on ABC. In an interview with George Stephanopoulos about the bankruptcy in Detroit, George Will blames single mothers

¹⁶⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement: Table PINC-05: work Experience in 2013-People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2013, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex*. Retrieved 7 July 2015, from http://www.census.gov/hhes/www.cpstables/032014/perinc/pinc05_000.htm

¹⁶¹ Alexandra Cawthorne, "The Straight Facts on Women in Poverty," (Washington D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2008), 2.

¹⁶² Alexandra Cawthorne, 2.

¹⁶³ Maria Shriver, "Powerful and Powerless," In *Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink*, edited by Olivia Morgan and Karen Skelton (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2014.) Kindle location 305-311.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, Kindle location 305-311.

as a cultural problem that feeds into the economic crisis in Detroit. He says, “You can’t solve their problems because their problems are cultural... You have three percent of fourth graders reading at the national math standards. 47% of Detroit residents are functionally illiterate. 79% of Detroit children are born to unmarried mothers. They don’t have a fiscal problem, Steve, they have a cultural collapse.”¹⁶⁵ I discuss the specific challenges with motherhood along the incarceration continuum later in this chapter, but I want to underscore how easily single mothers not only are trapped by poverty and unemployment while raising kids, they are also blamed for their situation.

A recent documentary from Moguldom Studios, “72%,” explores what they call the “baby mama epidemic” in the African American community.¹⁶⁶ In the documentary, they report startling statistics that approximately 72% of black children are born out of wedlock, many of whom are being raised by single mothers. The documentary draws attention to the multiple factors to consider concerning single mothers raising children, including the impact of colonization and slavery on the Black family unit as well as poverty and unemployment. Often, the gaze is shifted at Black women as “baby mamas” rather than Black women being honored for raising children in adverse circumstances. Further, when such statements are made, little attention is given to the social factors that underlie the epidemic.

Pathway to crime theorists identify the feminization of poverty as an entry to crime, whereby impoverished women with access to few social services commit crimes such as fraud, counterfeiting, forgery, and embezzlement of funds.¹⁶⁷ Black and Latino women, for example, are twice as likely as White

¹⁶⁵ “George Will on ABC: ‘Cultural collapse,’ ‘unWed Mothers,’ ‘voting for incompetents’ Bankrupted Detroit,” July 28, 2013, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/will-battles-abc-panel-cultural-collapse-unwed-mothers-voting-for-incompetents-bankrupted-detroit/>.

¹⁶⁶ They release films called “docutainment,” which are hybrids of reality and traditional storytelling from the urban experience. As a film meant to spark debate, it pushes against the stigma of black single mothers as welfare queens, which is a popular image in media. In particular, it pushes back against these stereotypes that have been publically articulated by Don Lemon, Rush Limbaugh, and Bill Cosby. Moguldom Studios Groups, “Moguldom Studios Releases Compelling Documentary.” Moguldom Media, <http://moguldomstudios.com/post-type-press-archive/moguldom-studios-releases-compelling-documentary-72>. Also, look at Melissa Harris-Perry, *Changing the Way We See Single Moms*. January 12, 2014. Posted May 10, 2016. <http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/watch/changing-the-way-we-see-single-moms-114731587919>.

¹⁶⁷ Joanne Belknap, *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice*, The Wadsworth Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice Series. 2nd ed. (Australia ; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001.)

women to be living in poverty.¹⁶⁸ These statistics on the impact of poverty on Black women in general mirror the statistics on Black women prior to incarceration and along the continuum. Returning women citizens struggle to find jobs that provide a living wage for them and sometimes their children. Further, statistics show that two out of five women in jail or prison failed to obtain their high school diploma or GED.¹⁶⁹ Women who remain in poverty once released are more likely to be recruited into a cycle of criminal involvement due to economic deprivation.

What makes poverty and inadequate employment opportunities worse for women who have been released is the stigma that accompanies them on every job interview. Research shows that stigma can actually impact who does or does not get hired. When people are not perceived as trustworthy or possessing people skills, which are commonly held perceptions of formerly incarcerated people, limitations exist among their job hiring opportunities as well as the types of jobs companies offer.¹⁷⁰

Manifestations of Social Death

The pipeline to prison looks different for women than men. For men, the process often involves violent offenses or involvement in the sale of drugs. For women, the process often hinges on a women's ability, despite race and class, to obtain adequate care and professional support in order to cope with the complex trauma they have faced in their lives. If women do not receive this care, they are more likely to view life as hopeless and forge coping mechanisms that sometimes prove harmful. In this sense, women tend to internalize their stress by engaging in behaviors that harm themselves. Research demonstrates that for Black women structural dislocation is the result of a variety of other marginalities but also a key indicator of criminal involvement.¹⁷¹ Rather than providing Black women on the incarceration continuum access to social services that can enable them to live a hopeful future, there is little support for women during the

¹⁶⁸ Cawthorne, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Caroline W. Harlow, "Education and Correctional Populations." Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003.

¹⁷⁰ Rachelle Giguere and Lauren Dundes, "Help Wanted: A Survey of Employer Concerns About Hiring Ex-Convicts." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 13, no. 4 (December 2002): 396-408.

¹⁷¹ Regina A. Arnold, 160-163.

many transitions they experience in life. In many ways, the system of entrapment in cycles of poverty makes women's prisons "the social program of last resort."¹⁷²

When police officers arrest women, they don't stop being human. They still feel love, pain, and joy. They are still mothers, sisters, and wives. Their criminal act cannot take away their soul. Nevertheless, their entry into incarceration does often subject them to social death. According to Orlando Patterson in *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, the social death that emerged from slavery refers to "the permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons."¹⁷³ Through practices of alienation and exclusion from society, incarcerated populations are subjugated to a process of becoming dead to society. Incarcerated women even go through a ritual-like process of dying socially, whereby it becomes almost impossible to reintegrate back into society once they are released.¹⁷⁴ From the arrest to the humiliation in the court to the assigning of a number, women lose themselves behind their prison garb. Serving as an underground caste system, the color of their prison garb actually identifies them as new intakes versus inmates who have been there for a while. Many no longer see them as human, but as their GDC number, which is more effective in identifying them than their name. Insubordinate women have a greater chance of experiencing punishment from the guards, some of which come in the form of degrading language, threats, and even violence. The correctional officer's response seeks to reinforce clear boundaries about who holds power and who does not hold power.

While social death is not physical, its impact has both psychological and physiological manifestations. Psychological characteristics include the rejection that women feel from society, even after serving time. Furthermore, their death is institutionalized by the policies that make it nearly impossible to obtain adequate services. Hope provides a critical resource to overcome social death; yet, social death can also be a leading cause of hopelessness and despair. In the face of social death, the crisis of establishing a

¹⁷² George J. Church, Scott Brown, and et al. "The View from Behind Bars the Number of Women Inmates Tripled in the Past Decade. Most Are Mothers. They Face a System Designed and Run by Men for Men." *Time* (1990): 20.

¹⁷³ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13.

¹⁷⁴ Shadd Maruna, "Reentry as a Rite of Passage," *Punishment & Society* 13, no. 1 (January 2011): 11-12.

social identity that is both valued and nurtured in the larger society can be a major hurdle to experiencing hope.

Maternal Incarceration and the Crisis of Hope on the Incarceration Continuum

Maternal incarceration emerges as a category both within and distinct from the social and emotional crises incarcerated women experience. Approximately 70% of women in prison are mothers.¹⁷⁵ Maternal incarceration refers to women who are mothers, particularly those who were the primary caregiver of their children when incarcerated. It could also refer to women who enter the criminal justice system pregnant and give birth to their children while incarcerated. Maternal incarceration affects the lives of children and their caregivers, who are often left to sort out the broken pieces. Maternal hope during incarceration is placed in crisis when faced with maternal separation, black maternal stigma, maternal shame and guilt, and maternal reintegration.

Maternal Separation

Maternal separation has profound negative impacts on the children, some of which may last longer for the child than for the incarcerated mother. Many liken the separation of a child during incarceration to that of death or divorce.¹⁷⁶ Statistics show that over 64% of incarcerated mothers report that they lived with their children a month prior to incarceration, which means the child will have to find another home, either with a relative or in the foster care system.¹⁷⁷ While studies show that maintaining a parental connection is critical for children of incarcerated parents, visitation and phone calls can become too costly and serve as

¹⁷⁵ Julie Poehlmann, "New Study Shows Children of Incarcerated Mothers Experience Multiple Challenges," *Family Matters: A Family Impact Seminar Newsletter for Wisconsin Policymakers* 3, no. 2 (2003): 1.

¹⁷⁶ Alison Cunningham and Linda Baker, "Waiting for Mommy: Giving a Voice to the Hidden Victims of Imprisonment," (London ON: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, 2003), 10.

¹⁷⁷ The Sentencing Project, "Incarcerated Women," (Washington D.C.: The Sentencing Project, 2012), 3.

an impediment to maintaining these familial bonds.¹⁷⁸ Maternal incarceration is proven to have a greater negative impact on children than paternal incarceration.¹⁷⁹

Some may even liken maternal separation to natal alienation. In his analysis of social death, Patterson introduces the term “natal alienation,” which he refers to as a sense of powerlessness that denies slaves their birth right and claims to any legitimate social order; the slave’s alienation placed automatic limits on their children’s participation in society as well.¹⁸⁰ In other words, natal alienation emphasizes the restraints that the children of slaves faced because of their parent’s confinement. Similar to the natal alienation experienced by slaves, the children of incarcerated women experience a form of natal alienation. The natal alienation experienced by the children of women on the incarceration continuum points to the failure of the system to provide the necessary social supports to sustain and support the parental bond during incarceration, particularly for children who have little to no familial or financial support.¹⁸¹ Natal alienation breaks the power of mothers to care for their children and subsequently children to bond with their mothers. This failed support, oftentimes, confine the future trajectory of the children of women on the incarceration continuum, making it easy for them to fall victim to a pipeline to prison. In other words, because of this and many other stresses imposed on the children of incarcerated mothers, natal alienation reinforces a cycle of incarceration.

Black Maternal Stigma

Not only are Black women left to face the structural and emotional challenges of maternal incarceration, they must also face the black maternal stigma that stems from the historical representation of Black mothers during slavery until now. The Mammy character that has historically been depicted in media is a desexualized, loyal to her master, heavy-set, unattractive, and oftentimes overly sacrificial Black

¹⁷⁸Stacey M. Bouchet, "Children and Families with Incarcerated Parents: Exploring Development in the Field for Opportunities for Growth" (Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008), 5.

¹⁷⁹ Alison Cunningham and Linda Baker, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Orlando Patterson, 6-8.

¹⁸¹ I make this argument with the understanding that special cases may require maternal separation for the safety of the children. In this instance, I support the well-being of the child. Orlando Patterson, 6-8.

woman.¹⁸² She knows her place in society and yields to it. The Mammy image intersects with Black maternity in two distinct ways. First, as Sybil DelGuardia points out, Mammy signifies “surrogate maternalism” that is asexual, domesticated, and in service of raising white children.¹⁸³ She is the aunt that comes to the rescue whom everyone loves.¹⁸⁴ More recently, Mammy also signifies the Black matriarch. The Black matriarch, on the other hand, signifies the strong Black mother who raises her children absent from the support of the father.¹⁸⁵ Other depictions of the Black matriarch recognize her as the failed Mammy; instead, she is symbolic of the black mother who is absent from the home, emasculates Black men, and is overly aggressive.¹⁸⁶ In *Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Patricia Hill Collins articulates the quandary of Black maternal stigma, which happens to be perpetuated by Black males. In one sense, Black mothers are glorified in media and throughout Black literature for their resiliency, strength, and sacrificial nature. At the same time, in order to maintain that respectable image, Black mothers must continue to sacrifice at the expense of themselves.¹⁸⁷ Mothers who do not sacrifice according to the strong Black female image are perceived as “selfish” or worse yet “bad mothers.” As indicated earlier in my discussion on Black single motherhood, these demoralizing socially-constructed images contribute to Black maternal stigma; its controlling power travels through the mind of Black incarcerated mothers to confirm and solidify the guilt and shame they already feel for being incarcerated. Furthermore, the controlling image captivates the imagination of society; Black maternal incarceration reinscribes the old myths around Black motherhood.

Additionally, Black women are constantly measured against the social narrative that identifies “good mothers” as married, educated, and middle-class. This idealized notion for Black mothers who also

¹⁸² Nargis Fontaine, “From Mammy to Madea, an Examination of the Behaviors of Tyler Perry's Madea Character in Relation to the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire Stereotypes” (African-American Studies Georgia State University, Atlanta, 2011).

¹⁸³ Sybil DelGaudio, “The Mammy in Hollywood Film I'd Walk a Million Miles - for One of Her Smiles.” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 28 (1983): 23.

¹⁸⁴ K. Sue Jewell, 95.

¹⁸⁵ Sybil DelGaudio, 23.

¹⁸⁶ K. Sue Jewell, 95.

¹⁸⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, 174.

face multiple forms of marginality endemic to poverty create an internal crisis that can impact how one views oneself.¹⁸⁸ Instead of the idealized image, poor Black mothers are depicted as welfare queens or women who take advantage of the system rather than work to earn money. The myth of the welfare queen depicts Black women as lazy, non-aggressive, and demoralizing to their children. This myth has also functioned as justification to keep the womb on lockdown. Society's way of putting it is: "if you're not careful, she'll keep having babies to collect food stamps and social benefits." The visibility of poor Black women ultimately becomes representative of what's wrong with America, justifies harsher policies, and shifts the focus away from the structural explanations that support discrimination and produce the poverty and powerlessness that Black women experience.¹⁸⁹ Their inability to fit into the social norms of motherhood creates perceptions that Black mothers are inadequate; furthermore, the reality that poor, marginalized mothers are more likely to engage in criminal behavior places their maternal rights under constant surveillance.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps the term "throwaway moms" more accurately describes how incarcerated mothers are treated as disposable in society.¹⁹¹ Collins argues that these images serve a distinct purpose—to subordinate Black women and to mask the social relations that affect all women.¹⁹² Understanding the role of narrative, both self-constructed and socially-constructed, is critical to understandings of hope. When women compare themselves against unrealistic narratives that demean rather than empower them, they grasp for hope against insurmountable odds. On the other hand, if women construct narratives about themselves that supersede these images, these narratives can function as a coping tool that enables them to resolve their crisis of hope.

¹⁸⁸ Kathleen J. Ferraro, and Angela M. Moe, "Mothering, Crime and Incarceration." *The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32, no. 1 (2003): 14.

¹⁸⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, Perspectives on Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 36-37.

¹⁹⁰ Suzanne Allen, Chris Flaherty, and Gretchen Ely, "Throwaway Moms: Maternal Incarceration and the Criminalization of Female Poverty," *Journal of Women and Social Work* 25, no. 2 (2012): 162.

¹⁹¹ Suzanne Allen, Chris Flaherty, and Gretchen Ely, 162.

¹⁹² Collins, 72.

Maternal Shame and Guilt

The stigma associated with this imaging is nothing compared to the internal trauma women experience when they have no control over the issues that directly affect their children. The negative impact of maternal incarceration and separation on their children creates maternal shame and guilt. Often referred to as “hidden victims,” some identify the children of incarcerated parents as the most vulnerable children.¹⁹³ Shame and stigma around the parents’ incarceration makes maternal incarceration distinct from other parental losses.¹⁹⁴ In fact, trauma is often recycled, where children have trouble with attachments to others and may experience depression and anxiety. Movement to numerous foster homes can exacerbate this trauma-related stress.¹⁹⁵ Children may also begin to act out in school or at home because they do not know how to cope with economic and social challenges as well as the stigma related to their parent’s incarceration. The pain experienced by their children because of their mistakes places shame and guilt as constant threats to hope. On the other hand, motherhood also provides a vehicle to new perceptions of the self. Incarcerated mothers, some of whose crimes are motivated to provide for or in defense of their children, wear the status of mother instead of criminal to redefine their perception of self.¹⁹⁶ Women who find a purpose and identity in being mothers counter social death and can ultimately find hope during their time in prison.

Furthermore, complications around who cares for their children while they are in prison contribute to emotional stress and maternal shame during their incarceration. Mothers no longer have control of the decisions that the caregiver makes for their children. Studies also show that caregivers of the children of incarcerated parents may not always have sufficient income to meet basic needs, which explains why these children are at greater risk of poverty.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Alison Cunningham and Linda Baker, "Invisible Victims: The Children of Women in Prison" (London ON: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, 2004), 1.

¹⁹⁴ Julie Smyth, "Dual Punishment: Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children." *Columbia Social Work Review* 3 (2012): 36-37.

¹⁹⁵ Julie Smyth, 35-38.

¹⁹⁶ Moe, Angela M., and Kathleen J. Ferraro. "Criminalized Mothers: The Value and Devaluation of Parenthood from Behind Bars." *Sociology Faculty Publications*. Paper 7 (2006): 5-10.

¹⁹⁷ Jessica Meyerson, Christa Otteson, and Krysten Lynn Ryba, "Childhood Disrupted: Understanding the Features and Effects of Maternal Incarceration" (St. Paul, MN: Wilder Research, 2010), 25.

Maternal Reintegration

Maternal reintegration can be just as hard as maternal separation. Not only are mothers usually more economically and socially disadvantaged than fathers, but they face more parenting challenges when they return home.¹⁹⁸ Women experience fears associated with creating a safe and secure environment for their children. It is not a given that mothers can always welcome their children home. Mothers may not always have a stable home to return to; furthermore, children may remain in limbo until parents reach the milestones necessary to provide a stable environment conducive to raising children.¹⁹⁹ In particular, women who have struggled with substance abuse must have additional support to assist with their sobriety, particularly if they are returning to the same communities in which they lived prior to their incarceration.

Finding Hope Along the Continuum

Incarceration adds challenges to an already challenged family system. One of the clearest ways of describing the way maternal incarceration works on the continuum can be found in a report completed called "Invisible Victims: The Children of Women in Prison."²⁰⁰ Table 1 (located in the Appendix), which is reproduced from this research, identifies what often takes place before maternal incarceration, during maternal incarceration, and after maternal incarceration. Prior to incarceration, those mothers most susceptible to incarceration are faced with low education attainment, financial pressures, substance abuse, little involvement with the biological father, a history of abuse. Once women are incarcerated, they face multiple losses—loss of job, house, relationships, and custody. Incarceration, on the other hand, has possibilities of exposing women to beneficial programming but can also immerse women into an antisocial environment that encourages negative activities. Lastly, reintegration has challenges of its own, including re-gaining access to those things that were lost during incarceration such as a job, custody rights, social

¹⁹⁸ Stacey M. Bouchet, 17.

¹⁹⁹ Jessica Meyerson, Christa Otteson, and Krysten Lynn Ryba, 25.

²⁰⁰ Alison Cunningham and Linda Baker, 15.

support networks, and housing. With the “criminal” label, however, regaining access becomes quite challenging. Feelings of hopelessness and despair reflect the devastating impact of maternal incarceration. Searching for hope along this continuum is significant if women are to rebuild their lives and help break the generational cycle of incarceration that sometimes comes as a result of maternal incarceration.

Faith and Spirituality and the Crisis of Hope on the Incarceration Continuum

The questions that make hope strikingly difficult to experience are questions that dig beyond the exterior into the interior being of a person. These questions challenge one’s very existence. The belief in a transcendent being or the ability to see in a transcendental way sits at the core of hope. The co-morbidity of physical, emotional, social, and maternal trauma throws fuel on the fire so that faith now joins the other traumas. It is not just the questions that women ask that complicate a crisis of hope but also the moral stigma and trauma that threatens to make Black women on the incarceration continuum suffer through an existential trauma of demoralization.

An Existential Crisis of Meaning in Suffering on the Incarceration Continuum

The experience of suffering and its existential questions place survival and the quality of life at the forefront of being.²⁰¹ Questions of theodicy center on the relationship of how one makes sense of evil in the world in the presence of an Omnipotent All-knowing God.²⁰² Not making sense of these very questions are perhaps what set many women on their pathway towards incarceration. The physical, social, psychological, and maternal challenges press against the soul causing big questions around one’s faith and spirituality to emerge. The first one held captive to these questions is God. The words resemble those of Jesus on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Other questions like “why me?” or “what is the purpose of this?” place hope on trial. Some may think God does not see them or that they

²⁰¹ Delores Williams, 20.

²⁰² Kaia Stern, 63.

deserve to suffer. Others may be so familiar with abandonment and rejection in their interpersonal relationships that the co-morbidity of trauma simply serves as a reminder of their unworthiness before God. The second one held captive with the existential questions of life is the self. More than likely, the self gets hit the hardest. Internalized labels that have been ascribed to a women's character coupled with their own feelings of guilt and shame about their past mistakes leave women in a pit of despair. In my own observations, it seems that to receive God's forgiveness is equally hard as forgiving the self. When women are already faced with the image of an unaccepting or unforgiving God and this image is simultaneously reinforced by those within the faith community, it is much easier to internalize the shame and guilt rather than overcome it and forgive the self.

Demoralizing Labels: Sin, Evil, and Punishment

Incarcerated women often experience isolation from their children, family, spouses, and God. To further complicate an existential trauma of meaning and purpose, there is no institution that highlights the fact that criminals deserve punishment more than the Church. As mentioned in the introduction, those who transgress social mores are considered guilty until proven innocent. I would even go as far to say that the church often fails to acknowledge that we are all criminals, that is, sinful beings. Beyond that, the stigma associated with being a criminal continues to condemn women to an inferior moral status, from which they have to work their way up the ladder of respectability and virtue in the eyes of others. This works-based moral ladder can also be internal, whereby women condemn themselves to moral death and never experience freedom from guilt and shame. Perhaps this is what T. Richard Snyder means by "ontological superiority," that is when some are seen as non-persons and in need of grace while others are seen as having obtained grace, perhaps even as bearers of grace.²⁰³

Further, historically, theologies have relegated women to a particular status. Women remained in the role of "helpmates" or "mothers." Their productivity, in this sense, was always in relationship to a man.

²⁰³ Richard T. Snyder, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 43.

While the conversation has shifted over the years, it is important to note that the practices within the church, especially the Black Church, have not necessarily shifted. These theologies become dangerous when they support women wearing a humanity that is devalued or restricted based on the church's role.

A crisis of hope, however, does not always cause people to run from God; some people run to God. Research suggests that religion may offer coping strategies that sustain rather than destroy hope, which will be explored in Chapter 4.²⁰⁴ Theologies of hope can counter restrictive theologies by opening the path for women to be who they are outside of the traditional role relegated to them by society. Further, theologies of hope value women for their humanity rather than simply their productivity.

Theologies that restore hope then are needed to serve as a bridge between those who have been thrown away or thrown into exile. These theologies revive the gospel message of love and grace to see all people as valued beings. They are durable enough to hold people during their questioning stage. Further, theologies of hope remind the church of its role to act in the world in a way that brings justice to those experiencing these multiple and co-occurring challenges. It calls the church to present a message that is comprehensive and broad enough to wrestle with the many dimensions of life that place hope in crisis.

Conclusion

Challenges manifest in all forms for Black women on the incarceration continuum, ultimately creating a crisis of hope for women who are trying to survive. While these challenges do not provide an excuse for women to be hopeless, they do provide a context to understand that complex trauma can make sustaining hope difficult. The challenges that women on the incarceration continuum face are often urgent and require immediate care. In other words, how can I have hope for an intangible future when my finger is hanging off and bleeding right in front of my face? While this is a somewhat dramatic analogy, many women on the incarceration continuum do have parts of their selves hanging off. They bleed because of wounds caused by traumatic events they have faced, both emotionally and physically. These events often

²⁰⁴ Shadd Maruna, Louise Wilson, and Kathryn Curran, "Why God Is Often Found Behind Bars: Prison Conversions and the Crisis of Self-Narrative." *Journal of Research in Human Development* 3, no. 2 & 3 (2006): 161-84.

take place before, during, and after incarceration. Without tending to these wounds, it is difficult for women to be and become healthy individuals in all facets of their life. I assume that when one feels cared for or taken care of in multiple areas of their life, they are more likely to experience and sustain hope even when in crisis. Not having these needs met can create a context where women feel emotional stress that makes it difficult to find motivation or enact agency.

As evidenced throughout my portrayal of all the crises, it is clear why Black women on the incarceration continuum fight to maintain hope. Nevertheless, while taking seriously all the challenges that sit along this continuum, this research is interested in how, despite all of the challenges they face, women are able to still hope. In chapter 2, I explore hope theories related to psychology, theology, and pedagogy that help me recover the language of hope. The diverse literature helps provide a robust understanding of restorative hope, which takes seriously the language of agency, transcendence, and creativity that is essential to building new identities and transformations of the self and others.

CHAPTER 2 EXPLORING THEOLOGIES, PSYCHOLOGIES, PEDAGOGIES, AND PRACTICES OF HOPE

Introduction

The essence of hope grounds human existence. Theologians, psychologists, and pedagogues alike recognize the vast psychological and developmental need for hope. They understand that humans cannot survive without hope; hope is a basic ingredient of living. Much has been written by theologians and clinical and pastoral psychologists, and pedagogues who seek to understand what hope means for people faced with seemingly insurmountable odds. Their musings dig into the depth of humanity to excavate the essence and resilience of the human spirit. They examine hope's source, its goal, and its function.

This chapter explores hope discourse in the literature of theology, psychology, and pedagogy. Part 1 examines voices that emerge from the “theology of hope” movement, popularized by Jürgen Moltmann, as well as Black theologians, womanist theologians, and Latin American theologians. Their explorations provide a useful point of departure as I engage the voices of formerly incarcerated women, whose stories add new insights and meanings to discourses of hope. Part 2 highlights clinical and pastoral psychologists who focus on hope as primarily a transformation of the self. In particular, I explore scholarship that views hope as a cognitive process, an imaginative process, and a psychosocial process. Further, I draw on pastoral psychologists to illumine theologically the threats to hope while also exploring ways to respond to these threats. Part 3 explores pedagogy from three different lenses—religious education, critical pedagogy, and prison pedagogy. Religious education highlights a hope rooted in narrative, particularly the narrative of the Black experience, in order to build identity and move toward social justice. Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, places a critical awareness on exposing the structure of society and moving toward social change. Prison pedagogies explore how scholars have approached prison education, both its promises and challenges.

Overall, all of the hope-talk discourse engaged in this literature review provides sources of reflection and helps frame major aspects of my project. The themes that emerge in existing hope literature

give voice to some of the overarching concerns that emerge when one seeks to define what hope is and how hope functions in the existential reality of a person who has or is experiencing various forms of restraint. Examining previous hope literature sheds light on critical concerns raised by women on the incarceration continuum.

Part 1: Theology and the Intersection of Hope

Theologies of hope examine the role of God in human suffering as well as the role of people in overcoming suffering. Hope theologians of the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, critiqued fatalistic notions of hope that sought to withdraw from the world and wait for a future beyond time. Theologians in the hope movement as well as in liberationist movements illuminated the social and political realities that give rise to hope. This section explores eschatological hope, a politics of hope, nonviolent revolutionary hope, womanist notions of embodied hope, and hope as historical praxis.

Eschatological Hope and a Theology of the Future

In the historical paradox of beliefs in humanity's limitless possibility, on the one hand, and radical threats to the future of humanity on the other, the theology of hope movement was born. The movement, popularized by German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, emerged during a time when the horrors of Auschwitz seemed to silence questions about God and even led some theologians to claim that God is dead. In the age of nuclear weapons and ecological crisis, Moltmann's critique of apocalyptic believers who withdrew from society. With new developments in medicine, technology, and outer space, Moltmann's grasping for a God who invited humanity into the fulfillment of future promise seemed appealing.²⁰⁵

In the 1960's Moltmann's eschatological hope challenged traditional theologies that sought to locate the fulfillment of God's promises in a time beyond history. This "transcendental eschatology," as he

²⁰⁵ Walter Capps, "Mapping the Hope Movement," *The Future of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 27-31.

described it, viewed God as beyond history.²⁰⁶ One had to endure life as it is and wait on God to rescue him or her from the current reality. In the place of this eschatology, Moltmann sought to establish a theology that saw God as in the future while at the same time being grounded in history.

Moltmann, who himself experienced trauma, shame, and confinement during the Second World War, wrestled with the question of hope and emerged with the understanding of a God whose resurrection signifies protest against injustice.²⁰⁷ In later writings, Moltmann describes his own experience of his imprisonment where God inserts God's self in his suffering. In *Experiences of God*, for example, Moltmann reveals that his understanding of hope was birthed during his time as a prisoner of war. He writes:

The experience of not sinking into the abyss but of being held up from afar was the beginning of a clear hope, without which it is impossible to live at all. At the same time, even this hope cut two ways; on the one hand it provided the strength to get up again after every inward or outward defeat; on the other hand it made the soul rub itself raw on the barbed wire, making it impossible to settle down in captivity or come to terms with it.

God in the dark night of the soul—God as the power of hope and pain: this was the experience which moulded me... Because I believe that I owe my survival to these experiences, I cannot even say that I found God there. But I do know in my heart that it is there that he found me, and that I would otherwise have been lost.²⁰⁸

While this hope is based on a promise in the future, it is also based on his understanding of “God with him.” His hope theology is directly connected to and informed by God becoming real in his own experience of suffering and thus awakening Moltmann's resistance against oppression and movement toward life. God's insertion into his suffering is a historical reality that provides a conversion experience in his consciousness. Identifying God's promises moves him to embrace survival practices rather than resigning himself to hopelessness and death.

Moltmann's experience and theology suggest that sometimes pits of despair provide an entryway to reflection, where seeds of hope can be planted in one's consciousness. Oftentimes, interventions from

²⁰⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 8.

²⁰⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 28-32.

²⁰⁸ Moltmann, 8-9.

others or God mediate these experiences as evidenced in Moltmann's case. For women on the incarceration continuum caught in prisons of despair, given the right circumstances, the possibility for hope still exists.

Theologians John B. Cobb, Carl E. Braaten, Emil Fackenheim, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Philip Hefner, Walter Capps, and Johannes B. Metz also enriched the conversation and provided unique perspectives to the theology of hope movement. Noteworthy among them is Carl E. Braaten because of his phenomenological approach to understanding hope. Braaten sought to illustrate the relevance of hope in human existence. In line with Moltmann's eschatological hope, Braaten locates hope in the realization of a meaningful future that is free from the darkness of the past and the suffering of the present. Braaten's approach underscores the significance of a meaningful existence, where hope equals humanization. Freedom requires either transcending the present situation or changing it. If one does not have that freedom, that is the freedom to respond in the present in hopes of a new future, then one cannot experience freedom. In other words, hope is ultimately about the promise that the current reality will change. For those on the incarceration continuum, particularly those with life in prison or who may die in prison, freedom is complicated. The definition of freedom must be expanded to integrate multiple forms of agency within its purview and that we conceive freedom in concrete social terms. *Black Theologians of Hope* give us resources to do so.

A Politics of Hope: Black Liberation Theologies of Hope

Hope-talk for Black theology requires freedom-talk, particularly talk about the freedom of people of color.²⁰⁹ The questions of Black theology, which grounds itself in the pursuit of freedom, must take into account that humans live in a world filled with social oppression. This oppression beats against one's humanity and limits human creativity, which is the bedrock of hope. This section explores how Black theology understands its task to unveil hope in the midst of dehumanization.

²⁰⁹ Please note that women on the incarceration continuum, even Black women, may talk about freedom while never mentioning race. Their status as "criminal" seems to be the domineering label they function within or attempt to escape from. This is a really interesting phenomenon to study with women of color who are incarcerated.

A Hope that Identifies with the Oppressed

James H. Cone critiqued American theology because of its failure to step into the concrete situation of the oppressed. Theology failed to use the reality of human suffering as the starting point for thinking about God and human creation. In *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone makes explicit connections between freedom and human existence. He writes:

To be human is to be free, and to be free is to be human. The liberated, the free, are the ones who define the meaning of their being in terms of the oppressed of the land by participating in their liberation, fighting against everything that opposes integral humanity.... *Freedom is the opposite of oppression, but only the oppressed are truly free.*²¹⁰

Cone's insistence that all people identify with Blacks, albeit troublesome for some, expresses more than a statement about liberation for the oppressed; it claims liberation for all. Only those who can identify with the oppressed and make the cause of the oppressed their own can truly be free. In the words of Cone, "No one is free until all are free."²¹¹ This idea resonates with Moltmann's claim that the "key to the rebirth of our hope is to be found in Auschwitz."²¹² Moltmann locates hope in the capacity to destroy the silence that permitted death camps and refused to rescue the Jews from captivity. Both Cone and Moltmann recognize that human beings are tied to one another, and we cannot experience personal freedom if we are unwilling to fight for collective freedom. Taking up the cause of incarcerated women requires this type of identification that is able to empathize and fight alongside women on the incarceration continuum who continue to be oppressed not only by physical chains but also mental, social, and spiritual ones. All these chains that come from within and without need to be broken.

Black theology uplifts the importance of a God capable of intervening in present despair to remind one that one is not alone in his or her suffering, and that a future with hope may in fact be realized. Far from an abstract hope, the hope of slaves and Black people emerged from Jesus' interference in the concrete reality of oppression. To borrow from Cone, "Their hope sprang from the actual presence of Jesus, breaking

²¹⁰ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 87.

²¹¹ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 88.

²¹² Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 22.

into their broken existence and bestowing upon them a foretaste of God's promised future."²¹³ A vision of the future provided a new self-understanding for Blacks that enabled them to persevere.

History is central to the insights Black theology offers Christian hope. Jesus is both with the marginalized in the present and waiting in the future to ensure fulfillment of all promises. "To speak of history eschatologically is to speak of God's promise of God's word of liberation, disclosed in God's future, breaking into our present and overthrowing the powers of evil that hold people in captivity."²¹⁴ Cone sees Christ, in many ways, as the eschatological hope that stands in opposition to present injustice. Similar to Moltmann, Cone conceives Black theology as concerned with the present.

*We know what the end is when we face it head-on by refusing, at the risk of death, to tolerate present injustice. The eschatological perspective must be grounded in the historical present, thereby forcing the oppressed community to say no to unjust treatment, because its present humiliation is inconsistent with its promised future.*²¹⁵

According to Cone, the concept of the Black Christ nourishes the impulse for defiance arising from the Black community. Hope can be located in Christ's identification as the Suffering Servant who is at the same time the Liberator, all symbolized through his death on the cross and resurrection. The marginalized can find hope in the face of death because they know that God has already conquered death. This knowledge emboldens the fight for justice. In the words of Cone, "Our journey in the world cannot be a meaningless thrust toward an unrealizable future, but a certainty grounded in the past and present reality of God. To grasp for the future of God is to know that those who die for freedom have not died in vain; they will see the kingdom of God."²¹⁶

Like Black theology, I would venture to say hope-talk raises questions about freedom, at least for some of the women on the incarceration continuum. The same question Cone raises for Blackness, I raise for incarceration. What is the relationship between the past, present, and future in the context of incarceration?²¹⁷ How do incarcerated women make sense of their future in the context of their past (in

²¹³ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 117.

²¹⁴ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 128.

²¹⁵ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 137.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 141.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 137.

which a crime was committed) and their present (in which they are incarcerated)? Can Christ also be found in Black incarcerated women who experience hopelessness and social death as part of their reality? This research opens the door for me to examine these questions. Cone provides resources to perceive Jesus' location in history as both with us and beyond us; this dual positioning of Jesus proves useful in thinking about hope in the context of incarceration. Major J. Jones develops these resources by highlighting the underlying motivations of violent revolution as a manifestation of hopelessness and proposing nonviolence as advocating a hopeful future.

Nonviolent Revolutionary Hope

Consistent with Cone, in *Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope*, Major J. Jones posits that Black Theology must offer a promise for believers to experience redemption on the earth and not just in the future. Major J. Jones situates the conversation of Black awareness, even for those on the streets and in a world of hopelessness, within Cone's understanding of hope and black identity.²¹⁸ Engaging in the pursuit of black identity and black awareness represents a practice of hope. To assert one's Blackness is to assert one's humanity. In a society that equates white with superiority and black with inferiority, it is also an act of resistance and courage. The concept of "being-forward" captures Jones's idea of hope.²¹⁹ His idea of hope is rooted in a God who is near and whose presence makes it possible to hope in a future that is not yet.

Inconsistent with Cone and some other Black theologians, however, Jones rejects a black awareness that takes the side of the oppressed. He sees the primary aim of hope as liberation for all people, oppressed and oppressor alike. Critical to Jones's assessment of hope is a critique of violence, which for him, opposes God's command to love. Jones's examination of hope and revolution yields a strong insight. A sense of urgency oftentimes drives people engaged in violent revolution and may actually be a manifestation of hopelessness rather than hope. Violent acts driven by fear may actually fall within an "ethics of distress."²²⁰

²¹⁸ Major J Jones, *Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1971), 16.

²¹⁹ Jones, 135.

²²⁰ Ibid, 98-101.

Jones challenges the ways that Black theologians merge hope and violent revolution; instead, he proposes a revolutionary hope that seeks to create something new. He proposes nonviolent protest that is rooted in collective action rather than violence.

Jones's proposal of nonviolence raises unique questions for incarcerated populations, particularly women who find themselves on death row. In Jones's assessment, he is clear that nonviolence as a way of life presupposes a government that does not use violence against its citizens.²²¹ I wonder if the death penalty would fall in his purview of state-sanctioned violence. If so, what type of collective "No!" should the community be engaged in to ensure that the humanity of incarcerated individuals is both respected and valued? While Black theologians point to the social dimensions of hope, womanist theologians nuance this account by emphasizing the distinct experiences of black women.

Womanist Notions of Embodied Hope

In resistance to the patriarchy of Black Theology and the racism of White feminism, the womanist movement emerged. Derived from Alice Walker's *In Search of our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*, the term womanist represents a way of celebrating and honoring Black women who have historically fought for survival in a racist, sexist, classist world.²²² Womanists find ways to negotiate their identity in the midst of the tri-dimensional burden Black women experience because of their race/ethnicity, gender and class. Womanists used the term "triple jeopardy" to describe the oppression they faced for being African American women and ultimately expressed frustration about the racist, sexist, and classist society in which they had to theologize.²²³ To counter what had become the normative way of theologizing, womanist theologians began to privilege the voice of Black women and use their experience as a source for doing theology. Womanist theology ultimately established a tradition that legitimized the experiences of Black

²²¹ Ibid, 4.

²²² Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi-xii.

²²³ Jacquelyn Grant, *White women's Christ and Black women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*, *American Academy of Religion academy series* (Atlanta Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989).

women as the point of departure for theologizing. In doing so, it also acknowledged and made visible the narratives of Black women as valuable, insightful, and transformative.

But, how do we begin to make sense of hope from a person who has been conditioned to feel shame and guilt for their very existence? This movement to privilege the narratives of women begins to respond to this question and yields a key insight about womanist notions of hope, that is, Black women often embody hope. In the theo-ethical anthology, *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation & Transformation*, womanist scholars explicitly identify and name hope and transformation in their lives.²²⁴ The naming of hope for Black women presents an interesting challenge. So often, concrete narratives serve as a more accurate depiction of hope than lofty descriptions and abstract concepts. In this sense, womanists would rather live hope than explain it. Black women's narratives illustrate hope through the thread of resistance and strength that persists in the midst of chaos. Perhaps one of the most profound ways to articulate womanist hope is the phrase "making a way out of no way."²²⁵ Delores S. Williams exemplifies this concept in her depiction of Hagar, who is a homeless, exiled, African woman forced into a "wilderness experience" that requires divine intervention.²²⁶ This concept of resourcefulness and strength captures the survival instinct that permeates black women's lived realities, the intervention of God in the struggle that Black women endure, and the imaginative possibilities that appear when one's eyes are opened and imagination enlivened.

In *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope*, Emile M. Townes use historical autobiographies to advance her thesis that autobiography and biography become tools of exploration and reconstruction, whereby readers can explore cultural and social phenomenon while also recovering stories that have often been invisible.²²⁷ Her edited volume, *Embracing the Spirit*, expands this notion of textual resources of

²²⁴ Emile M. Townes, ed., *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation & Transformation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

²²⁵ Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 108-113. Monica Coleman, *Making a Way out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 33-37.

²²⁶ Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 108-113.

²²⁷ Emile M. Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 17-19

exploration and reconstruction to include novels, poetry, art, sermons, speeches, scriptures, liturgy, and small group discussions. As evidenced in this edited volume and in other womanist scholarship, the recovery of Black women's narratives spark practices that help women participate in "recreating fertile ground upon which to continue to cultivate ourselves."²²⁸

This act of recreating is made possible through the Holy Spirit. In *Dancing with God: A Womanist Perspective on the Trinity*, Karen Baker-Fletcher articulates a concept of resurrection that communicates hope in a world fraught with lynching. Critical to her understanding of hope and resurrection is the Trinity, particularly that of the Holy Spirit. This resurrection hope that can be located in a world of death and suffering relies on the sustenance of the Holy Spirit. In the face of crucifixion and lynching, the courage of God lives in the person of the Holy Spirit. According to Fletcher, the ability to say "No" to injustice and act courageously, like mothers whose sons were being lynched, demonstrates life and hope.²²⁹ Her parallel placement of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mammie Till-Mobley, the mother of Emmett Till, enable both to stand as examples of mothers who gained strength from God to not only endure the suffering of their son's death but to act courageously.²³⁰ Resurrection integrates the spirit and physical in a way that allows for creative possibilities.²³¹ It originates with the spirit and opens the door for the creation of something new.

While death and suffering is no stranger to women on the incarceration continuum, neither is courage. Women on the incarceration continuum, particularly those in prison, protest death in many ways. Some of these ways are vocal while other forms of protest are seen in the resilience and creativity they muster up in order to live into new possibilities. Even more so, the image of Mother Mary that Fletcher draws upon to explain the righteous indignation women have when the system seeks to kill their children is so pertinent in prison. Women see that their daughters and sons are at risk for incarceration and/or some

²²⁸ Emile M. Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope*, 35.

²²⁹ Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: A Womanist Perspective on the Trinity* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 128.

²³⁰ Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God*, 150-151.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 130.

of the same pitfalls they faced and they seek opportunities to be courageous even while in prison. Revisiting Mary, the mother of Jesus with incarcerated women, may actually provide a fresh depiction of the Holy Trinity as well as resurrection hope.

I draw on this radical move made by womanists in the 1980's and 1990's to carve out a space for themselves at the table of theological discourse. In this sexist, racist, classist world, the issues that Black incarcerated women face must be included at the table of religious and theological educational discourses. Drawing from womanists, Black women on the incarceration continuum face quadruple jeopardy—classism, racism, criminalization, and sexism. As evidenced through the social death described in Chapter 1, these society-generated issues complicate the rehabilitation process needed during and after incarceration. In this research, I use the lives of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated Black women as a starting point both to expand notions of hope and to construct a pedagogy of restorative hope.

The persistent suffering that beats against the very lives of women on the incarceration continuum gives way to the need for hope. In *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology*, A. Elaine Brown Crawford, identifies “black suffering” as 1) mal-distributed, 2) enormous, and 3) transgenerational.²³² The disproportionate rate of Black females behind bars coupled with the direct impact on their children demonstrates that black suffering is endemic for Black women on the incarceration continuum. While womanist theology excels in exploring the experiences of Black grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, the narratives of women who may not be viewed as “the everyday Black female” fall under the radar. My research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the narratives of incarcerated women who may be grandmothers and mothers but whose chains have made their humanity invisible. Assuming that it is just as important to hear their “primal Holler,” I invite women who have been in situations of bondage to share their experiences through the lens of hope.²³³

²³² A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1.

²³³ Crawford defines the holler as the communal lament of African American women whose bodies have suffered physical and sexual exploitation. *Ibid*, 1.

Crawford explores the expression of hope from the experience of victimized Black women.²³⁴ Building on Crawford's exploration, I recognize the complexity of humanity in that Black women can be both victim and victimizer, oppressed and oppressor. It is incumbent upon those in ministry to recognize that, quite often, the one who suffers and the one who causes suffering is one and the same. Summoning the voices of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women pushes us beyond one-dimensional understandings of our humanity. In the context of this more complex duality, how do Black women who have come to terms with their own duality offer new insights about hope in the midst of trauma and suffering?

It is the very act of speaking, writing, screaming, dancing, and singing that testifies to the sacrality of Black life; it testifies to light breaking through oppression and male domination. In *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights*, Rosetta Ross identifies "testifying" as a religious practice that emphasizes life as sacred.²³⁵ Pointing to an African worldview, Ross highlights the way testimony reveals divine intervention in ordinary circumstances. Through her research on Black female civil rights activists, Ross shows that testimony presupposes an encounter with God, revealed through God's spirit being active in the person. It presupposes that God's spirit will enable that person to overcome insurmountable circumstances where God will "make a way out of no way."

This act of testifying is not unique to non-incarcerated women. While the stories of women on the incarceration continuum have rarely been told by them, these texts remain important sources of information through which to view the world. They help isolate cultural and moral practices and beliefs that not only reveal how women have been shaped but possess potential to shape others. This testifying takes place consistently in the dark corridors of life behind bars but is often overlooked because no one is in a position to hear. This research seeks to hear these stories. It recognizes the diverse ways in which women testify to a spirit of resilience, survival, and hope. And we partner with God to "make a way out of no way" by

²³⁴ Ibid, 10.

²³⁵ Rosetta E. Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 14-15.

listening to the voice of God's spirit that resounds in women who have struggled with what it means to hope.

Latin American Liberation Theology and the Exploration of Hope in Praxis

Latin American theologians expand liberationist notions of hope to elucidate the ways hope intersects with a liberating consciousness and historical praxis. Latin American theology developed in response to structural injustice against society's poor. The cry that arose from the Latin American continent requested a hermeneutical shift in theology. Like other liberation theologies, Latin American theologians propose that concrete reality is a point of departure for critical reflection, and that this critical reflection is the task of theology.²³⁶ In this sense, theology participated in liberative praxis by viewing the world through the lens of the poor. Similar to Black Theology, Latin American liberation theology draws direct connections between freedom and hope. Two notable Latin American theologians that explore these connections are Gustavo Gutiérrez and Rubem Alves. Whereas Moltmann identified the promise of the future as the hope for political engagement in the now, Alves and Gutiérrez acknowledge the concrete reality of the now as the catalytic hope to create a future in the present. Despite slight differences between their interpretations of how theology intersects with hope, both Alves and Gutiérrez recognize that the concrete realities of the present moment are the womb that gives birth to hope.

Hope and the Historical Praxis of Liberation

Gustavo Gutiérrez expounds on the relationship between hope and liberation in his seminal text on Latin American theology entitled *A Theology of Liberation*. Gutiérrez posits that while the natural impulse of humanity is oriented towards the future, a liberating future depends on present engagement in history. A new future can only be created with a critical awareness of injustice and intentional engagement in the historical praxis of liberation. In other words, the injustice that exists in the current social order creates a

²³⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 15th anniversary ed., trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 3-12.

“transitional situation,” whereby the future is dictated and created by the actions that take place now.²³⁷

Hope undergirds the liberative actions of people in the present; theology illuminates this historical praxis of liberation. Gutiérrez clarifies this idea of a praxis-oriented hope. He writes:

The hope which overcomes death must be rooted in the heart of the historical praxis; if this hope does not take shape in the present to lead it forward, it will only be an evasion, a futuristic illusion. One must be extremely careful not to replace a Christianity of the Beyond with a Christianity of the Future; if the former tended to forget the world, the latter runs the risk of neglecting a miserable and unjust present and the struggle for liberation.²³⁸

This struggle entails a socio-political liberation that destroys the root causes of oppression and enables the poor to live free and in relationship with others. Illuminating and interpreting the catalytic role of hope in this social and political struggle for liberation, then, represents a critical task of theology. In the words of Gutiérrez, theology means “sinking roots where the pulse of history is beating at this moment and illuminating history with the Word of the Lord of history, who irreversibly committed himself to the present moment of humankind to carry it to its fulfillment.”²³⁹

Hope and Consciousness

In *A Theology of Human Hope*, Rubem Alves seeks a new language for hope, a language of freedom. The barbarism of colonialism and its ability to rob people of the freedom to be subjects of their development and ultimately their future is inhumane and restrictive.²⁴⁰ While naming the realities, such as colonialism and poverty, that create national, economic, social, and racial restraints, he underscores the adoption of a new self understanding as the key to freedom and expressions of hope.²⁴¹ The realization that freedom has been taken rises to the surface in this shifting consciousness; humanity emerges when the subsequent response to this consciousness is action. People can determine their future rather than it being

²³⁷ Gutiérrez, 12.

²³⁸ Ibid, 124.

²³⁹ Ibid, 12.

²⁴⁰ Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (New York: Corpus Publications, 1969), 11.

²⁴¹ Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*, 6, 16.

determined for them. The endeavor to become human is the work of what he calls political humanism. In the words of Alves:

Political humanism sees the future as a horizon of possibilities, open, to be filled by the creation of freedom mediated to history by action. Man [and women], thus, creates the future, which is never determined. This is why action is so important for humanization, because there is nothing awaiting man [and women] that does not bear the mark of his [or her] action.²⁴²

In other words, the world cannot delimit hope when one understands her role as a creator rather than simply the created, as a subject rather than object, as one who can use political power rather than be dominated by it. The task of human hope, then, is to recover one's self understanding; it is the movement from what Alves describes as a "proletarian consciousness: the consciousness being dominated by a power which does not allow it to create its own history" to a free consciousness: a consciousness that is aware of his or her power and uses it to change the future.²⁴³ This determinative power weighs heavily in populations where power is constantly being stripped from them to create limited possibility.

Hope in Praxis on the Incarceration Continuum

Incarceration seeks to determine one's future by restricting the present reality. While phrases like "life without parole," "death-row," "max out," and "tentative release month" are words that speak to physical confinement, these sentences do not have the last word. For a system that is intent to determine the future of incarcerated populations, Alves' focus on a new self-understanding recognizes an emergence of freedom that physical chains cannot restrain—a process whereby hope emerges from a renewed consciousness. Incarcerated or formerly incarcerated people possess the expertise and lived knowledge to speak to this form of conscientization. Their insights can provide content that provides a greater understanding from how one moves from one form of conscientized hope to the next. Women on the incarceration continuum are often in a "transitional situation," where they have to mediate the current suffering and pain with hopes for a liberating future. A realizable future relies on the actions of the present.

²⁴² As indicated by the brackets, I've changed the language to make the quote more inclusive of gender. Ibid, 68.

²⁴³ Ibid, 10.

With the understanding that hope is active participation in liberative praxis, I assume that my research not only reflects *on* liberative praxis (via analyzing and interpreting practices and pedagogies of restorative hope) but *is* liberative praxis and opens doors for women on the incarceration continuum to *do* liberative praxis. Their current insights and wisdoms contribute to a body of knowledge that pushes toward a new and more humane future for women and girls on the incarceration continuum. In its attempt to illuminate and interpret (with the women) the hope that undergirds their survival and current resistance to structures that seek to annihilate their humanity, this research fulfills a theological task of critical reflection on the concrete realities of those who would perhaps be considered “the least of these.”

Theologies of hope ultimately set a precedent for using the narratives of incarcerated women to ask theological questions, engage in active social transformation, and pull upon the resources of the faith to draw liberating power. Psychologies of hope, on the other hand, allow those narratives to move from an explicit focus on oppression and suffering to a direct focus on the inner self’s engagement with suffering and oppression. Hope, then, spreads its wings to serve as an agent of personal and social transformation. Overall, both theologies and psychologies of hope become critical sources of reflection upon what women say.

Part 2: Psychology of Hope that Transforms the Self

Where liberation-oriented theologians have focused on the transformation of society in the midst of suffering, psychologists have focused on the transformation of self in suffering. Psychologists across the disciplines, including developmental, pastoral, and positive psychologists, demonstrate that examining the psyche offers unique insights that inform and expand understandings of hope. In particular, psychologies of hope help me name the internal and external pressures that broaden the meaning of hope. Furthermore, because of their intense focus on transformations of self, psychologies of hope, in general, provide greater insights for my movement toward a pedagogy of restorative hope. This section explores the contributions of positive psychologist Carl R. Snyder, developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, and pastoral care

psychologists Donald Capps and Gregory Ellison. Each psychological perspective adds unique insights to discourses around hope, particularly with those who are incarcerated.

Hope as a Cognitive Process

Cognitive-based psychologies of hope call attention to the mind's ability to enlist hope. In this section, I explore two psychologists who place an emphasis on cognitive processes within hope—Carl R. Snyder and William Lynch. In Snyder's articulation of hope, it is the power of hope-based thinking that shapes behavior. For Snyder, optimistic and agentic thinking motivate and form expectations that move one's self in the direction of an expected end. Lynch, on the other hand, sees the mind, namely imagination, as an instrument to cope with life's challenges. It enables one to wait on and hope for new visions rooted in the realities of life.

Carl R. Snyder, often recognized for his role in the development of positive psychology, defines hope as "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways."²⁴⁴ In other words, hope consists of a person's ability to establish clear goals, imagine multiple pathways to reach those goals, and persist toward reaching those goals even when impediments come. According to Snyder's model, women on the incarceration continuum who seek career fulfillment, addiction recovery and social reintegration must be able to set feasible goals with clear pathways that they can actually actively pursue. Snyder's emphases on goal setting that incorporates pathways and agency-based thinking holds value for women on the incarceration continuum who have experienced setbacks in life; to grasp and enact positive thinking may enable them to move from point A to point B. It is the ability to think strategically that sometimes gives flight to the manifestation of things hoped for.

Snyder designed a hope assessment to measure a person's goal thinking, agency thinking, and pathways thinking. Findings on his hope assessment demonstrate numerous benefits to those considered "high hope" people. For example, those who are considered high hope are more likely to care for their body

²⁴⁴ Carl Richard Snyder, "Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind," *Psychological Inquiry* 20, no. 4 (2002): 249.

as well as engage in preventative behaviors that will keep their body healthy.²⁴⁵ Academically, high hope people correlate with greater academic achievement in test scores as well as grade point averages, which counter the school-to-prison pipeline of youth who drop out and perform low academically.²⁴⁶ In comparison to low hope people, high hope people seem to produce more strategies for coping with stress and are more likely to use those strategies.²⁴⁷ While coping does not remove pain and trauma, coping does enable one to effectively respond to physical and psychological pain, which may in turn enable those experiencing psychological and physical challenges to better handle their crisis. Perhaps the type of hopeful thinking that Snyder describes would be the intervention necessary to help women on the incarceration continuum navigate the various physical, social, psychological, and faith crises they experience as a result of their entanglement with the prison pipeline. Thus, the question that emerges from these benefits is pedagogical, that is, how can those involved in dimensions of educational ministry create an educational environment conducive for hopeful thinking to emerge?

By the same token, women on the incarceration continuum also face challenges that limit both their agency and pathways. These external, sometimes systemic obstacles must be taken into account, particularly because they sometimes cause the most persistent hope crises. Ultimately, Snyder's cognitive-based approach to hope fails to wrestle with the structural barriers that often annihilate workable routes to reaching goals. This gap in research necessitates a move toward psychologies of hope that exemplify the threats to non-agentic thinking.

²⁴⁵ Carl Richard Snyder, "Hope Theory," 259.

²⁴⁶ Carl R. Snyder, Jennifer Cheavens, and Scott T. Michael, "Hoping," in *Coping: The Psychology of What Works* ed. Carl Richard Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 205-231.

²⁴⁷ Carl Richard Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope: You Can Get There From Here* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 163-210. Carl Richard Snyder, "Hypothesis: There is Hope," in *Handbook of Hope: Theory, Measures, and Applications*, ed. Carl Richard Snyder (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2000), 3-21.

Hope as an Imaginative Process

Carl R. Snyder and William Lynch both recognize the role of cognition in enacting hope. William Lynch, however, flips the perspective. While Snyder emphasizes cognitive ways to make hope possible, Lynch emphasizes the mental impediments that make hope impossible. William Lynch's book *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* talks about the psychology and metaphysics of hope. He provides particular insight about how the mentally ill are isolated (even perhaps excommunicated) from society.²⁴⁸ Being part of community is what makes people human; thus, extreme forms of isolation and exclusion are inhumane. Critical to Lynch's understanding of hope is help. Help is an inherent part of hope, which means hope requires a sense of dependence on the Other.²⁴⁹ Hope grows when mutual interaction persists. Those who are hopeless, he asserts, experience one of the three things—1) the sense of the impossible; 2) the sense of “too-muchness;” and 3) the sense of futility.²⁵⁰ These feelings push us toward finitude, which he argues, is in fact a door to recognize our human limitations and subsequent need for help. As an overarching metaphor of hopelessness, Lynch's idea of entrapment pushes one to ask about how one can be liberated from such traps. Lynch's response to this question is imagination. To be entrapped is ultimately a failure of the imagination, making it impossible to feel or act adequately.²⁵¹ Imagination and relationships, then, helps overcome the feelings of mental entrapment so that one can move forward and experience hope.

Lynch goes on further to say that the mentally ill remind us of our own infirmities. We disassociate from and excommunicate the mentally ill so we do not have to recognize infirmity in our selves. This movement to push out the “sick” finds relevance in the way society excommunicates incarcerated women. Because women on the incarceration continuum are viewed as sick or deficient and in need of help, we

²⁴⁸ With the understanding that mental illness is a crisis of hope that a large number of women on the incarceration continuum experience, Lynch's text has very practical implications on how to care for those experiencing mental illness.

²⁴⁹ William F. Lynch, *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 42.

²⁵⁰ Lynch, 48.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

disassociate ourselves from incarcerated populations defining them as “other” or “outside of us.” Contrary to this posture, we actually become more human when we identify and recognize our own infirmities and subsequent need for help.

The urgent challenge Lynch proposes—is for us to build a “city of man [and woman],” where everyone can be valued as human as opposed to building walls that keep people out.²⁵² Imagination, because of its ability to be flexible, open, and pliable, becomes essential to building this city. Building this city requires one to face their own humanity (and its limitations). The import of this insight lends itself to thinking about the walls we build against women on the incarceration continuum. Often, these walls prevent us from engaging them as human; instead, we engage them as sinful or criminal, distancing ourselves from them rather than embracing them. This distancing limits our own humanity. I would even venture to say that building this city requires the voice of those who are cast out of society. Research that takes seriously the voice and imagination of the marginalized, then, seeks to build a city of humans and become healer to the hopeless. While I value Lynch’s assessment of imagination, I do wonder if he adequately deals with the social entrapments that are outside of one’s imagination and real historical barriers that make the manifestation of hope unrealizable.

Hope as a Psychosocial Process

Theories of psychosocial development provide ways to conceive the difficulties of hope for those on the incarceration continuum. Psychologist Erik Erikson, for example, introduces how the early years in life provide the basic framework for experiencing hope. Women often identify their childhood as a site that birthed mistrust instead of hope. Pastoral psychologist Donald Capps identifies fear, shame, and apathy as threats to hope. Identifying these threats to hope make it easier to understand how stigma and stereotyping can amplify these threats so that invisibility and muteness is not just something imposed upon someone but something one imposes upon his or her self. Gregory Ellison’s work on the margins of society brings visibility to the social entrapments of invisibility and muteness that face young black men, social

²⁵² Ibid, 26.

entrapments that incarcerated women, especially Black incarcerated women, also face. All of these theorists provide crucial resources to help me name some of the social entrapments that impact one's internal sense of self, creating a crisis for hope.

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson explores hope as a tangential theme in the infancy stage of life, typically referred to as "Trust versus Mistrust." During this stage, infants rely on their caretaker, their mother in most cases, to meet their basic needs. Infants become aware that their cry provokes a response from their caregivers. Babies also master the ability to grasp and hold on during the process of nursing, a critical aspect of trusting.²⁵³ Consistent nurture provides the infant with a sense of affirmation that enables him or her to have confidence in themselves and the world. The consistency of care communicates a sense of stability to the infant. They learn they can trust the world. The virtue or basic human strength of hope emerges from an infant's ability to obtain a healthy balance of trust. Trust implies that the infant has a reasonable amount of trustfulness for his or herself as well as others. For Erikson, trust is the confirmation of hope and serves as a buttress against life's difficulties.²⁵⁴ Infants who do not develop a healthy ratio of trust will look upon the world with a sense of mistrust and will be less likely to explore. Erikson defines hope as "the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence," a definition that reflects hope's persistence throughout life.²⁵⁵ Although Erikson does not identify hope as a spiritual or moral principle, some of his writings indicate it as possessing a transcendent element and an essential component as one looks to embrace religion later in life.²⁵⁶

Considering that a vast majority of women carry trauma with them into the prison, sometimes stemming directly from parental relationships, I do not dismiss Erikson's characterization of infancy as a foundational stage for humans establishing a healthy sense of trust, which ultimately leads to the human

²⁵³ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), 100-106.

²⁵⁴ Erik H. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 107.

²⁵⁵ Erik H. Erikson, "Human Strength and the Cycle of Generations," *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1964), 118.

²⁵⁶ Erikson, "Human Strength and the Cycle of Generations," 118.

strength of hope. I perceive trust versus mistrust as a dynamic conflict that occurs far beyond the infancy stage.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, I am less interested in placing this crisis of trust versus mistrust at a specific stage in life and more interested in recognizing it as a key component to overcoming the oppression that many marginalized populations face. Many of the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual crises that incarcerated women face can be traced back to some form of mistrust. The human strength of hope, then, constantly faces threats that may weaken its durability. Bringing the voices of women on the incarceration continuum to bear on hope, I pay close attention to the way hope ebbs and flows throughout life due to the circumstances and/or crises one may encounter.

The existential question of this stage is, “Can I trust the world?” These questions evolve throughout the subsequent life stages to ask other questions such as “Is It Ok To Be Me?”; “Is It Ok For Me To Do, Move and Act?;” “Can I Make It In The World Of People And Things?”; “Who Am I? What Can I Be?”²⁵⁸ These questions indicate that hope requires a sense of a meaningful existence in the world, and is somewhat dependent on others to affirm that meaningful existence. Childhood poverty and the cradle-to-prison pipeline threatens to respond “No” to all these questions. Erikson’s psychosocial hope makes room for us to think about the external threats that exist to make hope difficult for women entangled on the pipeline to prison.

Erikson’s contribution to hope allows me to think about the psychological and social interchange always at work throughout the life cycle, specifically the ways in which the “other” helps establish a sense of self. Pastoral psychologists, however, provide a sense of continuity between my understanding of the “other” and “self” within the language of faith.

²⁵⁷ Donald Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 11-13.

²⁵⁸ Alexander Stone Macnow, ed. *MCAT Behavioral Science Review* (New York City: Kaplan Publishing, 2014), 220.

Threats and Allies to Hope

To bridge discourses of hope in psychology with those in theology, Pastoral psychologist Donald Capps makes two primary contributions to discourses on hope—his emphasis on the role of pastor as an agent of hope and his attention upon the Christian inner self and its experience with hope. In *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology*, Capps describes hope as “projections that envision the realizable and thus involve risk.”²⁵⁹ Often experienced as a solitary and unexplainable process, Capps describes hoping as a persistent named desire that emerges in response to some felt deprivation.²⁶⁰ Hope acknowledges that God, self, and the future are ultimately open, which introduces great possibilities as well as many risks to hope. The shift in Capps’ work to the Christian inner self holds value for women on the incarceration continuum. First, the assumption that women have a “Christian self” counters myths that all women in the prison need to be rescued and saved.²⁶¹ In fact, many incarcerated women enter prison with a robust religious understanding that somehow got buried beneath their crises and overcome by what Capps identifies as “threats to hope.” Also, Capps’s emphasis on the inner self recognizes that oftentimes external actions are manifestations of internal crises.

Donald Capps identifies three threats to hope—shame, despair, and apathy—that manifest with Black women on the criminal justice continuum as they navigate their crises. Despair is “the closing of the personal future.”²⁶² In other words, although a person may have desires, those desires seem unobtainable because of personal life circumstances. The outward manifestation of despair is disgust at persons or institutions while the inward manifestation of despair is depression. Shame is the “humiliation of dashed hopes” or the realization that what was wanted did not happen.²⁶³ Apathy represents a “state of desirelessness” where a person does not care about what happens around him or her, to him or her, or within

²⁵⁹Donald Capps, *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 53.

²⁶⁰ Capps, 52-64.

²⁶¹ Women in the prison come from all religious backgrounds. In fact, the classroom environments I’ve worked in are pluralistic and diverse. Using Capps shift to the Christian self is simply another way to say that incarcerated women are spiritual beings that engage in intentional practices to grow in their faith.

²⁶² Ibid, 99.

²⁶³ Ibid, 123.

him or her.²⁶⁴ It is important to note that Capps focuses on the inward feelings that emerge from threats to hope, but I would say, shame and apathy also has outward manifestations as well. Nevertheless, Capps' designation of the threats and allies of hope, in fact, provide useful language in my own engagement with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. All three of these enemies are ever present internal emotions that accompany women before, during, and after their incarceration. Women often articulate extreme despair and shame that often leads to apathy while also longing for the capacity to trust (which provide the conditions for hope), to remain patient (which sustains hope), and to employ modesty (which releases failed hopes and the self that envisioned those hopes).²⁶⁵ For incarcerated women, the threats to hope they encounter is compounded with the structural and emotional barriers they face during and after prison. While their future remains open to possibilities, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women also know that policies sometimes foreclose on their future possibilities, which reinforces feelings of apathy, shame and despair rather than hope. Yet and still, the capacity to hope is what often catalyzes change in self and the world. While formerly incarcerated women relate to these threats and allies to hope, there are other recurring threats that women on the incarceration continuum articulate. These additional threats and allies to hope build on the list that Capps has already begin to identify.

Interrupting Hope and the Call to Care

In *Cut Dead but Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men*, Gregory Ellison builds on Capps' assessment of threats and allies to hope in the context of black manhood. By exploring the formation of hope in the crucible of muteness and invisibility, pastoral theologian and psychologist Gregory Ellison expands the notion of hope to reflect its dynamic character. Ellison defines invisibility as the “complicit acceptance of a limiting identity and the failure to risk the required self-scrutiny to know one’s humanity.”²⁶⁶ This concept reveals that invisibility is more than how one is seen or not seen externally, but

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 107.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 99-162.

²⁶⁶ Gregory Ellison, *Cut Dead but Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 3.

how one allows that to impact their agency to see or not see themselves. Thus, the task of critical visibility is not only reserved for society; it is reserved for one's self. Ellison's work not only provides concrete examples of threats to hope but provides ways that "interrupting hope" can intervene in circumstances of despair.

An interrupting hope is a disrupting desire for existential change that is generated and sustained in a community of reliable others that names difficulties, envisions new possibilities, and inspires work toward transformation of self and other. The constant negotiation between self and other and the navigation among narrative, time, and space make hope a journey and not a static philosophical belief. Predicated upon movement to change, an interrupting hope is more like a pilgrimage, during which the cut dead and the caregiver are transformed along the way.²⁶⁷

His intentional engagement of both the receiver of care and the caregiver underscores the psychosocial nature of hope. Hope, at its best, thrives in a community of "reliable others," where there is a mutual accountability and mutual transformation. In this sense, "hope is born out of collaborative interchange" rather than individualistic internal feelings.²⁶⁸ Critical to understanding the meaning of hope is this inherent call to care, which makes hope formative, mutual, and in process.

For the purpose of this research, Ellison's definition of hope emerges as a critical conversation partner. While Ellison's text focuses primarily on men and my research on women, Ellison moves to explore hope from the margins in a way that pulls on the rich psycho-theological resources that provide language for the whole person—body, soul, and spirit. His embrace of "fearless dialogue" as a way to foster, and in some ways, mediate hope, falls in line with pedagogies of hope that seek to create a consciousness-raising experience that provoke transformation. Although indirectly, Ellison examines the source and location of hope. What my research contributes to this examination is the voice and visibility of women who wrestle with sustaining hope in extenuating circumstances. It is their analysis and expertise that expands the conversation and helps hope literature delve into a more in-depth look at hope from the margins.

Ellison hints at specific strategies that communities can employ to cultivate hope. His strategies integrate practices that include acknowledging small victories, adopting art as a tool to gain critical

²⁶⁷ Ellison, 81-82.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

awareness, embracing, valuing, and learning from diversity, relying on the wisdom of those perceived as “non-experts,” and self-care.²⁶⁹ His attention to practice recognizes that hope, like a garden, requires consistent care in order for it to fully bloom. It is my assumption that practices and pedagogies of restorative hope provide essential nutrients for the continual emergence of hope. These practices can be employed in environments like the prison or low-income communities to counter the social toxins that drain hope and destroy buds before they ever have a chance to blossom.

Psychologies of hope help me name the internal and external pressures that broaden the meaning of hope. Instead of trying to appropriate my own understanding of hope, I invite formerly incarcerated women, who often encounter massive challenges once released from prison, to define and identify hope in their lives. Asking formerly incarcerated women to pay attention to hope throughout incarceration until now emphasizes that hope is not static, but is a dynamic interplay between external circumstances and internal desires. I am interested in how incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women maintain hope in the midst of great threats to hope. Sometimes, it may take a caring person outside of the self to mediate between hopelessness and hope, referred to as an “agent of hope,” a “reliable other,” “othermother,” or a “hope-builder.” This insistence on the presence of others to assist in building hope resonates with my own understanding of the role of religious educators and my attempt to articulate a pedagogy and practices of restorative hope.

Part 3: The Quest for Hope in Pedagogy

The all too familiar “school to prison pipeline” that provides entry into incarceration and the subsequent studies that show prison education as an exit from the cycle of recidivism and despair places education as a primary conversation partner in discussion about constructing a comprehensive approach to mass incarceration. Even more so, I am not just talking about education about something; I am talking about education for something, or education with a purpose. The term that most adequately describes the education I refer to is a pedagogy of restorative hope. In order to delve further into the construction of this

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 154-157.

pedagogy, understanding pedagogues who speak to and undergird my pedagogical commitments is essential. This section explores the intersection of education and hope in the context of my research.

Hope emerges as a critical theme in education across the span of fields. Pedagogues within theological education and educational studies, in particular, recognize hope as an essential ingredient in sustaining productive life trajectories, specifically for African American and other marginalized youth. In this section, I explore pedagogy through the lens of religious education, critical pedagogy, and prison pedagogy.

Religious Education and the Intersection of Hope

Hope within the discipline of religious education often is preoccupied with the ways youth make meaning in the world. In this section, I will review religious educational scholarship that works specifically with marginalized youth. I will focus on two primary strands that offers a perspective on hope for Black incarcerated women—scholarship that highlights the use of narrative and scholarship that highlights the use of Black experience. My focus on narrative is critical because it becomes both a site where the voice of incarcerated women is heard and their identities built and affirmed. I include scholarship on the Black experience because it draws attention to racism and the need for justice.

Religious Education and Hope in Narrative

Many religious educators identify narrative as a way to employ and inspire hope.²⁷⁰ For the purpose of my work with incarcerated women, however, two religious education scholars—Anne Wimberly and Frank Rogers—exemplify the intersection of hope and narrative that contributes to my understanding of pedagogies of hope. Wimberly’s focus on black adolescents and the role of caring adults in their lives along

²⁷⁰ Dori G. Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-Talk with Young Women* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005); David White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005); Anne Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004); Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

with Roger's emphasis on narrative pedagogy are indispensable resources as I analyze the benefits of sharing narrative art in the context of caring communities.

Emerging from work with Youth Hope-Builders Academy (YHBA), a theological program for Black high school youth, *Keep It Real: Working with Black Youth* is an edited volume of work representing several leaders who have worked on staff with YHBA in various capacities. This text affirms the need for caring adults to address the concrete experiences that youth face on a daily basis. "Keeping it real" describes the process of caring adults who connect the daily realities of Black youth to the Christian gospel message.²⁷¹ This text proposes a self-disclosure approach to youth ministry, where the social location of the youth becomes the point of departure rather than treating youth acontextually.

Within this edited volume, for example, Wimberly uplifts the definitions that youth ascribe to hope. Her invitation to youth participation in defining hope acknowledges that the experiences of youth influence how they come to perceive and experience hope in their daily lives. She identifies four major themes: "hope as belief or faith in God and self," hope as vision, goal, expectation, desire or opportunity," "hope as motivation, effort, striving or determination," and "hope as spiritual or intuitive awareness and as a way of being."²⁷² Her move toward inviting the perspectives of youth underscores a major insight in how hope works in her model of village pedagogy. Hope emerges within the context of an intergenerational community that values, supports, acknowledges, and learns from one another. It thrives on mutuality. In this sense, adults and youth have the capacity to be hope-builders.

In this spirit of mutuality, I approach my research as one who is intent on learning with incarcerated women. Like Wimberly, my assumption is that mutual interchange breeds hope. While research often talks about or at incarcerated and formerly incarcerated populations, my research talks with them. I privilege their analysis and interpretations of hope as a catalyst for delving deeper into hope discourses. Incarcerated

²⁷¹ Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Keep It Real: Working With Today's Black Youth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), xiv.

²⁷² Wimberly, 120-123.

Black women, then, become “hope-builders” as they challenge and expand normative and liberationist perspectives of hope.

Furthermore, Wimberly’s emphasis on story serves as a foundational principle in my own pedagogical approach to understanding how Black incarcerated or formerly incarcerated women make meaning. My research seeks to recover the story of Black women whom society deems as “criminal.” I assume these women have insights to offer that will both challenge and edify our current understandings of religious education.

Revealing his theoretical discoveries from conducting youth theater and storytelling workshops with adolescents, Frank Rogers advocates the use of narrative pedagogy.²⁷³ The workshops he conducted sought to aid the youth in probing their lives by articulating a crisis and envisioning a resolution for that crisis. Throughout the text, Rogers reveals the stories of a diversity of youth from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Rogers claims that narrative possesses the power to communicate deep yearnings from the soul as well as larger truths from cultural and faith communities. Throughout his text, he reveals the ways narrative transmits religious traditions, crafts personal identity, stimulates contemplative spirituality, creativity, and critical consciousness. Consistent with Wimberly, Rogers urges youth workers to invite youth to explore narratives from their own cultural traditions.

My research builds on the use of narrative as a tool to express voice, explore identity and build a sense of self as evidenced in religious education literature. Particularly for incarcerated and/or formerly incarcerated individuals, I want to highlight the benefits of shaping one’s identity through the use of narrative.²⁷⁴ Narrative identity takes place as women narrate their stories. Dan P. McAdams would say we do not discover ourselves through narrative; we make ourselves through narrative.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Frank Rogers, *Finding God in the Graffiti: Empowering Teenagers through Stories, Youth Ministry Alternatives* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2011).

²⁷⁴ Atkinson (1998) and Rogers (2010) help me elaborate the immense benefits of narrative and narrative pedagogy in the lives of marginalized youth. Robert Atkinson, *The life story interview, Qualitative research methods* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998).

²⁷⁵ Dan P McAdams, *The stories we live by: personal myths and the making of the self*. 1st ed. (New York, N.Y.: W. Morrow, 1993).

Even more so, narrative pedagogy ultimately offers one primary insight that is critical to my work with Black women on the incarceration continuum. The sharing of narrative provides a valuable site for women to be heard, understood, affirmed, and cared for; this narrative site becomes restorative when it not only teaches you about the story of others, but it moves the learning community towards empathy and compassion for others. This narrative can be biographical as well as arise out of the cultural and historical experiences that shape one's sense of self and understanding of the world.

Religious Education and Hope Grounded in the Black Experience

Black experience constitutes its own narrative. It provides a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world in all its complex iterations. Pedagogies of hope that are grounded in Black experience understand the world as unjust while at the same time seeing the potential of people to fight against and rise above these injustices. Five primary scholars merge insights from Black liberation and womanist theological traditions with African American Christian religious education that offer insights as I begin to evaluate the depth of knowledge these traditions provide for religious education with Black incarcerated women. Grant Shockley, Kenneth Hill, Anthony G. Reddie, Evelyn Parker, and N. Lynne Westfield all understand the importance of critical engagement with, assessment of, and responses to an unjust society that propagates hopelessness through its perpetuation of racism, classism, sexism, which oftentimes undergirds the incarceration of Black and Brown bodies.

Grant Shockley affirms a religious education grounded in black religious experience.²⁷⁶ Mining from Black theology and womanist theology, Shockley identifies these movements as relevant and valuable when developing religious education for African Americans. Because of my own emphasis on liberation, I concur with Shockley's assessment of the relevance of Black theology and womanist understandings in constructing a pedagogy of hope that targets marginalized groups. Shockley believed that educational ministries, through ongoing involvement in social praxis, develop in persons an awareness of the social

²⁷⁶ Charles Foster and Grant S. Shockley (eds.), *Working with Black youth: opportunities for Christian ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

mission of the biblical message, develop a sense of hope, provide “social justice praxis learning situations,” and develop a sense of community and sustained commitment as people engage in social change.

Like my own understanding of religious education, Shockley sees social analysis, transformation, praxis, and the role of the community as critical components of any pedagogy of hope. Shockley challenged Black people to engage in the liberation of oppressed blacks and to provide a religious education that illuminates a worldview of freedom and encourages blacks to create an agenda that is emancipatory. One of the primary insights I gain from his work is that religious education is transformative and must emerge from the context of the day to day struggles of blacks to survive and develop in an unjust society. These insights encourage a diligent search for practices and methods that embody these principles. It is important to understand that Shockley’s writings stem from the immediate needs of the existential situations of Blacks - Blacks needed social justice ministries. My writings also stem from the immediate need of women who are marginalized in the criminal justice system. Black women need ministries that advocate with them and on their behalf. I seek to explore how the contemporary situation of Black women, particularly those entangled in the criminal justice system, challenge and expand theologies of liberation and Christian education in Black Churches to form a pedagogy of hope.

Anthony G. Reddie combines Black theology and liberationist approaches to transformative education to enrich the practice of teaching the Christian faith to youth from the African context.²⁷⁷ Identifying religious education as a branch of practical theology, Reddie categorizes his text as both educational and theological. Using Black theology as a primary source for his approach, Reddie views Christian education as the way God-talk is taught and learned in communities. He views the Black Church as the most authentic setting for teaching Black Christian education, underscoring black culture as a resource for linking the identity of Black youth with notions of Blackness. Interestingly enough, working with Black incarcerated women challenges this notion that the Black church is a central feature of Christian

²⁷⁷ Anthony G. Reddie has published several texts: *Nobodies to somebodies: a practical theology for education and Liberation* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2003); *Acting in Solidarity: Reflections in Critical Christianity* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2005); *Dramatizing Theologies: A Participative Approach to Black God-talk* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2006).

education. There is a strong distance between the Black church and these women. One reason may be the Black Church's invisibility in carceral spaces. The distance may also be related to many women's personal experience of the Black Church, where the church becomes restrictive and based on rules and judgments rather than a liberating experience.

While Reddie offers practical approaches for working with youth in multi-ethnic and inner-city settings in Britain, Kenneth H. Hill reconnects African American history with Christian education. Like Shockley, Hill affirms the dynamic interplay between education and Black theology in the history, philosophy, and establishment of African American Christian Religious Education (AACRE).²⁷⁸ His insights map the intellectual and historical trajectory of AACRE, creating a space for younger religious education scholars interested in Black religious education to enhance the discourse to include contemporary issues that face African American adolescents.

What is happening with Black adolescents is only a manifestation of what is taking place in larger society. The situation of Black adolescents, therefore, cannot be analyzed in isolation of the racist, classist, sexist, ageist, and militaristic society.²⁷⁹ The problems Black youth face are theological problems that should expand the agenda of theologies of liberation, namely Black liberation theology. Putting Black and womanist theology in conversation with the current state of Black youth is a compelling dialogue and area of inquiry for theological education. James Cone begins the conversation by comparing the cross (death of Jesus Christ) with the lynching of Blacks and the lynching of Blacks with the mass incarceration of African Americans.²⁸⁰ In the discipline of religious education, little scholarship exists that offers the rich dialogue with Black history and culture that Shockley, Hill, and Reddie offer in their texts.

The concept of identity development pervades the scholarship of Evelyn Parker. In *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls: Hard Stories of Race, Class, and Gender*, Parker explores the spirituality of a

²⁷⁸ Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (St. Louis, MS: Chalice Press, 2007).

²⁷⁹ Grant, Jacquelyn. "A Theological Framework," *Working with Black youth: opportunities for Christian ministry*, edited by C. R. Foster and G. S. Shockley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

²⁸⁰ James H. Cone, *The cross and the lynching tree* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011).

diverse ethnic group of adolescent females in light of systemic oppression in the North American context.²⁸¹ Of particular interest for my research is the chapter where Parker provides the stories from her interviews with five African American female adolescents. The presence of mothers, grandmothers, and “othermothers” represent a consistent theme throughout their stories; these older women help them navigate the difficult terrain of race, mostly in school settings. These caring adults help bolster the young girls’ spirituality by uncovering the hope needed to overcome.

Parker’s research on the connections between adolescents overcoming and spirituality holds promise.²⁸² Nevertheless, all of these young ladies are middle-class teenagers who attend church regularly. The text’s lack of emphasis on lower class female adolescents who may be unchurched or female adolescents who are entangled in the juvenile justice system represents a gap in her inquiry. The stories of lower class Black females or Black females who have a criminal background would add greater depth to her analysis. In what ways do the stories of the young girls in the text differ from those from criminal backgrounds? Are there mothers, grandmothers, and othermothers in their life to help them navigate systemic oppression? In Parker’s text, school represents the primary site where the adolescents faced racial discrimination. Is school the same entry point for many of the young girls who are currently entrapped in the juvenile justice? If so, what is the role of society, congregations, and other caring adults in counteracting the school-to-prison pipeline? My research explores these questions in greater depth and fills in the gap by focusing on marginalized women who are in the criminal justice system.

In another book, *Trouble Don’t Last Always: Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents*, Parker introduces the concept of emancipatory hope, which underscores the resilience youth employ when confronted with issues of racism in the world. Emancipatory hope fosters a spirituality that enables adolescents to cope in the world. Parker introduces loyalty and sanctified rage as two components of emancipatory hope that demonstrate an active and robust spirituality among adolescents. By viewing

²⁸¹ Evelyn Parker (e.d), *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls: Hard Stories of Race, Class, and Gender* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006).

²⁸² Evelyn Parker, *Trouble Don’t Last Always: Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003), 11.

emancipatory hope and adolescent spirituality in concrete practical ways, Parker affirms the need for religious education to remain teachable. The insights about loyalty and sanctified rage, for example, are insights that come to bear on conversations about why Black teens, particularly young Black women get entangled in the pipeline to prison. Learning from girls and women on the incarceration continuum may provide wisdom on ways religious educators can become more proactive in harnessing their rage and loyalty in productive ways that leads to a hopeful life direction.

In *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality*, N. Lynne Westfield moves toward examining a womanist practice that has been embedded in the tradition of Black women for centuries—the practice of hospitality.²⁸³ Pedagogy offers a gathering space where the learning community can engage in practices of hospitality, which often build resilience against the challenges one faces on a personal and systematic level. Ultimately, pedagogies of hope that are grounded in black experience not only offer critical ways of seeing but concrete ways of being that enable one to survive and hope.

Religious Education: Moving Toward a Pedagogy of Restorative Hope

Albeit briefly, in *The Future of Christian Education*, Charles Foster moves us beyond the quest for hope in the lives of youth and acknowledges that the need for hope is just as real, just as felt in the lives of adults. The ongoing destruction manifested in police brutality, poverty, and disease contributes to this loss of hope. Even more so, an intrusive silence in the pulpits and Sunday school classrooms about what it means to be human in a rapidly deteriorating yet more technologically advanced world leaves us longing for more.²⁸⁴ Foster beckons religious educators to reconsider how to communicate the source of hope to adults who are searching for answers to their daily realities. All of these religious educators and critical pedagogues expand the concept of hope; yet they have not put hope in conversation with the lives of those who experience extreme confinement, particularly Black women adults. My work fills the gap in the existing literature by looking at the concept of hope with Black incarcerated women.

²⁸³ N. Lynne Westfield, *Dear Sisters: A womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

²⁸⁴ Charles Foster, 135.

Exploring the narratives of Black incarcerated women poses a unique challenge for religious educators. Religious educators must respond to the dialectic between individual mistakes and social conditions. Holding the choices people make in the same hand with the collateral consequences society imposes influences my desire to focus on both personal transformation and social change. Hope must take into account the individual and society, the internal and external, intrapersonal development and interpersonal development. In this sense, hope and agency are partners in the endeavor to create a viable future for Black women on the incarceration continuum. Even more so, theological education must begin to grasp the language, practices, and pedagogies that intersect at every level on the incarceration continuum if they are to prepare faith leaders for socially-engaged, critically-informed, and hope-inspired ministry. It is these ways of imagining pedagogy that perhaps can make theological institutions what Dori Baker calls a “Greenhouse of Hope.”²⁸⁵

Critical Pedagogy and the Intersection of Hope

Critical pedagogical approaches to learning work to recover the agency of people in order to transform the world. One of the primary ways to recover agency is to restore hope. Critical pedagogy seeks to unveil opportunities for hope, regardless of the obstacles. No one denies that barriers exist that impinge upon one’s freedom. Paulo Freire defines these barriers as “limit-situations.”²⁸⁶ How one perceives barriers in his or her life become a key indicator of whether or not one will overcome those barriers. While limit situations are not insurmountable, they require hope in order to overcome. Ultimately, the ability to overcome seemingly hopeless situations emerges as one’s perception shifts from passivity to action, from hopelessness to hope. What is hope? According to Freire, hope refers to an ontological need that is anchored in practice in order to become historical concreteness. Hope alone cannot change concrete reality; yet, to

²⁸⁵ “Greenhouses of hope” is a phenomenon where Christian congregations are free to “experiment with both newly imagined and time-honored ways of following the path of Jesus.” Dori Baker, ed., *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 2.

²⁸⁶ Critical pedagogue Paulo Freire serves as a major theorist that shapes my approach to pedagogy and my theorizing about the types of educational practices that inspire hope and promote agency.

struggle apart from hope is a useless illusion. Hopelessness, on the other hand, is hope that has lost its bearings. It has become paralyzed and unable to engage in the process of recreating the world.²⁸⁷ It renders the concrete situation as immutable, thus rendering self as powerless. The person who is hopeless manifests this through passivity, lack of agency, and unwillingness to struggle against injustice. Freire, often identified as a forerunner of critical pedagogy, provides for so many critical pedagogues a political language in which to articulate resistance.²⁸⁸

In his seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire's dialogical, problem-posing pedagogy locates hope in the quest to be human.²⁸⁹ Rather than mandating people to come to the table whole and complete, Freire underscores becoming whole as a process called "humanization." Humanization is the recognition that, while structures exist that seek to oppress, people have the capacity to struggle against oppression so they experience life as communicative, active agents in the making of history.²⁹⁰ To put it simply, humanization is the process of becoming free. According to Freire, humanization is the vocation of humanity. Critical to Freire's theorizing is the understanding that neither history nor humans are fixed but always in the process of becoming. Hope, then, is not static; it moves with people as they seek to become more fully human by transforming their consciousness and changing the world. What a profound insight for incarcerated Black women who are often trying to move from under the rigid boxes that society and even their own selves confine them to. It is critical to embrace the understanding that, not just them but all, humanity are in a state of becoming represents a major site of reclaiming agency and responsibility over the direction of their lives and the world.

bell hooks identifies with a vision of "liberatory education that connects the will to know with the will to become."²⁹¹ In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks promotes

²⁸⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2006), 1-3. (Original English translation published 1994).

²⁸⁸ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 46.

²⁸⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1993), 43-69. (Original work published 1970).

²⁹⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 43-47.

²⁹¹ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 18-19.

what she calls “engaged pedagogy.”²⁹² Engaged pedagogy represents a holistic pedagogy that acknowledges, relates, and welcomes the “whole” self into the classroom setting. Unlike many other learning environments, engaged pedagogy does not seek to divorce the mind from the body, but acknowledges that a person is on a journey, approaching the learning moment with experiences and biases of their own and seeking ways that they themselves can experience self-actualization. In this sense, the teacher is invited to be whole with the students.²⁹³ Pedagogical values include student expression, critical thinking, mutual risk-taking, mutual participation, passion, and the development of the whole self within the classroom. The concept of mutuality yields a critical insight for musing on hope—that is educators maximize the potential of hope when they release themselves to express their humanity with their students. This mutual acknowledgement of humanity, while often challenging, works against systems that present learning as rigid and prescribed.

Similar to prisons, educational systems can work against wholeness and the building of whole selves and communities of wholeness. In *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, bell hooks analogizes a university classroom with a prison. She identifies the classroom as a site of confinement where professors are subjected to surveillance by the administration and strict rules that hinder community.²⁹⁴ This analogy is not unlike the numerous scholars who illuminate schooling as a rigid and somewhat restrictive space along with scholarship on the school-to-prison pipeline.²⁹⁵ In this sense, educational institutions from the cradle to the university sometimes perpetuate a fragmented self by focusing on the mind rather than the whole self; learning, becomes focused on simply information-building rather than human-building and/or community-building.

²⁹² Ibid, 13-32.

²⁹³ Ibid, 16.

²⁹⁴ bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13-14.

²⁹⁵ The list of such scholars includes the following: Maisha T. Winn, *Girl Time: Literacy, Justice, and School-to-Prison Pipeline, Teaching for Social Justice* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2011), 107-120. Erica Meiners, *The Right to be Hostile: Schools, Prison, and the Making of Public Enemies* (London: Routledge, 2007).; Harvard report; Monique W. Morris, " Race, Gender and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Expanding Our Discussion to Include Black Girls," (New York: African American Policy Forum, 2013), 12; “The *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* crisis can be reduced to one simple fact: The United States of America is not a level playing field for all children and our nation does not value and protect all children’s lives equally.” “America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline: A Report of the Children’s Defense Fund” (Washington, DC 20001: Children’s Defense Fund, October 2007), 11.

Democracy must not just be thought about and talked about; it must be practiced. For hooks, the active practice of community and democracy gives way to hope and a more just society. The idea of community grounds bell hooks' pedagogy of hope. Imperialist pedagogy, on the other hand, competes with a pedagogy of hope. Founded in white supremacy, this mainstream imperialist pedagogy works directly against establishing a community while a pedagogy of hope works toward interdependence, mutuality, and love. Shattering the "us/them" dichotomy and conquering fear helps sustain democratic practices. A pedagogy of hope, then, challenges the relational divide rooted in "isms" by actively seeking relationships with people who are different. This intentional pursuit of community creates a site where theory and practice merge.

Ultimately, bell hooks places the development of the whole self at the center of conversations about the purpose of prisons. What if women on the incarceration continuum were seen as whole beings with a body, soul, and spirit that is in constant process? What if us/them became we? What if we replaced the culture of isolation and antisocial living that permeates the prison with a culture of community and communion? While these are big "what if" questions, they remain at the heart of constructing a pedagogy of restorative hope. Hope is not just for hope's sake; it is for the sake of conquering injustice.

In *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, Ira Shor frames critical liberation pedagogies as activist learning; the final imperative is social change. Raising awareness and confronting injustice should all lead to social transformation. Four key components characterize Shor's definition of critical consciousness—power awareness, critical literacy, permanent desocialization, and self-knowledge. Each component feeds and undergirds commitments to pedagogies of hope. Power awareness, for example, recognizes both the limitations of society and the unlimited potential of human action in shaping society. Critical literacy goes beneath the surface to provide a critical reading of the implicit, explicit, and hidden messages of diverse contexts and within diverse texts. Permanent desocialization sees social and personal

transformation as a joint process that seeks to understand, question, challenge and examine systems. Lastly, self-knowledge/organization seeks to employ education to inform and inspire transformative action.²⁹⁶

Dialogical education acts against traditional learning. Teaching is not a one-way exchange. Instead, the role of participation in the classroom, the questioning of the status quo, and the acknowledgement that students are change agents contributes to the activist agenda of pedagogies of liberation.²⁹⁷ In Freire's problem-posing model, he calls this education "cultural action for freedom." Problem-posing education poses a problem that is relevant in the student's social context, listens to the student's responses, and represents their thoughts and ideas for close scrutiny by students. Shor calls this a situated model of teaching, where learning begins with student cultures and what students bring to the class with them. In this sense, classroom discourse emerges from what students themselves find most compelling, their "generative themes."

Shor describes mutuality as the heart of this method of critical pedagogy. The task of this method is balancing teacher's authority and knowledge and student's input, which should result in concrete teacher-talk and critical student-talk.²⁹⁸ The "third idiom," as Shor describes it, is where teacher's talk becomes more concrete and student's talk becomes more critical. Overall, the direction of dialogical education shifts to a horizontal relationship between teachers and students rather than a vertical relationship.²⁹⁹ Teachers still maintain some authority, but they learn non-traditional ways of being "the teacher" in the classroom. Instead of talking "at" students or "down to" students, teachers talk with their students. This creates a dramatic shift in how teachers perceive students and how students in turn perceive teachers.

In a system where the norm is for Black women on the incarceration continuum to be talked at or down to, critical pedagogy proposes a hopeful way to bridge the relational divide that often exists through the criminal justice system. What would happen if a shift in relationship took place between correctional

²⁹⁶ Ira Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 129-130.

²⁹⁷ Ira Shor, *Empowering Education*, 182-198.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 255.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 254-262.

officers and inmates or inmates and wardens? How is justice reframed when everyone is sitting at the table and not just those with authority? This shift transgresses boundaries so that people across the correctional spectrum can relate to each other on a human level while also maintaining an environment that supports healthy personal development. It is a radical yet complicated way to begin a conversation on restoring hope.

As a pedagogical practice, hope enables people to see themselves as agents of change in civil society. Critical pedagogue Henry A. Giroux helps move the conversation of hope from the political to the pedagogical while still remaining within a critical emancipatory framework. One of the roles of a critical educator is to employ emancipatory authority and radical teaching that allows for meaningful and critical engagement with student voice while also providing content that re-envision the world and schools in light of the inequality it maintains.³⁰⁰ In the words of Giroux, “educated hope opens up horizons of comparison by evoking not just different histories but different futures. Educated hope is a subversive force when it pluralizes politics by opening up space for dissent, making authority accountable, and becoming an activating presence in promoting social change.”³⁰¹ His term “educated hope” strongly resonates with my own inclination to see hope as subversive, paradoxical, and generative. Significant to his understanding of educated hope is that the goal of hope is not freedom from the social but freedom through the social.³⁰² Hope, then, must be grounded in transformative actions that impact the present. In particular, hope is not the future but opens up a door to believe in a different future, thus creating space to push and struggle for that new future. Hope does not keep its head in the sand but faces hardship with a vision beyond those hardships.

Insights emerging from the concept of “educated hope” hold significance for non-incarcerated individuals as well as incarcerated individuals. Women who face the hardship of separation from their children, guilt, stigma, loss, and despair need an anchor. Oftentimes, hope becomes that anchor. Even more so, hope serves as a link between critical awareness and political agency. A pedagogy of restorative hope,

³⁰⁰ Henry A. Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 111; 199-143.

³⁰¹ Henry A. Giroux, “When Hope Is Subversive,” *Tikkun* 19, no. 6: 38-39.

³⁰² Henry A. Giroux, “When Hope Is Subversive,” 39.

then, must be able to embark in a delicate dance between personal responsibility and social change, between lived histories and structural realities. This nuanced sense of seeing the world and one's role in the world serves a functional purpose for women on the incarceration continuum. It creates space for them to see their choices as integral to their own formation as well as the ever-forming world. The outcome may not always be engagement in a broad-based socio-political movement; it may simply be tending to the inner-self or nurturing the next generation.

In *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, Peter McLaren challenges the five faces of oppression embedded in the life of schools—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Considering the lack of gender-sensitivity within the prison context, McLaren's critique about classroom sexism and how it functions as a hidden curriculum is beneficial when articulating some of the ways the criminal justice system grants power and privilege to male inmates over female inmates.³⁰³ Oftentimes, female inmates find themselves within a system where their treatment can be linked to class, gender and power dynamics. In essence, through the lens of critical pedagogues, prisons reproduce the social structure of inequity while critical pedagogy empowers a critical consciousness that enables them to repair the world. Overall, critical pedagogy demonstrates the need for pedagogy to acknowledge and challenge systems of injustice while at the same time providing the resources necessary to move toward social change.

Pedagogy within the Prison

I want to identify scholars who have written specifically on prison education that holds relevance for my engagement of restorative hope pedagogy. Prison educator Robert Scott claims that even those critical of the prison can find prison education, specifically teaching within the prison, as a “site of political struggle in the era of mass incarceration” in which teachers “intervene and advocate” for their students.³⁰⁴ In “Distinguishing Radical Teaching from Merely Having Intense Experiences While Teaching in Prison,”

³⁰³ Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education* (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc, 2003), 212-213.

³⁰⁴ Robert Scott, “Distinguishing Radical Teaching from Merely Having Intense Experiences While Teaching in Prison.” *Radical Teacher* 95 (2013): 23.

Robert Scott urges and describes the benefits of prison educators adopting critical pedagogical approaches to prison education. Scott's claim that teaching can be an uncritical approach aligns him with critical pedagogues who views teaching as a political act. As noted by Scott, the very features that distinguish prison from non-carceral settings, is also what makes teaching in the prison a unique and transformative environment for the teacher. Scott claims that "the poverty of stimulus could be seen as a resource for generating an undistracted body, easily provoked and with plenty of time to do homework."³⁰⁵

If I was to ask incarcerated woman if they are distracted by Wi-Fi, email, socializing and partying, as Scott named as distinguishing marks within the prison, the women might say, "No". But if I was to ask if they are distracted, I'm sure the bulk of women might say, "Yes". These distractions may be connected to the existential situations they face as named in Chapter 1. Thus exploring the classroom as a site of hope has relevance for both how it transforms teachers and prison itself. Also, Scott's claim that incarcerated students have an opportunity to see multiple oppressions and reconstruct this identity as self with power is valuable to understanding one of the major outcomes of hope.³⁰⁶

I do however take seriously Scott's caution to well-meaning teachers who must guard against "when students are objectified by people with a pre-determined agenda."³⁰⁷ I am also critically aware that all education has some intended goal, whether named or not; Thus reflexivity is a critical approach to guarding against this.³⁰⁸ Thus, understanding what transformation and hope in a prison context requires those in the prison to be a guiding voice. This research is an attempt at "braiding the voices of teachers and students."³⁰⁹

In "Sociology of the Prison Classroom: Marginalized Identities and Sociological Imaginations Behind Bars," Kylie L Parrotta and Gretchen H Thompson use a sociological lens to investigate doing

³⁰⁵ Robert, "Distinguishing Radical Teaching from Merely Having Intense Experiences While Teaching in the Prison", 25.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 25.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 26.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 26.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 29.

gender, emotion work, and interactionism within the prison classroom.³¹⁰ They ultimately aim to explore the broader implications of teaching within prison and teaching in higher education. Their assertion that students need to develop a sociological imagination that sees themselves as something other than inmates is critical to understanding the imaginative seeing necessary in hoping. Classroom actually can become a space where those called “inmates” can see themselves differently.³¹¹

In *Voices from American Prisons: Faith, Education and Healing*, Kaia Stern demonstrates how prison education can disrupt penal confinement and its punitive tactics by introducing incarcerated men to sites of learning.³¹² While her work does not focus on critical pedagogy, her claim about prison education is one of hope and healing. Through case studies and interviews, she reveals prison education as a place that provides a venue for transformation, personal integrity, and social life. Because the men’s voice guides her claims, her work most closely aligns with this research. However, the focus on women is sure to bring new insights to this question of the healing power of prison education.

While previous literature in prison education may not name “hope” in quite the same way as I do here, it is clear that the socio-political act of teaching itself is a manifestation of hope. Why prison educators teach in prison is to make our “prison society” more conscientious, to provide space for transformative sites within the prison context and to offer opportunities for incarcerated persons to develop intellectual and social capital that will contribute to their future trajectory. Further, prison education often has aims that extend beyond the prison context, which sometimes even means “that we have to go into prison to move society away from prison.”³¹³ In other words, the aims of prison education oftentimes align with the aims of restoring hope in self, others, and society.

This research, however, departs from previous conversations by putting critical pedagogy in conversation with theological and psychological hope discourses. In particular, while I take seriously

³¹⁰ Kylie L. Parrotta and Gretchen H Thompson, "Sociology of the Prison Classroom: Marginalized Identities and Sociological Imaginations Behind Bars," *Teaching Sociology* 39, no. 2 (2011): 165-78.

³¹¹ Kylie L. Parrotta and Gretchen H Thompson, "Sociology of the Prison Classroom," 175-176.

³¹² Kaia Stern, *Voices from American Prisons: Faith, Education and Healing*, 18-160.

³¹³ Robert Scott, "Using Critical Pedagogy to Connect Prison Education and Prison Abolitionism," *Saint Louis University Public Law Review* 33, no. 401 (2014): 408.

previous scholarship in prison research, which has more often engaged incarcerated men, this work is grounded and built upon the voice of women who name what it means to hope in confined spaces. For educators who see their role as inspiring hope within their class, exploring what it means to hope in confinement from those who have actually experienced confinement provides clues at how to teach and subsequently inspire hope in confined spaces. Thus, a major assumption that undergirds my thinking on education in all forms is the purpose of education is more than transferring knowledge; it is about co-creating hope with those who learn.

As Scott points out, this goal sometimes results in pre-selecting students to participate in educational opportunities who are the ones prison administration presumes will meet standards to make the program successful. This is understandable since administration is part of carceral control. Security is prioritized over the needs of students.³¹⁴ Those who pose a threat to recidivism rates are not granted access. They must prove they are worthy of access by meeting certain standards.³¹⁵ Real reasons exist for creating and maintaining certain standards, at the same time, these standards create an environment where the burden of proof falls on women to prove they can be trusted to complete the endeavor. Needing to provide “proof” is not inherently wrong, but it can do real damage to a person’s sense of self. “Proving” one should be admitted can become a way of being in the world, where one automatically assumes they have to prove who they are. This is increasingly complex in a prison because disciplinary reports can be written for actions that are not morally wrong, but simply violate standard procedure within prison.³¹⁶ Overall, prison pedagogy along with religious education and critical pedagogy all provide useful sources of reflection as I move toward a pedagogy of restorative hope.

Conclusion

³¹⁴ Robert Scott, *Critical Pedagogy to Connect Prison Education and Prison Abolitionism*, 410.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, 410.

³¹⁶ This is also evidenced in our program. To be admitted in our program, students must be free of disciplinary reports for at least 6 months. Further, if students receive a disciplinary report while in our program, they cannot take classes until their record is clean of disciplinary reports for at least 6 months.

The vast hope literature that exists from theologians and psychologists provide a rich point of departure for this research's engagement with hope. Previous literature has recognized history as a critical question to examine in relation to hope. In order to adequately describe the source of hope, the question of where hope emerges is critical because it appears to inform people's consciousness and actions in a particular way. Many of the theologians that emerged in the 1960's, both in the theology of hope movement and in liberationist movements, identified active engagement in the political and social realities of the present as an embodiment of hope as well as a producer of hope for the future. Psychology, on the other hand, underscores hope's relationship with self and its movement toward an expectant end. While the focus is on transformations of self, this psychological literature reveals the critical role that community and external circumstances play in making hope realizable.

Both theology and psychology lay the framework for me to expound upon restorative hope, which sees transformation of the whole self in relation to others and the world as an essential component of hope for women on the incarceration continuum. Pedagogies of hope expand my thinking to explore hope through the lens of teaching and learning. Thinking about pedagogy in confined places is particularly useful in conversation with pedagogies of hope. Pedagogies of hope set a precedent for the use of narrative and black experience as a resource for building a hopeful sense of self. Overall, discourses on hope provide useful sources of reflection as I make sense of the experiences of women along the incarceration continuum. Chapter 3 builds on this chapter by exploring restorative hope as a way of being.

CHAPTER 3:

RESTORATIVE HOPE AS A WAY OF BEING: HUMANITY AND THE QUEST TO BECOME ALONG THE INCARCERATION CONTINUUM

Introduction: Exploring Human-ness within Restorative Hope

Restorative hope contends against society's propensity to place strict boundaries on what it means to be human. A plethora of criteria have been used to describe human-ness. When people fall outside of these social norms, they are often placed in exile. Not only do they have to earn their way back into society, they have to re-earn their way back into the status of "human." Those who do not reside within the category of "human" unfortunately become a target for inferior treatment. This maltreatment is justified by one's non-humanness. Within restorative hope, I ground my notion of humanity and human hope in *imago dei* and the process of humanization.

Restorative hope calls forth a human hope that takes seriously the *imago dei* of all people. It operates on the principles that: 1) all humans have inherent value and worth, 2) humans are made in the image of God, and 3) being human is a dynamic process of becoming. From a Christian perspective, inherent worth comes from the God-breath that sustains the human breath of individuals. Thus, as long as God-breath is in a person, there is hope in and for that person. The human-in-process is always a human first; thus, the value of the human is an inherent value rooted in their identity as a Divine Creation. As Theologian Miroslav Volf reminds us, "God sees each human being concretely, the powerful no less than the powerless. God notes not only their common humanity, but also their specific histories, their particular psychological, social, and embodied selves with their specific needs."³¹⁷

I stand apart from theologians who affirm the *imago dei* of humanity on the basis solely of human reason. While reason holds value; additionally, the capacity for self-transcendence and the possession of an immaterial self that can communicate with an immaterial God either through modes outside the self or

³¹⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 222.

through seeing God in the everyday mundane reality of practical life is unique. Further the fact that humans can be impressed upon their hearts through interaction with a Transcendent One that subsequently directs them to act in the world in particular ways sets humans apart. With that, I affirm the process of being human possesses a future that is open to possibilities of becoming. The process of becoming does not increase the inherent value of being human; yet, the practices that one takes upon the self and the world may actually be generative in the world. Thus, I assume that the process of becoming assumes that as humans become more resilient, relational, and authentic, they will be intentional about how they engage the world. Thus, humanity is not static, rather always participating in an interactive iterative process of being/becoming human. We become more human as we live fully into our beings in the here-and-now. Thus, attempts to confine some one's future or give a predetermined future is actually an attack against a person's very being.

In addition to the theological notion of *imago dei*, engaging in the process of humanization shapes my understanding of human hope. Humanization as a process of becoming is rooted in critical consciousness and human agency. Pedagogue Paulo Freire affirms this notion of being human as a process of becoming when he claims that the vocation of every person is humanization.³¹⁸ For Freire, it is also a statement about human participation in the world. Humans are subjects in the world who can help shape and transform the future. Participation in the world, primarily through critical consciousness and intentional acts in the world to overcome oppression, becomes a major factor for what it means to be human. Becoming human to Freire, is about becoming a subject in the world who seeks to exert control over his or her destiny. Work with incarcerated women will most certainly challenge to which degree we can exert control over our destiny. In this sense, liberation is not solely about a psychological or inner transformation but about human action in the world. As discussed in Chapter 2, Rubem Alves places human action as central to hope and the process of humanization because the future requires humans to act on it in order for it to become what it will.³¹⁹ Additionally, this process of humanization requires embracing a new self-understanding in order

³¹⁸ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 21-24.

³¹⁹ Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*, 68.

to see the world anew.³²⁰ Restoring agency, then, is an act of restoring hope in one's self in relationship to the world, namely one's capacity to act in that world.

This chapter provides a vivid description of how those living along the incarceration continuum faces constant threats against the self as a valued and agentic being capable of contributing to the world. In this chapter as well as Chapter 4 and 5, I present quotes from women I've interviewed along the incarceration continuum. All of the names used are pseudonyms to prevent identifying the research participant.

Further, throughout this section, I draw on the criminologist Shadd Maruna and anthropologist Victor Turner to further my claim that incarceration is a human marker that strips, degrades, and fragments women on the incarceration continuum. I use the lens of ritual and cultural performance to reinforce that, within incarceration, dehumanization takes place in a systematic way that shapes internal views of one's humanity as well as external views towards one's humanity. In other words, punishment becomes a systematic process of dehumanizing individuals during their arrest, trial, strip searches, and other practices within incarceration. In this sense, incarceration becomes a way for incarcerated individuals to move from the status of human to the status of criminal with little means of ever systematically going through a process of re-humanization. Human beings are then recruited into ways of being that counter hope in one's humanness. Restorative hope, on the other hand, seeks to restore the human status of person's being by emphasizing a humanity that is resilient, authentic, and relational in the face of rituals of punishment.

Humanity on Lockdown: Exploring Human Confinement through Ritual Performance

Incarceration serves as a cultural ritual. Within this cultural performance or social drama, as Victor Turner has identified, four stages take place—breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or schism.³²¹ The social drama begins when someone breaks a rule (breach) in which sides are taken either for or against the

³²⁰ Ibid, 11.

³²¹ Victor W. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 41.

rule breaker (crisis). Actions are then taken to repair the breach (redress). Successful repairs result in returning to the community as normal while unsuccessful repairs result in separation from the group. This seems like a fairly linear process; yet, for women on the incarceration continuum, this process can be taking place on many levels at the same time and can easily place hope in crisis along the continuum.

When police arrest a suspect, the police arrest more than their bodies; they arrest their humanity. Human confinement describes the ways in which a person's sense of humanity experiences constraints that impede their ability to become more than who others have named them to be. Incarceration, in particular, ritualizes human confinement through practices enacted upon the physical body and immaterial soul; these practices confirm a diminished sense of humanity that gives rise to a myriad of feelings that counter hope. One of the questions that emerge from hope-talk is: What type of identity have I embraced and others assigned to me because of my incarceration? Oftentimes, incarcerated women have difficulty breaking out of the box of other's people's perceptions and expectations because they have somehow internalized these same perceptions and expectations. The very ritual of arrest, trial, and incarceration somehow places a mark on the identity of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons' souls that is difficult to remove even upon release.

Once women enter the system, they are constantly moving in and out of this cultural performance of rituals, whereby schism from larger society seems much more realistic than reintegration into larger society. On a meta-level, those who are arrested by law enforcement have been accused of committing some "breach" in society. The courtroom drama, another public ritual, becomes a time where others decide whether the person actually committed the breach. If it is determined that the breach has been committed, the guilty party must face consequences for their actions. The schism typically refers to when the repair has failed. To be clear, punishment in prison is supposed to function as a repair or redress but often functions as a schism. Being sent to prison and the things that happen thereafter represents the schism or separation from society. In this case, the schism from society actually is the consequence used in order to repair the breach. On a micro-level, this social drama repeats itself consistently throughout the prison experience, both in relationship to those in authority (such as officers and wardens) and in relationship to their peers.

The threat of separation from their peers within the prison setting, then, becomes a priority that women constantly negotiate. In particular, the social dramas that take place within prison on a micro-level serve as lenses to illustrate the human confinement that results in a being that is degraded, stripped, and fragmented.

Humanity Degraded: The Making of Condemned Selves

The public censure and disavowal that women receive from society as a result of their incarceration often leaves permanent scars, human markers that become reminders of pain and guilt. Rituals of punishment, in fact, brand these human markers into a person's psyche as well as the imagination of those watching. In the past, executions served as a public ritual. The executed received the marks of condemnation on their body—a public spectacle that served as a reminder to deter others from deviance.³²² Officials invited the community to the grand performance. The community could feel a sense of justice by watching those who committed crime pay retribution for their actions. In more recent years, punishment shifted from the material reality of the body to the immaterial reality of the soul. In the words of Foucault, “The expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations.”³²³ Even punishment is less public; it is no less ritualized. The public gaze shifts from the body being a public spectacle of condemnation through execution to the courtroom scene, where criminal selves are placed on trial and sentenced for their crime.³²⁴ The behavior of the criminal is not only placed on trial; the soul of the criminal is placed on trial.³²⁵

Trials, for example, function as a ritual of blaming. It provides a public way to shift one's gaze towards a specific individual in order to hold them responsible for criminal activity. Rituals of punishment then escort people into this diminished status, sometimes marking both the body and soul as condemned. Indigo confirms the impact on her state of mind when she received her conviction in the courtroom, “Prison

³²² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1st American ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 8.

³²³ *Ibid*, 16.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 9.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 18.

was a death sentence in my psyche,” she says. Blaming, in turn, shapes discourses around punishment.³²⁶ Passing through the trial into prison is a ritual space that signifies loss of social spaces and a change in status.³²⁷ In *Good Punishment?: Christian Moral Practice and US Imprisonment*, James Logan describes the alienation, even that which women on the incarceration continuum might experience, as a consequence of sin while also recognizing that the category of “criminal” works to assign inferior status to those who have committed crimes.³²⁸ It moves people from the status of one who is innocent to one who deserves to be punished.

This change in status inevitably follows those on the incarceration continuum even upon their release. One woman talked about how she kept shrinking back in public spaces because she thought people knew she had been incarcerated when they looked at her. Punishment rituals come with clear consequences for both how we understand punishment and how we come to know those who have committed crimes. The moral exclusion and shame led Harold Garfinkel to name punishment practices as “status degradation ceremonies” whereby a person’s whole identity is shaped by these practices.³²⁹ Shame is the invisible cost of ritualized punishment and often lives beyond the public gaze. To escape shame in the face of false visibilities and a condemned self is difficult. Women on the incarceration continuum experience this condemnation externally and internally. Punishment rituals trigger internal misgivings, often resulting in the residue of shame. The feeling of condemnation and shame, unfortunately, robs women of hope. It conditions a person to condemn one’s own self just as much as it conditions society to condemn them. To take Donald Capps notion of shame a little further, shame is not just a “humiliation of dashed hopes” but a humiliation of one’s being.³³⁰

³²⁶David Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society: A Study in Social Theory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 68.

³²⁷ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 36.

³²⁸ James Samuel Logan, *Good Punishment?: Christian Moral Practice and U.S. Imprisonment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008), 26-32.

³²⁹ Harold Garfinkel, Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies, *American Journal of Sociology* 1956 61(5): 420.

³³⁰ Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 123-126.

Like Capps, I recognize shame as self-directed and involving the whole self. For both of us, shame emerges when a person had high hopes in a particular outcome but those hopes were not met. Yet, shame goes much deeper than that when women are in contexts where their very sense of being is under constant attack. Thus, I press to understand shame as a human condition that threatens one's *humanity* because that *being* is having things done to them that are sometimes outside of their control. It is easy to internalize that sense of violation. Particularly, in the prison context, the assumption is that these women, who are labeled criminals, deserve to be exposed. Yet, shame is mostly invisible. The exposed self is left in a perpetual state of hiding that which was exposed even when that exposure is no longer evident. Ultimately, the moral exclusion of prison is difficult, but the procedures done within prison marks a person's humanity, leaving them in a state of crisis about who they are and who they can become. It also places them into a posture of proving their humanity.

Not only do rituals of punishment rob women of hope in themselves, it also robs society of hope in these women. Rituals mark people in the public's eye, where society's actions toward women on the incarceration continuum communicate a loss in their possibility to be human. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women experience this type of human arrest, where their very being is always in question. Criminal becomes part of their identity, rather than a time in history. In fact, society continues to place people on trial when they are released. While they have served their time, they continue to pay. The burden of proof always rests on them to prove to society, their family, and faith communities that they are "better" or "productive." What becomes even more complicated is that society places these expectations on formerly incarcerated people, and then takes the resources they need to actually provide the evidence that they can be productive. This burden is well depicted in the comments of Indigo who wrote:

Hope is a fresh start. Hope is me saying, okay, you know what? I was a terrible money manager. I need to come out, re-evaluate my skills, find a different skill set, don't deal with money...but find a fresh start that you can develop skills or utilize skills you already have to be productive and to give back to the community. But I don't have a fresh start, and that's what has been devastating for me in re-entry is that re-entry doesn't give you a fresh start. I've been told no for jobs. I've been told no for housing. So I'm still incarcerated but free. I'm still in prison. Even the room in the old lady's house, which she was a Jewish lady, so unless I cooked kosher food I really wasn't allowed to cook in her kitchen, and so I was back in a room, and there were days I felt like I'm back in prison. Nobody has come

*to see me at that house and I've lived there about eight months now, because I can't receive company there, but that was the best living situation I could find for myself, but the point is, if you don't allow me to work hard, yes, work hard and get a job, and get a place to live, then you have told me I'm in prison, and as long as I'm in prison, what hope do I have? This is permanently going to be on my record. You're telling me that permanently I will never have a fresh start? I will never get over my sins. It's the antithesis of what my faith reflects. You sin, you repent, God forgives. Community in the area of criminal justice should reflect that. There's no deity that doesn't forgive. So even with Catholics when you're supposed to do penance, I did my penance. So at what point do I get restored back to my community? If I'm not restored back to the community at large, how can I have hope?*³³¹

When people fail to reintegrate people into society in a way that enables them to obtain the economic and social capital necessary to make it through, they snuff out hope. Indigo remarks, “And as a community, you are creating a perpetual cycle of non-feel good, despair, the opposite of hope when a person cannot pay the price for their crime and come out and say, okay, I have a fresh start.” Far too many times, women’s anticipation for release spiked, yet they experienced a severe disappointment when they realized that social participation would remain barred. Those who struggled with mental health before and during their incarceration encountered the monster again, having to sometimes even fight off thoughts of suicide.

Humanity Stripped

Researchers have begun to identify the varied ways that punishment is ritualized, especially during incarceration.³³² The ritual of incarceration, then, is a time that marks the stripping of one’s sense of being. The initiation phase of incarceration is a process of depersonalization and a pulling off of the things that had been identity markers. Shadd Maruna describes this process in the following way

The prisoner undergoes a ‘civil death’, losing former citizen rights and liberties, but also a distinct set of ritualistic admission procedures—undressing, strip searching, and disinfecting the individual, assigning him or her a new institutional uniform, haircut, and living quarters and ‘obedience tests’ meant to break the individual’s personality, including forced verbal acts of deference.³³³

In very concrete practices, the women are literally stripped of the things that gave them a sense of identity and humanity prior to prison. The loss of this sense of being disrupts hope, leading to a crisis oftentimes

³³¹ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

³³² Shadd Maruna, Reentry as a Rite of Passage, *Punishment & Society* 13, no. 1 (2011):13.

³³³ Maruna, “Reentry as a Rite of Passage,” 11-12.

for both the women and hope itself. Indigo describes her experience going to prison the first time after being sentenced. She writes:

For me, when I discovered I was going to prison, I couldn't cope. I had a breakdown. I lost hope...prison was a death sentence in my psyche. When I was faced with this thought of prison, I literally wanted to kill myself...Up until the moment I was sentenced, I was still under this delusion that I wasn't going to prison. So I left my computer running at home. Everything was like oh, I'm going out. I'll be back. I just was in denial. And so from the sentencing hearing, I went straight into prison, into jail. I wasn't allowed to go home and pack up my house...There was no time to say, oh my God, I'm going to prison. I never had that, because I just refused to deal with that thought. So then I was sitting in this cell...and all that was going through my head was I'm going to prison, I'm going to prison, I'm going to prison. And so we go through this whole process. I finally get to my room, and I'm just numb...Going through the motions. It's just so unbelievable, even now, it is so unbelievable. It was otherworldly. You have to understand my father was a professor. My brother is a professor. My sister works in academia. We don't have people in our family that go to jail. (laughs) We're not drunks. I've never even smoked weed in my whole entire life. I've never had anything happen other than a speeding ticket. I didn't even have a DUI...So you go to your room, you carry your mattress, you carry your sheets, you carry your -- I think you have one change of clothes, your rubber slippers, you send everything home, and they give you everything down to your underwear. So there is absolutely nothing I came in with except my glasses that was from the outside. So all your creature comforts are gone.³³⁴

Women lose their careers, their families, their sense of control, and ultimately their physical freedom. These multiple losses often leave women wondering who they are and in crisis. They have been stripped of their current sense of being and limitations have arbitrarily been placed on who they can become. These rituals are socially damaging to one's very humanity.

Rituals offer a way for society to categorize the being of others. Culturally, they are human cues that invite or even force people to move into particular statuses of being. They either validate or invalidate one's own sense of being. They place sharp distinctions upon one's identity by reinforcing who one is not, while simultaneously claiming who one is. Sherry describes the carceral stripping as the stripping of agency. She says:

You don't have any rights. You don't have a voice. Basically you're just told to do things when someone else wants you to do them, not when you want to do it. You can't go to the refrigerator and look in. You can't sit on your porch if you decide. You can't decide on I don't want to have this today. I want to get something else to eat. It says that you were

³³⁴ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

*behaving so awful and so bad that society decided this is the best place for you. You're powerless.*³³⁵

This stripping of agency and identity feeds into a stripping of one's very human-being-ness. Further, this stripping is in direct opposition to a humanity that feeds on participation and possibility.

Further, stripping not only happens to the identity of women; it also happens to the bodies of women. To be clear, wearing a prison uniform already is a public form of humiliation and shame, a means by which society separates and categorizes those who have broken social norms. However, the women describe something else as more shameful than wearing the prison uniform, which is when guards strip the uniform in order to enact routine strip searches within the prison. Strip searches are used to deter crime and help maximize security efforts. The initial mandatory strip search happens when women enter the prison for the first time. Anytime women transfer between prisons, have visitors, return from court, or return from temporary release, they are also subject to full searches. Additionally, mandatory drug tests and cell searches may also warrant a full search. This is not to mention the random searches that may take place. Those who are considered high security undergo even more searching. One of the most common reasons why officers presumably strip search women randomly is because they are suspected of having contraband. Contraband can range from more illicit forms like weapons, cell phones, and alcohol to less illicit forms like glitter, markers, or tape. Many things that seem inherently harmless can easily become weapons to harm one's self or others; thus, restrictions against contraband reinforce safety in the prison. On the other hand, often, women are placed in lockdown or wrongfully strip searched for contraband.

Within strip searches, it seems like the social drama is happening a little out of sync. For example, the breach, in many ways, is that the woman is incarcerated. By nature of their incarceration, they are subject to strip searches. It is the stripping itself that actually becomes the formal means to determine whether someone is guilty of a breach. Their status as "criminal" situates them in a constant state of crisis, whereby even a slight suspicion or mandatory leave subjects them to full searches where their body is exposed and others get to decide whether they will be doubly found guilty. In this sense, a criminal being

³³⁵ Sherry Interview, 3 January 2015.

is marked as “guilty” whether or not they committed a crime. The stripping of their bodies shifts the gaze to their naked bodies as a spectacle to deter crime, maintain law and order, and reinforce their status as a being under state control. Physical discomfort, loss of control, and hyper-visibility sometimes even in the presence of peers falls within the crisis stage. If women are found guilty of an actual breach, women will be subject to more intense punitive practices before reintegrating into the prison community. Those who are searched and not found guilty quickly reintegrate themselves back into the larger population. Whether guilty or not guilty of a breach, the designation of those in power is ascribed upon their naked selves. With the high number of women who have been sexually assaulted or who have experienced some form of abuse, one must take into account the mental and emotional impact of strip searches on a woman.

What intensifies the stress, however, is the fact that routine searches can happen even when one has not committed a breach. Nona depicts a vivid depiction of strip searching. Nona says:

One of the worst things about being incarcerated is having to take off all of your clothes in front of somebody and...to pull your butt apart, bend over and cough for them to examine all of you and leave you there just to put back on a uniform that has a number on it...If you don't know you -- If you don't have a good name to call you, you don't have a hope to link onto to say I'm somebody even as I'm doing this or God you said I'm -- If you don't have a Bible verse to quote, you will be left there stripped, only to be given nothing... You have to have somewhere else to go.³³⁶

Even being out in the “real world” does not take away a body that has internalized this sense of violation. Instead, to overcome the feeling of violation and invalidation of one’s humanity, one must “have somewhere else to go” mentally or spiritually. One must not be left as a stripped body/being but must have resources that enable one to be a *being-on-the-move*.

Nona also talked about being at the transitional center yet having to come back to this site where one’s clothes could be stripped off at any moment. She writes:

[E]ven at the transitional center, I think an incredible part of again, the duality of it, was that here I am...getting on MARTA, the train, the bus, handling currency again, working a job, feeling normal, wearing clothes, having a zipper, and having pockets, and then going right back into the place the same day. Like Cinderella, I told my mom, “I feel like my carriage turned into pumpkins and rats at the end of the day when I would have to take those same jeans, same thing I did with the brown uniform, my clothes off every time you came in that building, every single time, every day.” I worked Monday through Friday,

³³⁶ Nona, Interview, 30 January 2015.

and then I went home for 12 hours on a merit pass on Saturdays. Even when I came back from pass, at the end they could still do it at any time while you were in it, and it just -- I don't know -- I don't -- I don't know what to do, how to explain that. If you don't have hope, what that can do to you.³³⁷

The strip searches enacted when one enters back into the space functions as a reminder that they have been marked as someone who needs to be thoroughly searched and evaluated before crossing over into society or even back into the prison. In other words, as long as women are under confinement within the criminal justice system, they wear their carceral identity. If they are not careful, the carceral identity will not only mark who they are—the being in the here-and-now—it will also mark who they are becoming.

Overall, incarceration broadly and strip searches specifically represent two cultural performances where women often find their beings left vulnerable and open. The physical and emotional impact of this social drama often leaves scars upon one's humanity that impact how a woman views herself. The only way to overcome this type of violation is to have a resiliency that allows one to bounce back from these experiences in spite of the residue of shame and violation.

Humanity Fragmented

Criminality applied to one's humanity creates an human confinement that prevents incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons from moving beyond the criminal act(s) they committed. Human confinement places a person's humanity under lock and key. In this frame of reference, a person's being is static and unchanging. A person is the same today, yesterday, and forever. The fragmented glimpse into a person's past becomes the truth by which human confinement identifies incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. It locks people in their mistakes by emphasizing a fragment of someone's life, namely their criminal acts, and applying it as if this is the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." They are not their name, but their department of corrections number. They are not their transformation, but their murder or drug use or kidnapping charges.

³³⁷ Nona, Interview, 30 January 2015.

The criminal justice system creates mechanisms that help control knowledge about the confined as well as maintain order and control over bodies of women on the incarceration continuum. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault refers to these mechanisms of control as the panopticon, a building that was built in the 18th century for the sole purpose of watching incarcerated people. The panopticon gaze signifies a non-critical form of seeing that seeks to control, define, and disempower the watched. How and what one comes to know is directly connected to what one sees and/or perceives. The internal and external consequences of panopticism create a new politics of containment that centers on the ways in which people are seen and subsequently the ways in which people see. Distorted forms of visibility develop that creates distance rather than connection. It is based on Bentham's principle that "power should be visible and unverifiable."³³⁸ What will be visible to those without power, namely the incarcerated person, is the tower that houses those who will look upon him or her. What will be unverifiable is the incarcerated persons knowledge of when he or she is being watched. A stark dichotomy exists between the seeing that takes place and the person who is seen.³³⁹ In the words of Foucault, "in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen."³⁴⁰ Panopticism distorts the way people see as well as the way people are seen. It distances the be-ing who is seen from the be-ing that sees. This distancing also creates suspicion among those who see and those who are seen.

The panopticon gaze seeks to interrupt empowerment strategies that may be direct (such as physical and verbal acts of defiance) or indirect (an empowered sense of self). In other words, as a containment strategy, it intends to squash any form of resistance. With mechanisms that create noncritical ways of seeing, how we come to see individuals can easily be distorted. Similar to a microscope, instead of seeing individuals as whole, panopticon reduces and fragments individuals. This fractured gaze makes those in power all-seeing but only with partial knowledge. Another underlying feature of the panopticon gaze is the sense that one is always being watched. The one who watches is ever-seeing but never seen. In other words,

³³⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, 201

³³⁹ *Ibid*, 201.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 201.

all the power is in the hands of the one who gazes rather than the one who is gazed upon. The overarching insidious sense of being watched and observed by the powerful creates fear, doubt, and insecurity. The feeling of being watched becomes a pervading sensation that influences how one engages the world. This controlled gaze feeds into a sense of inauthenticity, making it difficult to ever be comfortable in one's own skin. One may even say women in the prison context can be "cut dead but still alive" because of their experiences of hypervisibility, mis-visibility, or invisibility.³⁴¹ Objectifying the experience and actions of incarcerated women feeds into a public imagination.

The practices used to sustain law and order usher one into a process of losing oneself so that one can even become unfamiliar to one's self. Within prison, women are isolated from the things, people, and practices that made them who they were prior to incarceration. In this sense, hope has to be related to the existential reality of what people face and how that presses against their perception of self. One has to embrace a carceral identity—an identity that seeks to conform to prison culture in order to survive incarceration. In the prison, one is constantly asked to perform, to wear multiple identities in order to appeal to various participants within the prison. Most women even say wearing the mask is necessary to get one through the challenges of prison life. The role-playing becomes a tactic of survival. To be seen as weak or soft makes one an easy target for others. A carceral identity, however, forces people to become something other than themselves. In some circumstances that means playing tough while in other circumstances that means playing perfect. Wearing these roles becomes a way to gain privileges, maintain safety, or simply fit in. As Toya named, "I had to transform into different people at times to fit in." She talked about playing roles "like being on top of the world, being the one that had it altogether, and then one that was bad and just being mean, hateful towards people that didn't even deserve it."³⁴² While she was fully aware that this was not her real identity, she also understood the prison as a place that could not handle her true self. Safety required concealing her true self so that the prison environment could not steal it. Only parts of herself could be offered in the space, creating a situation where the human longing to be known is co-opted by the

³⁴¹ Ellison, *Cut Dead But Still Alive*, 1-3.

³⁴² Toya. Interview. 15 September 2014.

human longing to survive.

I asked Toya what happens when people do not change in order to survive in prison. She shared:

*If you don't, I feel that you'll be taken captive, seriously. I feel that if you don't have some form of changing to, well, adapting, if you don't change or perform in a certain type of way, you will feel lost...Feeling alone, not fitting in and stuff and you don't fit in, because you're not like everybody else. So you start having second thoughts about yourself and who you are as a person, and you seep into a depression.*³⁴³

This constant identity-shifting is a form of captivity, in which one can easily lose the self. The incongruence between the public persona that women wear and the personal identity that constitute who women are can be easily blurred in the constant image negotiations in the prison. Those who are able to navigate a sense of inner continuity and authenticity in prison actually experience a greater sense of security.³⁴⁴ Thus, to carve out space where one can be their best self in the present in route to their best possible self in the future is critical, particularly in a prison setting. Put another way, finding space in the prison to actually be one's self is in order to get through prison life with a healthy sense of self.³⁴⁵

Be-ing Beyond Bars: Human Hope as a Way of Being, Becoming, and Being Seen

Restorative hope conceptualizes the act of seeing as significant in transformations of self and society. To see is to know one's self, others and the world differently. To see critically stretches beyond the typical physical seeing but recognizes seeing as a theological, political, social, and generative act that enables one to know, be, and do differently in the world. Within a carceral society, critical visibility is de-privileged in favor of the panopticon gaze. The panopticon gaze signifies a non-critical form of seeing that reinforces hypervisibility, invisibility, and mis-visibility. It sees; but, it sees through a confined lens, which in turn confines the seeing, knowing, being, and doing of others.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Yvonne Jewekes, "Men Behind Bars: "Doing" Masculinity as an Adaptation to Imprisonment." *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 1 (2005): 55-59.

³⁴⁵ Yvonne Jewekes, "Men Behind Bars," 53.

Critical visibility emerges from the interlocking and multi-faceted dimensions of seeing, knowing, being, and doing that emerges within restorative hope. One can become critically visible only as others begin to see beyond the surface. Critical visibility counters negative forms of seeing that forecloses the imagination rather than opens it. Some of these negative forms of seeing or not-seeing are hypervisibility, invisibility, and mis-visibility. Critical visibility may not prevent society from mis-visibility, invisibility, and hyper-visibility. It does, however, seek to make society more aware of this mis-seeing. Hyper-visibility is the overrepresentation of seeing particular types of bodies that begins to frame how individuals marked in that group are seen. Invisibility is no representation or the “complicit acceptance of a limiting identity and the failure to risk the required self-scrutiny to know one’s humanity.”³⁴⁶ This concept reveals that invisibility is more than how one is seen or not seen externally, but how one allows that to impact their agency to see or not see themselves. Furthermore, a mis-visibility is sometimes worse than not being seen. Mis-visibility is the misrepresentation of individuals; it is when only parts of a person’s self appears before the gaze, making it difficult to see the complexity of that person.

Women on the incarceration continuum recognize the multilevel ways human confinement manifests. Even when women get released from prison, they face the collateral consequences of their incarceration. These consequences make it difficult to obtain employment and housing, some of the most basic social needs of humans. There is also an internal decarceration process that takes place, where returning citizens have to learn how to be physically free. The myriad of complications of this decarceration process manifests in the intangible bars that still exist. For example, one woman described her release by saying, “You are still incarcerated in certain types of ways. You need to learn how to separate yourself from the bars. It's very hard doing that. Because right now, I feel like I'm still behind bars. Mentally I'm still behind bars.” Some have identified this as “complicated freedom.” For example, while one may be technically free, one may still be on parole, which creates unique circumstances of confinement and possible reincarceration.

³⁴⁶ Gregory Ellison, *Cut Dead but Still Alive*, 3.

At the heart of a human-in-process perspective is the understanding that we are not today who we were yesterday nor will we be tomorrow who we are today. This perspective ultimately leaves room for a person's identity, both personal and communal, to change among a world that is in constant flux. Rather than simplifying how one understands human nature, human hope embraces a more complex and nuanced perspective of human nature. It does not discount sin, crime, or the capacity for someone to do evil. Instead, it recognizes that all humanity, whether incarcerated or not, participates in individual and systemic acts that can be deemed sinful, criminal, or evil, thus requiring a greater need for redemption for all of humanity. All must see themselves as criminals in order to receive the beautiful act of redemption. Human hope tends away solely from discourses of personal responsibility and tends toward a discourse of second chances.³⁴⁷

When one sees possibilities for what others can become, new possibilities are birthed and pathways opened. Eden connects her birthing process with hope and second chances. Eden says:

*I was born dead. I was turned the wrong way, breached... I was just blue... and they were getting ready to prepare me a death certificate. But an old doctor happened to walk by and he looked. He heard the layman talking, and he said well, this child is not dead. He picked me up...hit me about four or five real hard times, you see? And they said I leapt up. That was hope. That's an unusual thing of hope, but that was hope. That was hope in one of its greatest forms.*³⁴⁸

The declaration that *beings* that some may have declared dead but are actually alive represents the importance of second chances. Whereas the facts may communicate death (i.e. the lack of oxygen), the truth may actually be another reality not yet realized. In this case, the truth was she perhaps should have been dead but wasn't. She goes on further to say:

*And hope, to me, also looks like this. I know the people that I lived with and the ones that I left in prison, there are some good people that could be definitely attributes and they would be good in society, so even though it wasn't my plan to do re-entry, it wasn't, it has become my passion. Hope that we as human beings can see the larger picture is asking a lot, because there's so many things that's going on out here, but if -- and all I want them to see, my hope comes in, see giving someone an honest second chance, so -- That's not easy. That's not easy at all.*³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Maisha Winn, *Girl Time*, 136.

³⁴⁸ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

³⁴⁹ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

Human hope is the belief that a person is always more than what you can see with your natural eyes. Even in the face of the most preposterous criminal actions, human hope leaves room for restoration in the very essence of a person's humanity. It embraces a human-in-process perspective that counters human confinement. To counter a humanity that has been stripped, degraded, and fragmented, restorative hope recognizes humanity as resilient, authentic, and relational.³⁵⁰

Humanity as Resilient-I Am Because I'm Still Here

This section describes the durable nature of hope. Hope manifests in a resilient humanity that seems to bounce back from circumstances of extreme trauma, tragedy, or confinement. It is grounded in the affirmation "I am because I'm still here." Women did not describe hope's development as a linear process that took place over a predetermined set of time in a predetermined way. Instead, hope developed in a cyclical way; hope went through seasons of highs and lows. Hope expanded as experiences added new interior strength to a person's sense of possibility.

I draw on the term resilience, which resonates with Black religious education and womanist scholars who have seen African descended people, particularly women, across the spectrum of ages and stages of life fight for their humanity. Womanist pedagogue N. Lynne Westfield gives a descriptive definition of resilience that provides useful language for conceptualizing hope. She writes that "Resilience is where choice and location unfold to new horizons, new dawns, and rich possibilities...about finding ways of living within one's context so well that it reconstitutes the self while in chaos (but not out of chaos) to see one's self in a positive light while the world around would say opposite."³⁵¹ Expanding these insights, the concept of resilience emerged as a prevalent theme in the lives of women on the incarceration

³⁵⁰ The categories of resilient, authentic, and relational emerged from coding the manuscripts from the interviews conducted with research participants. During the coding process, I compared the manuscripts to search for consistent patterns or reoccurring themes that surfaced among them. When I noticed phrases or narratives that relied heavily on depending on and connecting with others, I coded as relational. For phrases, repetitive words, and narratives that centered on being one's self or being able to realize one's full personhood, I coded for authenticity. Lastly, I coded narratives and themes that centered on traversing through great difficulty as resiliency. Because all three of these themes repeated throughout all of the interviews, I concluded that these themes were critical in building hope with women on the incarceration continuum.

³⁵¹ Westfield, *Dear Sisters*, 7.

continuum. Resilience is not just the manifestation of hope in a person's life; resilience is the essence of a person that understands its own existence as an embodiment of hope. Westfield bases resilience on the Nigerian affirmation, "I am well, I am whole."³⁵² Pressing against the constant pressure to surrender a meaningful existence, resilient humanity maintains a posture of dogged determination amidst the circumstances.

Hope sits on a continuum between survival and thriving. The fact that possibilities exist to be more or to be perceived as more invokes strivings within the self to, at least, survive. Womanist foremother Delores S. Williams' seminal work *Sisters in the Wilderness* illuminated the need to secure the survival and quality of life for Black women; this remains true along the incarceration continuum.³⁵³ Women are still fighting to survive and enjoy a quality life. According to Westfield, "survival is not a virtue, but a result of a base response instinct to environmental conditions...survival presupposes and connotes competition, aloneness, and estrangement...The nuances of survival come from the gray palette—covering the spectrum only from hollowness and waiting to needing and just barely enough."³⁵⁴ Westfield provides an accurate and rich illustration of survival. While I resonate with her definitions, I diverge from Westfield's bifurcation of practices of survival and resilience. Both survival and resilience are postured toward hope. Survival holds on to one's lived existence with whatever resources are at hand. While it appears to be a step down from resilience, the very embodiment of survival amidst hellish circumstances provides an image of possibility. That Black women and girls on the incarceration continuum can survive or live through the complex trauma they have faced performs hope at the most basic human level. When quitting is not an option, resilience lives. As Eden clearly states, "I could have quit a long time ago and just say whatever. But that's not an option for me. I see hope in us sitting right here. It's educating you, yes for your school, but it's educating you as a person, that there is a possibility that a person that has been incarcerated can be utilized out here."³⁵⁵

³⁵² Ibid, 8.

³⁵³ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 22.

³⁵⁴ Westfield, *Dear Sisters*, 7.

³⁵⁵ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

The line between survival and resilience is so thin that it can be difficult to name one as hopeful and the other not as hopeful. More concretely put, Indigo remarked:

For me, surviving is what our parents went through where they struggled to put food on the table, keep a roof over our heads, to meet the basics of life. So a person who is in survival mode takes a job because it's a job and it pays. They'll clean toilets, sweep. They may have a PhD and do those things, but they need the money to stay alive. But a person that's thriving says what do I want to do? What is my passion? How can I help other people? They've met their basic needs, and now they want to take things to that next level and really prosper in themselves, thrive, and be all the things that they were designed to be.³⁵⁶

The juxtaposition between surviving and thriving then is not about the absence or presence of hope. Instead, it is about the absence or presence of agency. In other words, the narratives of resilience highlight a need for suffering in order to legitimize resilience.

The hope of the future moment generates a sense of resiliency that enables one to endure the present. Indigo expresses this connection between survival and resilience concretely. Indigo says:

“Hope and life are very intertwined. Hope is the desire to keep on living, to move -- to be in a thriving mood in life, and you can't have life, an effective life without hope. When you're in survival mood, you want to thrive. That's why you hustle and do all the things you need to do to survive, so that you can move into thriving, and what propels that desire for survival or thriving is hope. As long as there's hope, you're thinking of a future that has benefits, that looks good, that you can meet the challenges of life. That's hope.”³⁵⁷

Hope serves as a driving force, resourcing women on the incarceration continuum with the emotional fortitude to practice resilience. Yvette names this driving force as “determination.” She says, “There’s nothing I believed this far that hasn’t happened. The energy I put out in my belief is the energy I received in return.”³⁵⁸ The test of hope for Yvette, then, is a stick-with-it-ness that presses against moves according to one’s own beliefs.

Myeshia illustrated this resilience when she shares about how when she first got out of prison, she stayed with one of her friends. However, soon as her friend realized she would not hustle with her, her friend pulled a gun on her and she had to leave the house to avoid trouble. She called one of the chaplains.

³⁵⁶ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Yvette, Interview, 30 July 2015.

Then, she started to stay in a back storage room of a boutique until she got a job at a local food restaurant. Even then, she still had \$2,000 worth of tickets that she had compiled prior to incarceration and was waiting for her upon release. She began to save her money when a wealthy white man gave her \$1400 to add to the \$600 she had saved to go get her license. Slowly but surely, she talked about how she got back on her feet. Then, she came into contact with a local ministry in the community who helped provide housing, utilities, and other bills. Myeisha talked about how random church people would put money in her hand. She talks about several jobs where she starts working and then is released when they find out she was formerly incarcerated. She talked about how she did not know how to pay bills because she had never done that before. A friend helped her budget. Overall, both her inner fortitude as well as her relationship with others helped build hope.

When I asked Myeisha how she was able to withstand her difficulties, she pointed back to her prison experience. In prison, she said, “I became a better person because I got to know myself. It’s a dark place but there’s optimism. Nothing else can bar me down.”³⁵⁹ Despite the many challenges she faced, she talked about having an unwavering faith in God that bolstered her spirit, enabling her to withstand the challenges. The very act of living communicates hope, even if it is hope at its most elemental form. Her story illustrates well “the feeling of security, protection, and stability emerging from the midst of risk.”³⁶⁰ Resilience is not born from privilege, but born in the fire of deferred hopes.

Humanity as Authentic-I Am Because I Can Be Who I Am while Becoming Who I Will Be

Who am I? Human hope shifts the question from what did you do to who are you and who are you becoming. Human hope sees the question of *being* as central to self-understanding and one’s own consciousness. To be human is to be complex. It is to possess the capacity to do great harm and great good. The paradoxical nature of the essence of what it means to be human beckons us to come to grips with the

³⁵⁹ Myeisha, Interview, 7 August 2015.

³⁶⁰ Westfield, *Dear Sisters*, 8.

multifaceted nature of humans. Embracing this complexity and living into one's authentic self welcomes freedom. When one cannot be one's authentic self, one embraces a host of false selves. The constant performance of a false self may become a serious inhibitor in restoring hope in the possibility of becoming more. Authentic humanity affirms a being-in-relationship to self. It is grounded in the affirmation "I Am Because I Can Be Who I Am while Becoming Who I Will Be." The promise of becoming is hopeful in light of *being-in-the moment* constantly moving toward a *being-in-the-future*. This future being is at once distinct from the being now but also the same being.

Human confinement shuts down the possibilities of becoming more than we are by saying that we are who we will be. Human hope, on the other hand, affirms an open-ended process of becoming. It refuses to lock us in particular to lock our identities in particular boxes based on our actions for current circumstances. Restorative hope affirms who we are while also pushing people to who they will become. In this sense, restorative hope is rooted in the concrete reality of a person in the here-and-now while also being invested in the being-to-come. Restorative hope refuses to be content and constrained by the boxes of others. It is not the affirmation of a safe non-volatile space that motivates a person to become; it is the risk of losing one's self to the expectations and definitions of others that motivates a person to become. It is the possibility of not having a sense of meaning and purpose in life. It does not accept the illusion that only a select few are in the process of becoming while everyone else has arrived. Instead, the understanding that others are in a state of becoming too motivates hope in a world that can be different as one makes meaning out of their life.

Restorative hope describes the natural quest that humans undergo—the quest for meaning. I draw on Kegan to describe meaning-making as a human activity. He writes:

Meaning is, in its origins, a physical activity (grasping, seeing), a social activity (it requires another), a survival activity (in doing it, we live). Meaning, understood in this way, is the primary human motion, irreducible. It cannot be divorced from the body, from social experience, or from the very survival of the organism. Meaning depends on someone who recognizes you. Not meaning, by definition, is utterly lonely. Well-fed, warm, and free of disease, you may still perish if you cannot 'mean.'³⁶¹

³⁶¹ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 19.

To exist without meaning is almost like not existing at all. Victor E. Frankl raises a similar question in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*.³⁶² He asks why say yes to a life where human existence is constrained by pain, guilt, and death. Is there inherent meaning in life? His response centers on a person's ability to find meaning and would even say that this is a person's entire motivation for existence.³⁶³ When a person finds meaning, that person gets a glimpse of who they are and who they are becoming. In this sense, despair is not the presence of suffering but rather suffering without meaning.³⁶⁴ One who cannot find meaning in life, perhaps, does not have a life worth living.

Authentic selves find a sense of meaning that is all their own, which enables them to fulfill the plot to their own narrative. Meaning and connection to a sense of purpose in life creates the content for the plot. One's "will to meaning" or concrete meaning for one's personal existence contributes to the agency needed to live out the plot.³⁶⁵ Meaning lays the internal groundwork needed to sustain life in the midst of hardship. If one of woman's primary purposes for existence is to discover meaning, it is no wonder why incarceration feels like a sense of human confinement. Anything that threatens one's sense of meaning in life actually becomes a direct threat to their sense of being. Nevertheless, the disequilibrium that occurs internally as a result of incarceration tends to the question around meaning-making. In this space of existential questioning and meaning-making, one's authentic self is being formed. For meaning is not given on a "one fits all basis" but tailored to individuals and their particular narratives. The quest for meaning, in fact, is a being-in-process. To be clear, life presents challenges that may cause one to question their sense of meaning and place hope in crisis. Authoring one's life, nonetheless, is about making meaning of the circumstances one finds oneself in. Put succinctly, "[wo]man should not ask what the meaning of [her] life is, but rather [she] must recognize that it is [she] who is asked...each [woman] is questioned by life; and [she] can only answer to life by *answering for* [her] own life; to life [she] can only respond by being responsible."³⁶⁶ Thus, the

³⁶² Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 137.

³⁶³ *Ibid*, 99.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 104-105.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 99.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 109.

task of a burgeoning authentic self is to hold fast and remain faithful to fulfilling one's personal quest for meaning. Frankl calls the task of remaining faithful "responsibleness," where one is always asking the question "for what, to what, or to whom [she] understands [herself] to be faithful."³⁶⁷

The very act of reframing one's story is an act of restorative hope, where people are invited to author their own narrative. Thus, an authentic self is rooted in this process of meaning-making that is both connected to the things around them but also completely distinct and separate from the things and people around. In other words, human hope within the framework of restorative hope "is not about the doing which a person does; it is about the doing which a person is."³⁶⁸ In carceral spaces like the prison, it is easy for one's own voice to be muted in an environment where external voices have dominated so much. Self-authoring is particularly important in contexts along the incarceration continuum where authoritarian voices tend to be white male voices, or the voices of Black guards who are a paycheck from being in prison themselves. Unlike parental voices, there is no guarantee that these external authority voices in carceral settings have the woman's best interest at heart nor is there any indication that their guidance is integrity-based.

To differentiate the self that is commanded to obey with the inner self that has agency to choose whether to obey and how to obey is critical within the process of self-authorship. One not only prioritizes response-based consequences, one also makes decisions about one's own drama. One regains control of the plot of one's own narrative. Self-authorship enables the woman's voice to make clear determinations about her life. Self-authorship pushes one toward authentic being by refusing to *be* under the authority of someone else's plot and narrative for one's life. While prison forces conformity in so many ways, self-authorship and authenticity praises the development of an authentic self that is whole, integrated, and clear about its ability to become. Self-authorship enables women to say "No!" to negative identity recruitment while also recognizing their ability to make conscious choices about their identity for the sake of survival. Everyone

³⁶⁷ I changed the gender to signify that the quote also applies to women. Ibid, 109-110

³⁶⁸ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, 8.

may not have chosen how their narrative began, but everyone has a choice about how their narrative can develop.

A carceral identity confines one's identity to society's expectations. These expectations influence how others ascribe value to women on the incarceration continuum; it also influences how women internalize their own value and worth. Authentic selves, on the other hand, seem to be grounded in a humanity that see themselves as contributing in a meaningful way to society unrestrained by status and in spite of the pain and suffering that characterizes so much of life. This type of meaning counters a carceral society. Upon release, for many incarcerated women, re-crafting one's narrative includes what it means to be "productive" in a society that limits where and how they can produce. This is particularly important in a society where one's ontological value is more often quantified based on what one can possess rather than qualified based on who one is. These values seep into the thoughts and hopes of women for themselves.

Being out of prison brings a rude awakening when women are faced with the real social challenges related to the ontological marker of "criminal." As Indigo indicates:

So today I received a paycheck of \$112, and this is hope for me. I got out of prison May 9th last year. I've not been able to find a job, and it's March 20th, and this is the first paycheck I've received since I got out of prison. And it's amazing. I think I'm pretty sure it's the least amount I've ever made in my whole life, but it's hope that there'll be more, in two weeks there's be another paycheck, and it doesn't matter the amount. I get to tithe off of it. I get to share off of it. I get to put gas in the car and food, and I've been faced with some of those lacks...For me, my struggle with coming out of prison has been mostly self-esteem type things, and the paycheck says somebody wants you to do a job. Somebody sees value in you and you're contributing and you're being productive. So even being able to be productive is hopeful.³⁶⁹

Something as simple as getting a paycheck of \$112 inspired hope. The money didn't give hope, but the sense of becoming a productive self created hope. Hope's value came from one being able to see themselves as contributing, productive citizens in the world. Ultimately, women who have learned to author their own lives refuse to accept society's expectations for their lives in exchange for their own.

³⁶⁹ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

This confidence in a sense of authentic self that emerged in Lisa's voice demonstrates that she did not see her life based on specific aspirations; instead she centered her hopes around being a loving being.

She commented:

My hopes. I just want to continue -- I don't know. I don't have like an aspiration...I just feel I'm here to be a loving being, so that's my aspiration, to be a loving being...There's no place that's associated with that. There's no title that's associated with that. There's nothing for me that's associated with that. If I end up being a loving being, being a janitor somewhere, I'm okay with that. If I end up being a loving being a position somewhere, that would be great too.³⁷⁰

In another interview, Lisa speaks further about this theme:

Once you've begun to realize things about yourself. You have to figure out how to maneuver with that information things that you've accepted about yourself...Like with my family...I'm a people pleaser and I wanted everyone to be good. That's just my personality. And I was always falling short, not because of me but because of their expectations, not my expectations...So I had to release myself from their expectations, and I know the consequences of that is that when they call, I might not be able to run to their assistance. So I know they may feel X,Y, and Z. But I have to allow them to be who they are so I can be who the f—k I am.³⁷¹

What stands out about these comments is the fact that Lisa's sense of a meaningful existence is not based on a particular position but rather a particular state of being. It is not based on what others expect of her, but her capacity to live according to her own standards. She admits that this is difficult, but she finds meaning in being who she is rather than who someone wants her to be. The fact that meaningful existence can actually emanate from being one's authentic self wherever that authentic self finds itself provides hope for all regardless of their position.

Lastly, women recognized the world and humanity as complex and imperfect. They embraced imperfection as part of life and learned to see themselves through a lens of meaning rather than imperfection. Towards the end of her interview, Eden describes her internal transformation of self worth. She comments, "I told you when I looked in the mirror I didn't see nothing but a reflection. Now, I see [Eden] when I look in the mirror. I see the creation of God. I see a strong woman that is a door to the

³⁷⁰ Linda. Interview. 25 February 2014.

³⁷¹ Linda. Interview. 16 March 2016.

hopeless.”³⁷² She describes her authentic self as one who has come to see herself clearly, both the good and the bad. Her self-image transformed from a reflection in a mirror to a *being* created by God with a specific meaning in life—to be “a door to the hopeless.” I then asked her what happened that caused her to see her authentic self. Eden responds:

*Truth. Truth. Truth. I deal with a lot of people that they hadn't got to that point yet of truth. They don't deal with truth... You see the good, bad, and the ugly. And you accept it. You change that which you can. And that which has prominence ...when you fall that far you're bound to have scars, permanent scars. They don't go away. Permanent things don't go away. You live with them. And permanent scars have a way of reoccurring. They have a way of reoccurring, especially when you are getting a check mark for a new lesson that you've learned. Just as good as the next person. There is no better than, there is no less than, and each one of us in the women, there's enough stuff in us to make a lady and a tramp. In a gentleman, there's enough in him to make a gentleman and a rogue. I've come to learn that. None is perfect but the Father. That's a beautiful lesson, Sarah, that a lot of people -- some of us won't never learn that lesson. Forgiveness. We have to learn how to forgive yourself.*³⁷³

Forgiveness of herself really demonstrates “the courage to accept acceptance.”³⁷⁴ This acceptance of self provides a shield against the labeling that dehumanizes and diminishes hope. In other words, her authentic self is grounded in the fact that despite the inadequacies of herself and others and even suffering in the world, her being is still created in God’s image and her being is worthy of forgiveness. Overall, an authentic self enables one to freely participate in healthy relationships with others. Authentic selves, nevertheless, become more hopeful as they are able to be that authentic self in community. In other words, as Greg Ellison argues, a hopeful self needs to be seen and heard.³⁷⁵ This seeing and hearing often takes place in relationship with others.

Humanity as Relational-I Am Because We Are

What does it mean to be human? Being human means to be in relationship. The battle is not just about losing one’s self to inauthenticity and fragmentation; it is about losing oneself to genuine human connection. The experiences of women on the incarceration continuum reiterate the human need for

³⁷² Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 163.

³⁷⁵ Ellison, *Cut Dead But Still Alive*, 90.

connection. To exist is to be in relationship with something other than the self. Restorative hope restores a person's humanity by promoting connection rather than isolation. Within restorative hope, I claim that humanity's very existence relies on his or her relationship with others. The existence of humanity rests upon the interdependence of all human life. Relational understandings about what it means to be human counter Descartes' rational approach to existence ("I think therefore I am") and embrace the popular South African proverb known as Ubuntu or "I am because you are" or "I am because we are." The phrasing of "I am" is intricately connected to the existence and well-being of the "you are." The need for human relationship is heightened in spaces—like the prison—where a poverty of meaningful relational connections abounds. Restriction to fulfill this basic human need actually represents another form of human confinement.

Social isolation marks the prison experience. When women first enter the prison, they are isolated from their family, friends, and social ties that existed beyond the barbed wire. Practices within the prison such as solitary confinement and restricted physical contact compounds the social isolation and subsequently confining fulfillment of the human desire for connection. The parameters set in place for how relationships are structured complicate this human confinement in carceral settings. The prison is a structured process of interaction and relationships of power, thus strategically dictating which bodies can interact and how those bodies should be interacting. Crossing these boundaries result in isolation. While there are reasonable explanations why these boundaries exist that limit opportunities for interpersonal connectedness, the fact still remains—to be human is to feel, touch, and engage others with one's emotions. Interpersonal relationships, then, are critical to building a strong inner self.

While incarcerated women encounter isolation on many levels, some women carve out their own pockets of space where they can experience life-changing, hope-inspiring relationships that actually transformed their lives. This work of carving out space for authentic relationships—to know and be known—is a human endeavor, an act to become more whole. Despite the vastness of prison, to those inside, prison becomes more like a community, in which Sherry described as "a small society behind barbwire and

razor.”³⁷⁶ Women claim that it is these relationships within the prison that enable them to make it through the ups and downs of prison life. Nona shares her narrative of a relationship with a death-row inmate she says literally saved her life. She talks extensively about this encounter of her being in relationship with that of another in this carceral setting. In her words:

As long as I've known her, she has been out of normal population or what they call general population, held in a lock down maximum security university where they normally would have people on lock down with behavioral issues, mental health, suicide watch, and I was all three of those things at one time, (laughs). So we always were near each other. We would yell to each other, through the bars, and the vents, and the ways that inmates learn to communicate with each other... and they knew how close I was with [the death row inmate], so I worked her floor. I delivered her food trays and different things through the bars. She was not allowed out...And the times that she would come out was when they allowed her to join the Theology program and to be in the classes, and it humanized her, and it was just an awesome, awesome triumph of opportunity...And so when all this was going on, and she's going to her classes, they stopped it...Another warden came in, put her back in chains, so the program would come to her. While they were doing that I'm sweeping, I'm working around the lock down unit, I'm talking to her, she is talking to me. You're going to feel good if you could just get in this program. You won't want to cut yourself. You'll feel good. You won't care about what they have to say about you around here ... It was literally my Department of Corrections theology...It gave me something in the back of my head, too, to push me to do better... Who cared if I sliced myself up? In fact, at one point I had a vein and it was really bad, and I remember the officer's words, go ahead, kill yourself. We'll just take you off the count. And that was the moment I realized that I'm not plugged in. I'm not alive. I am not where life is, and it's my choice that has me in this death, so God, can it be my choice to get me to life? ...I was so glad [the death row inmate] was a messenger of hope in her situation, and even in a lock down unit, there was freedom, and there was a messenger of liberty.³⁷⁷

The relationship described in this passage demonstrates the power of relationship even to overcome death warrants. This death row inmate's words of encouragement were generative and created a pathway for Nona to experience hope. The messenger of hope and liberty, in this situation, shared with Nona an opening to new possibilities. Whereas this lockdown space is meant to confine, Nona and the death row inmate did not let the bars confine their ability to communicate; instead, they used the small openings in the vent to meet each other's need for connection. Even openings as small as vents can open up new possibilities. For Nona, the death row inmate affirmed what she was beginning to awaken to—that her life mattered regardless of what the guards and others said. Relationships provide spaces of affirmation as one becomes more

³⁷⁶ Sherry, Interview, 3 January 2015.

³⁷⁷ Nona, Interview, 30 January 2015.

authentic. In the words of Robert Kegan, as we create ourselves, “we look into the souls of our neighbors for verification.”³⁷⁸ Although the death row inmate is no longer here, Nona makes clear through advocacy and public engagement events the generative impact that this messenger of hope made in her life.

Often times, the grasping for authenticity and relationality continues after prison. In my own observations from formal and informal conversation, the primacy of relationship emerged as a central concern. Women who were freshly released demonstrated a greater lack of relational connection than those who had been released a year or more at the time of the initial interview. For those that struggled with depression, suicide was not a far off thought. Others may have had the pertinent family support but still no real grounding where they could be their authentic self. On one particular occasion, Lisa told me frankly that she often contemplated returning because she built solid relationships in prison. To be out of prison and faced with the reality of inauthenticity seemed unbearable. Her “saving grace” for not returning is the care of her son, whom she loves.

That a person cannot find authentic relationships upon release is deeply troubling. Relationship is significant enough to create a desire for women to return to prison but also significant enough to keep women out of prison. Humans are meant to be in relationship. Humanity is meant to have significant others who care about their actions and well-being. Relationships help the self become who he or she is supposed to be. Similar to the biblical scripture “iron sharpens iron,” interdependency and connection provides a relational context for the sharpening of the self. All humans need help to become their authentic selves; it is not an individualistic process. To borrow from Freire, “Hope is rooted in [human’s] incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with others.”³⁷⁹ Failure to connect with others in a meaningful way actually feeds into a sense of aloneness in the world, foreclosing even the possibility for help if needed. Help, according to William Lynch, is a critical component of hope.³⁸⁰ This help is often found within the context of relationship.

³⁷⁸ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, 1.

³⁷⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 91.

³⁸⁰ Lynch, *Images of Hope*, 42.

The relational nature of one's humanity necessitates the need for the community to pay close attention to those who have been exiled or rejected. Relational humanity presses toward generative behavior that manifests in care-oriented actions. Helping one person within the community provides possibilities for the entire community. Thus, help is a communal task as opposed to relegated to the government or specific individuals within a community; it requires all hands on deck to be invested in the being and becoming of others. As Rochelle points out, "Hope is not always an individual making things change. Hope is sometimes a community making things change."³⁸¹ Relational humanity signifies communal possibility. It recognizes that the diminishment of one affects all; the edification of one affects all.

The term "returning citizen" marks the return of formerly incarcerated people back to society. The term "returning citizen" marks a shift in language; it moves away from identifying a person as "formerly incarcerated" whereby the emphasis is on a person's former incarceration and moves toward "returning citizen" whereby the emphasis is on a person's citizenship in society. In other words, within the term "returning citizen," there is a clear recognition that formerly incarcerated individuals are full participants in society and should be treated as such. Their return to society is not ritualized in the same way as their entry into prison, which may contribute to feelings of social isolation and human disconnection upon release.³⁸² The "criminal" status seems to follow them, hindering them from meaningful reintegration into society and community. The process of reintegration is not an individualistic endeavor but mutual; it relies on the interdependency of the returning citizen and the community. It celebrates the returning citizen's resiliency and welcomes her authenticity all within the context of relationship. This signifies the communities' responsibility to welcome and reintegrate returning citizens back into the life of the community. The need for "rituals of reintegration" becomes even more important when women on the incarceration continuum face such strong human confinement. Humanity-in-exile benefit when they are able to move from one status, that of a "criminal" or "exile," to another status, that of a "member" or "kin" within a larger village. Good punishment is rooted in a politics of ontological intimacy, which is the

³⁸¹ Rochelle, Interview, 21 July 2014.

³⁸²Maruna, "Reentry as a Rite of Passage," 12-20.

“binding and dynamic way of being-there-with-and-for-others, which is often hindered by a punitive system.³⁸³ Those who remain in exile often remain unacknowledged, muted and invisible; apart from a sense of belonging, they are more likely to exude rage or dissipate into invisibility.³⁸⁴

Our relationships with others create pathways to hope; so do our relationships with a Transcendent other. It’s important to note that being-in-relationship with God manifested throughout the narratives of women. Faith in a Transcendent Being emerged as a resource to cope with and manage problems, conflicts, and emotions. Faith in God did not presuppose faith in religious institutions. In fact, religious institutions seemed to contribute to rather than relieve some of the stress felt by women on the incarceration continuum. Many of the women expressed clear relational connections with God that not only enabled them to know hope; but it also encouraged them to be hopeful. Indigo comments, “For me, hope is intrinsically tied to God, and when I feel disconnected from God, I lose hope.”³⁸⁵ In other words, a hopeful being is directly connected to a being that is connected to God. Another woman, Rochelle, shares her connection with God and hope. She says, “To me, hope has a spiritual type of connection. People always say surrender and let God do things, but if you're doing everything in hopes of this and in hopes of that, then you're the one doing everything, so then that leaves no room for the spirit to do anything if you're the one trying to always constantly do everything that you hope for.”³⁸⁶ In this instance, a being in relationship with God actually gave way to a letting go and complete trust in God to do things that help bring about a hopeful outcome. Both quotes illustrate a hefty value on relationship with God as pertinent to a relational humanity.

Relationality with both God and others holds great value for women on the incarceration continuum. The value of who we are is based on God creating us; the fruit of who we become is a result of us living into one’s authentic self in the context of authentic relationship. Restorative hope, then, takes into account who we are as a valued self while also taking into account who we are becoming. For those who identify as Christian, restorative hope becomes more robust in knowing that the possibility for becoming

³⁸³ James Samuel Logan, 217.

³⁸⁴ Ellison, *Cut Dead But Still Alive*, 140-141.

³⁸⁵ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

³⁸⁶ Rochelle, Interview, 21 July 2014.

does not rely solely on self but relies on partnership with God. Ultimately, relationships between humans as well as relationships between humans and the Divine represent important relational connections that contribute to a sense of well-being and ultimately restores hope during difficult times.

Conclusion

This chapter is grounded in formerly incarcerated women's experience of incarceration, whereby I use their accounts of incarceration to explore the impact of incarceration on a person's humanity. Through the lens of ritual performance, I discussed how humanity is degraded, stripped, and fragmented in public view. This public and systematic de-valuing of humanity impacts how one views themselves as well as how others view them. In response to this dehumanization, I offer a humanity that is resilient, authentic, and relational to combat the pressure of losing hope along the incarceration continuum. Building on this chapter, Chapter 4 describes specific practices that emerge from a being who is becoming more authentic, relational and resilient. I argue that a reoriented being influences a person's sense of agency, which ultimately impacts what they see, how they come to know, and what they do.

CHAPTER 4:

SEEING, KNOWING, AND DOING: RESTORATIVE HOPE ALONG THE INCARCERATION CONTINUUM

Introduction

Chapter 3 explored restorative hope as a way of being, namely embracing a humanity that is resilient, authentic, and relational. This chapter shifts the focus from who a person is to the practices that flow from a person who is hopeful. Even more specifically, by uplifting the voice of women on the incarceration continuum, this chapter highlights ways of seeing, knowing, and doing that emerges from a re-oriented being who is seeking to negotiate and embrace hope amidst difficult situations. This chapter seeks to demonstrate a movement from confined ways of seeing, knowing, and doing that becomes the norm within the prison context to the ways restorative hope invites possibilities for new ways of seeing, knowing and doing along the incarceration continuum.

Part 1 focuses on restorative hope as a way to see through a lens of possibility. In Chapter 3, I focused on the panopticon gaze, which promotes an uncritical and categorical seeing that seeks to label and make sense of people and situations in a very confined way. This chapter, however, argues that restorative hope enables broad seeing that opens up possibilities rather than confine them. I am particularly interested in two ways of seeing—resourceful-seeing and priority-driven seeing—both of which emerged as women sought to navigate life along the continuum. Seeing, within restorative hope, represents the multi-dimensional process in which women use their agency either to shape the resources around them to transform their situation or the ways they prioritize among pressing concerns in their life. Namely, resourceful-seeing and priority-driven seeing unveiled alternative frameworks for understanding one's circumstances in ways that could revive hope.

Part 2 highlights hope as a process of knowing in the dark. To combat and overcome the impact of darkness, women relied on God. In the midst of their darkness, they came to know hope by trusting God to transcend darkness. In addition, women also transcended darkness by not allowing moments within time—the past, present, and future—to become shadows that darkened life's possibilities. Women used the

resources of the past, present, and future, instead, to re-orient and broaden their thinking to know new possibilities. Overall, hope as knowing in the dark is the process by which women adjust their vision and subsequently the way they understand life to live in spite of the darkness.

Part 3 highlights ways of doing through the lens of generative praxis. In essence, I explore the ways women along the incarceration continuum become generative selves by finding ways to care for their own children and the future even in confined circumstances. I opt for the language of “generative” citizen rather than “productive citizen” to counter notions of productivity that are westernized, materialistic, or unrealistic for women behind bars. I approach this work with the assumption that all of humanity has the capacity to be generative citizens for the sake of a better today and tomorrow. Overall, exploring new ways to see, know, and do are practices that stem from a being who is a hopeful self seeking to live amidst adverse circumstances.

Part 1: Hope and the Invitation for New Ways to See: Seeing as Multidimensional

Restorative hope highlights the function of seeing as a means to maintain and incite hope. The term “seeing” describes the lens by which we make sense of and frame the world. It is a multi-dimensional concept that goes beyond the mere visual act of seeing but includes the social, psychological, theological, physical, and generative dimensions. As a physical act, seeing engages the senses. The experiential component of “taking in” is the process by which we ingest the concrete aspects of life. What one sees is ingested before it is digested. Yet, as one makes sense of and verifies what they see, seeing becomes more than what one takes in; it becomes how one begins to perceive what one has taken in. As a psycho-socio-political act, we inscribe our values, thoughts, and feelings upon what we see. What we see becomes a representation of the way we subconsciously perceive the world. As a theological act, seeing involves the eyes of the heart. One uses one’s heart as a lens to determine if what they think they see is actually what they see. In this regard, seeing is a form of discernment about people and circumstances. As a generative act, seeing gives birth to possibility. To embrace seeing as multi-dimensional is to exchange one-dimensional lenses for lenses of possibility.

This multi-dimensional approach to seeing asserts that seeing is active and interactive, constantly integrating the physical, social, theological, psychological, and political perceptions of our reality to influence our vision of past, present, and future. All of these dimensions of seeing inform our attitude and outlook on life. Hope as a way of seeing ultimately informs how we make projections about the future. To borrow from Donald Capps:

Hopes then are projections because they envision a future that is technically false and unreal, as it does not exist, and yet is profoundly true and real, as it expresses yearnings and longings that not only exist but are often more real than the objective world....hope is a certain way of seeing, of visualizing, of foreseeing.³⁸⁷

What we see can impact our sense of agency, self-esteem, confidence, and emotions; thus, seeing reminds us that our environment helps make us who we are. Oftentimes, what we claim to see is really a representation of our emotions or cultural understanding, which integrates into our perception. Thus, to call attention to seeing as multi-dimensional also calls attention to the fact that seeing is representational. Even when we are not actively reflexive about the various aspects that contribute to how we see and perceive things, we can rest assured, oftentimes, we see with more than our eyes. Seeing embraces active imagination and conscious awareness. Human nature tends to categorize and label in order to make sense of things, often for very good reasons like survival. Even though placing categories on things helps protect us and enable us to see danger from afar, this type of seeing has also left people confined with their mind's eye. Practicing this discipline of enlarged seeing actually jumpstarts the imagination and invites new ways of understanding others and the world.

New ways of seeing restore hope by shifting the lens; either reframing the same situation or re-shifting the focus so that new possibilities can be in one's scope of vision. For the purpose of this research, I want to identify two distinct ways of seeing that emerged from the interviews of women on the incarceration continuum—resourceful seeing and priority-driven seeing. Both ways of seeing restore hope by helping women press beyond the circumstances to see alternate possibilities when at first glance no other possibilities may have appeared.

³⁸⁷ Donald Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 66.

Resourceful Seeing: Mental Flexibility in the Midst of Adverse Circumstances

Limitation rather than possibility is the norm along the incarceration continuum. Particularly in the prison context, women are made more aware of what they cannot do than what they can do. In order to rise above these constraints, one must be able to see through a lens of possibility. Resourceful seeing is one's ability to think and act imaginatively during difficult situations. Driven by the ability to maneuver the material and immaterial resources at one's disposal, resourceful seeing uses the imagination's eye so that what seems ordinary becomes a tool to create a more hopeful orientation toward life. It is not dependent on being given new resources or new circumstances; instead, resourceful seeing relies on one's ability to see different possibilities. Research on hope theory confirms the robustness of resourcefulness and its contribution to hope. In particular, resourceful seeing is the bedrock of Snyder's concept of pathways thinking.³⁸⁸ Those who see resourcefully, for example, use their ability to think creatively and lithely to determine alternate routes to reach their goals. Their fresh insights help circumvent barriers in order to reach a desired end. Some neuropsychologists might say that resourceful seeing is a form of mental flexibility. Mental flexibility is the ability to shift one's own thinking or action to engage the changing demands of a situation.³⁸⁹ While one may have been taught to see the world in one particular way, resourceful seeing encourages new patterns of seeing, often resulting in changes in perception, cognition, and behavior. The circumstance does not change rather the way a person decides to see and subsequently respond to the circumstance changes.

Within the prison, resourceful seeing became an essential skill women used to navigate pressing situations. Women's perception of hope often pivoted on what they saw taking place in the moment. Hope felt low when placed in the midst of difficult and seemingly unchangeable circumstances. When the women found themselves in crisis moments, their hope also faced moments of crisis. Thus, resourceful seeing

³⁸⁸ Charles R. Snyder, "Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind," *Psychological Inquiry* 13, no. 4, (2002): 251.

³⁸⁹ Chris Loftis, "Mental Flexibility," in *Encyclopedia of Neuropsychology*, edited by Jeffrey Kreutzer, John DeLuca, Bruce Caplan, et al. (New York: Springer, 2010), 1572.

enabled women to mentally and emotionally overcome the circumstantial barrier by using the resources at hand to create new pathways of possibility.

When issues emerged where women could not secure employment or housing upon release, it was very easy for them to identify themselves as not really hopeful. Prominent among these challenges were issues of motherhood. Toya was trying to get back her son whom she hadn't seen in ten years. She shared: "Hope is very dim right now. I am trying to get at the place where I *see* hope more. Because it's not so strong and it's not so evident right now, still working on self. I'm still working on self...Sometimes *seeing* myself as a failure. Can't get anything right."³⁹⁰ (italicized and bold are mine).³⁹¹ My next question sought to understand the ways her current understanding of hope influenced her view of the world. In response, she laughed and said, "Like there's no hope nowhere, because all the things that's going on (with me) and happening around the world." The negative she sees in the present moment takes primacy over future possibilities, even beginning to shape her view of the world. Not only does she see herself as a failure, in this moment, she sees the world as failing. Her desire to "see hope more" is actually a desire to see herself, her circumstances, and the world differently.

Resourceful seeing depends on the emergence of creative insight with available resources in order to forge new pathways of being in relationship to the circumstance. Women drew on different resources to engender hope. One such resource is scripture. For example, Toya drew upon Scripture to give her hope in the midst of her circumstance around motherhood. She mentions the collage she had submitted during the *Exploring Identity and Spirituality* course I taught in the prison during her incarceration. This collage contained some of the most important memories in her life. For the assignment, she demonstrates resourceful-seeing in her use of scripture. Toya writes:

I put together a collage of things that mean family to me, such as children unity, smiles and parenting. Centered in middle is a picture of my son. He is the main focus of the collage, which represents one of the turning points in my life; my incarceration is centered on him. Just as in Solomon's first test of wisdom, where the two women were told to cut the child

³⁹⁰ Toya, Interview, 15 September 2014.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

*in half, I have chosen let my son go. The love of a mother would never tear their child in pieces but rather watch him grow from afar, whole and happy.*³⁹²

In this prose, she uses her interpretation of scriptures as a resource to shift her perspective about the situation. Although she may have preferred her son coming home, she found a way to see the situation differently, which ultimately resulted in transforming dimensions of her emotions. In times of weakness, this scripture may continue to serve as a resource for feeling hopeful.

The situation one finds oneself in is no longer the subject of the narrative; instead, resourceful seeing re-narrates the story so that other possibilities emerge to either transform how one sees the situation or transform how one responds to the situation. In this particular instance, resourceful seeing is rooted in choosing to manipulate the present in order to see the future differently. While this shift in perception may not necessarily change all the emotions around the circumstance; it does provide an orientation toward a hopeful future for her son, which opens the door for her to experience glimmers of hope as well. In cases, where circumstances may never change, seeing one's self and the world newly can revive hope.

Resourceful seeing not only emerged in the deep emotional issues of life, it emerged in the mundane. In these instances, being in prison represented an unchanging circumstance and current reality. Thus, in order to make prison a livable space, ordinary materials like toilet paper and razors became hope-making tools. Women on the incarceration continuum found ways to assert their sense of self through hairstyles, unique fashion statements and clothes. Further, women created feasts from ramen noodles and little bits and pieces of whatever they had in their room. Women discovered ways to do tattoos and other underground means of seeking fulfillment. One of the most amazing manifestations of resourceful seeing I've heard of from the women is one incarcerated woman's ability to make a glorious nativity scene out of toilet paper. Women described the manifestation and impact of resourceful seeing in very concrete ways. Several examples are listed below in the form of quotes.

1) Adorning the Body:

Toe nail polish. We didn't have access to that, but we were allowed to have clear toe nail polish, and they would take pictures out of magazines and cut them -- We would keep blades. We're given razors to shave with. There was a time where you could break it down,

³⁹² Ibid.

*take the razor piece out and cut things up or do whatever you want with it, so we used it to sharpen pencils, we used it to cut wrists, whatever (laughs), but they would take pictures out, like a Coco Chanel logo, the interlocking Cs, cut it out of a magazine, put it on the big toe and use the clear nail polish and floor wax as a sheer veneer over it and walk around with Coco Chanel toe nails. That's art.*³⁹³

2) Transforming Space: Decor on the Inside

*[W]hat blew my mind was the creative uses of what is there, like floor wax. Decorating our doors for Christmas became a huge art expression, and I saw things I couldn't believe. Someone had a scene from Happy Feet on their door with a train, a 3D train swirling down the door. They made paper boxes. I don't know where they got the supplies from. Another person took the inside of Dorito bags, chip bags, that is foil, cleaned it up, and laminated the whole door with that foil and put a bow. So that was silver, and it looked like they trimmed the pieces just right so it didn't look like the inside of a Dorito bag. I never would have thought that.*³⁹⁴

3) Transforming Taste: Food

*I think cooking and trying to make a meal as homely as possible was a form of art... You decide you want to make fried rice, chicken fried rice, how do you make that in prison with a bag of oriental rice and noodles and bell peppers -- a bell pepper and onions that you bought on the black market and you have to plan it, and it gets your juices flowing. You want to make sure you don't get caught, and you're using your ID as your knife to cut up the onion, and that was pretty creative.*³⁹⁵

4) Transforming the Interior Self: Singing in the Choir

*I think with art, I always felt, especially with music that it just broke down a lot of barriers and walls, because people were willing to come up and talk to you who maybe without that would have shied away, I think... it's pretty obvious therapeutic part of engaging in art, and so when I talk about it breaking down barriers with others it probably breaks down those barriers within yourself. Somebody told me that I sang my way through.*³⁹⁶

All of these represent examples where women on the incarceration continuum enact resourceful seeing to maintain a sense of self and experience enjoyment even while in prison.

Once embedded in this space, women begin to see possibilities for ordinary things to be used in other ways. Resourceful seeing transformed space, tastes, and selves. Being able to use the resources in front of them to help transform their feelings around the circumstances became a valuable way of enacting agency. It also becomes a way to rehearse mental flexibility, where women learn how to transform their feelings and responses to circumstances even when they cannot immediately change the circumstance. The

³⁹³ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Rochelle, Interview, 21 July 2014.

circumstance no longer represents an impasse to *being* but a limit-situation that can be transformed, a transformation that happens as women begin to engage in the world in a creative and improvisational way.³⁹⁷ What becomes critical in resourceful seeing is not the goal itself nor is it the circumstance; instead, resourceful seeing uses what's surrounding the circumstance to help transform one's perception, responses, or feelings in the midst of and sometimes toward the circumstance. To put it simply, resourceful seeing is not just acting differently; it is perceiving differently.

Another example of resourceful seeing is when Rochelle decides that even though she can't vote she can register others to vote. Rochelle says:

I am an engager. I am an engager. And I won't allow others to limit me. I might limit myself, but I don't allow others to limit me. One example was that I didn't realize that I couldn't vote. And I could have become hopeless about that, but instead I decided every election that I couldn't vote in, I would register other people to vote...One election I registered about 50 people to vote. I believe in engaging even when people try to rig the system and create laws that were meant to discourage you from engaging.³⁹⁸

In this instance, Rochelle did not allow her inability to vote limit her political participation; instead, she found what may have been an even more powerful alternative—encourage others to engage in the political process. Resourceful seeing restores hope by transforming unfavorable circumstances to hopeful possibilities. It enables one to do more with less. It is an imaginative act. Creativity guides the process of seeing ways to manipulate what's in front of a person in order to make it a hope-making tool. Persistence and proactivity counter passivity. Resourceful seeing is necessary because one can never give guarantees that specific circumstances may change. And while circumstances may defer hope, hope still has the capacity to bounce back when it can see a new pathway for thinking, feeling, acting, or being in spite of the circumstance. Ultimately, resourceful seeing fights against the urge to give up without having exhausted every potential possibility to move toward a desired outcome. Sometimes the spaces that seem most

³⁹⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 49.

³⁹⁸ Rochelle, Interview, 21 July 2014.

unlikely for creativity and hope to emerge are the most appropriate spaces to display the elasticity and creativity of the human spirit.

Priority-driven Seeing

Priority-driven seeing refers to the process by which women on the incarceration continuum negotiate choices based on what is perceived as of utmost priority. I use the term “priority” rather than goal to indicate the task of negotiation inherent in this way of seeing. Many things can be goals, but not everything can be a priority. The term “priority” denotes a sense of urgency and importance over other things. In other words, priority-driven seeing is not just about goal-setting, it’s about priority-setting whereby the priorities set actually become the driving force for the goals that are set. Goal-setting might be deemed as strictly cognitive, but priority-setting is not strictly cognitive. It requires drawing upon one’s existential reality to set above all else the thing or things that one deems as most important to their livelihood or the livelihood of a loved one. In other words, the type of goals that many of us set emerges from privilege rather than deprivation. These goals, however, sometimes have a sense of urgency that places a great burden upon decision-making. Simply stated, priority-driven seeing is not a matter of what you would like to live with; it is a matter of what you can’t live without.

Priority-driven seeing uses the focused eye of realism to identify consequences for decisions made. For example, when women on the incarceration continuum put the outcomes of one decision against the outcomes of another decision, they selected the decision that seemed most appropriate to the outcomes they were willing to embrace. In this sense, women sometimes negotiated between possibilities for the present moment with possibilities for the future moment and chose accordingly. This priority-driven seeing demonstrates agency in that women on the incarceration continuum decide their path based on their desire to place one priority above others. Those who were able to identify meaningful priorities they could invest their energy in tended to express the drive to press toward a desired outcome. Meaningful priorities consisted of desires to achieve something that met desires that ranged from a hot and tasty meal to attitudinal transformation to educational attainment.

Women faced competing challenges and opportunities. Yet, experiences in prison seemed to provide the necessary space to reflect on and re-evaluate these priorities. Negotiating priorities seemed to conform to specific patterns. Oftentimes, women made decisions based on their relationships, values, or goals. In other words, women prioritized concerns that yielded acceptable consequences in their relationships, aligned adequately with their values, and positioned them to fulfill their goals. What became increasingly clear though is that women were not simply negotiating between one important priority and one insignificant priority; women were negotiating between two equally significant priorities, whereby choosing one over the other yielded real costs. Thus, priority-driven seeing sometimes posed serious challenges for hope. At the same time, because life operates in a way where we are always negotiating between two competing interests, priority-driven seeing disciplined people to exercise foresight about these competing interests in order to claim a particular path

One type of priority negotiation that emerged as a common theme is caring for self and caring for others. Oftentimes, lack of self-care landed women in prison. Prior to incarceration, some women described an overemphasis on interpersonal relationships, which led to incarceration. Their relationship for others, in other words, contributed to some of the behaviors and motivations that put them on a pathway to incarceration. To be clear, relationships also influenced the priority-driven seeing; however, these relationships seemed to inspire rather than counter positive self-imaging and positive self-care.

For example, if there is a decision between participating in programs within the prison or child visitation, they would weigh their options. It is one thing to decide between two schools in society; it's another thing to choose between a program that teaches you how to be a better parent or a program that stimulates one's intellect in the context of prison. Both programs would be important—one helps women be in relationship to their child while the other provides resources that might help the woman make it through prison. The latter emerges from a context of constraint where options are limited.

Further, the choices women on the incarceration continuum have to make are often scripted against a backdrop of several other narratives that create significant risks with each decision. If women thought participating in programming may encourage their child to embrace a love for learning and see them

differently, they might find ways to rearrange visitation or decide to wait until they have completed the program to continue child visitation. They understand that receiving an education for themselves would place them in a better position to care for their child; thus, the anticipated future outcome caused them to delay the present gratification of seeing their child in order to complete the program. However, women may figure that it is more important to see their child now and complete the program later than opt out of the program to see their child. Negotiating these concerns ultimately centers on the well-being and healthy development of their child. Priority-driven seeing restores hope by encouraging active decision-making, critical thinking, and drive. While the type of choices women has may be limited by structural forces, priority-driven seeing invites women to give voice to the urgent needs that arise in their lives.

Yvette, for example, uses priority-driven seeing to meet her needs. Yvette talks about hope in terms of sheer determination. She did not allow others to set priorities for her but set priorities for herself. She shares her story of getting out of prison and being able to get a job, house, and car because she set her priorities when she was first incarcerated. Even with her named successes, Yvette does not pretend that the road has been easy; instead, her determination forces her to move toward her priorities rather than pursuing things that might distract her. In Yvette's words, she says, "Everything they said I wouldn't do, because I believe in it, I made it happen."³⁹⁹ She shares how she began saving money for a house while in transition so that she was able to get what she needed upon release. In this instance, the words of others did not hinder but fueled the fire of her determination. She goes on further to say that despite her long sentence, "I looked 20 years beyond in the beginning."⁴⁰⁰ Being able to look ahead and set priorities helped her make decisions about what was most important to her.

Priority-driven seeing then becomes a driving force for goal-setting. So many things drive the way women begin to prioritize their goals. One goal is freedom. For example, one woman states that she looked forward to freedom from the first day she was convicted and planned her whole incarceration around that end result. In addition, anger towards the criminal justice system, for example, actually becomes a driving

³⁹⁹ Yvette, Interview, 30 July 2015.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

force for the goal-setting of some women both during and after incarceration. Nona demonstrates how placing freedom as a priority shapes her view of herself and her world. She says:

I don't have the anger against myself anymore. See I haven't cut myself in what, let's see, when did I get into the theology program? (laughs) 2009? 2010? And got healed of those things, and got out of that prison, and got liberated then and there, so my anger, it's not towards me. I love me. I value me. I see me. Now I do. I thank God for me. I thank God for what he's given me and the talents and gifts that I want to give back to him, and that's where my goals are, so we've got all that going on where my hope is, but now I'm angry (laughs) at the system. And what I gave them. I gave it to them...They only came for me because I called for them (laughs) kind of thing. My actions called for it. But nevertheless, just saying, it's just that's what keeps me -- because I refuse to give them that again. I refuse to.

Women prioritize their agency to behave in particular ways as a primary goal for not getting caught up in behaviors that would lead to incarceration. Seeing themselves as agents of their own behavior and incarceration actually contributes to a feeling of power over themselves and even the criminal justice system.

In other words, refusing to surrender agency to the criminal justice system by committing crimes actually becomes a way to enact agency and freedom. The priority and its subsequent outcomes becomes the driving force that provides direction for one's path.⁴⁰¹ In particular, the drive to be free then becomes a priority in which one finds hope. Maintaining agency and power over one's self becomes an ultimate priority against the threat of imminent incarceration. Priority-driven seeing ultimately restores hope because it enables women to make choices about their life.

Part 2: Overcoming the Prison Context: Restorative Hope as Knowing in the Dark

Simplistic notions of hope focus solely on individuals' lack of hope without paying attention to the context that perpetuates a sense of hopelessness. Women who find themselves in prison force us to pay attention to the context. They force us to acknowledge that hope can easily go into crisis, especially when one attempts to exist in a place that embodies despair. As one woman stated, "It's like being in a dark room—you wake up in a dark room and you try to turn on the light and you can't. And when you go to

⁴⁰¹ Carl R. Snyder, C.R. "Hypothesis: There is Hope," in *Handbook of Hope Theory, Measures and Applications* Edited by Carl R. Snyder (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000), 9.

turn on the light, you have walls all around you.”⁴⁰² The context of the prison creates an environment of darkness.

Thus we cannot simply say women on the incarceration continuum cannot see, but we must ask why they can't see. To pay attention to the contexts and circumstances that create darkness and contribute to not seeing enable us to think more broadly about hope and our responses to hopelessness. Too often, our efforts to revive hope deal with attempts to fix individuals without ever acknowledging the individual's context. The women's sight is not gone, but the lights are out. In order to sustain hope in darkness, the women learn to adjust their eyes so they can see through the dark. In this sense, hope is not a destination but a journey. Women experience hope as they continue to negotiate their dark circumstances and contexts, thus grabbing hold of hope amidst darkness. Women who adjust their vision to see in the darkness embody hope. It's not always because they can see in the dark; rather, they have learned to know in the dark. To know in the dark is the process of adjusting to the darkness. As one adjusts, one begins to apprehend things more clearly. Knowing in the darkness is a learned skill that comes as one begins to adjust their way of seeing and perceiving in confinement. Not all women enter prison with this skill of knowing how to navigate confinement and the obstacles confinement brings. The darkness, oddly enough, seems to produce a sense of renewed assuredness in one's capacity to survive amidst darkness. The women taught me that hope still lives in dark places.

Prison forced one to adjust one's vision and enlarge one's imagination so one could see in the dark; yet, at the same time, those who valued the light used the context of darkness to grow and know in new ways. That confinement could produce a unique context for specialized knowing pervaded the interviews. Learning to see in the dark while also learning to walk in the dark produced a knowledge that one could never have if one did not experience the darkness. As Barbara Brown Taylor illuminates in *Learning to Walk in the Dark*:

[W]hen, despite all my best efforts, the lights have gone off in my life...plunging me into the kind of darkness that turns my knees to water, nonetheless, I have not died. The monsters have not dragged me out of bed and taken me back to the lair. The witches have

⁴⁰² Toya, Interview, 15 September 2015.

not turned me into a bat. Instead, I have learned things in the dark that have saved my life over and over again, so that there is only one logical conclusion. I need darkness as much as I need light.⁴⁰³

While I would never say that any particular woman needed prison, I could see that often in their interviews, women did not rage against prison itself as much as the way they were treated in prison. Prison, although often viewed as a dark space, seemed to yield both unnecessary and necessary fruit. The darkness of the prison context actually forced women to learn to walk even when they could not see. Rather than darkness being an enemy of hope, darkness yielded a paradoxical understanding of hope.

To conceive of prison as this dehumanizing space while also understanding that it provided a space where women could reflect and learn about themselves and the world in new ways challenged my understanding of confinement. This learning could in fact be double-edged; it could contribute to one's criminal knowledge or to one's personal growth and development. In other words, because prison throws people into a space of disequilibrium and crisis on so many levels, women could not avoid trying to swim in the murky waters if they sought to survive. Eden captured this dilemma clearly. In her words, she says:

Sometimes prison will teach you the bad way to look at hope. That it will never come, that you don't have hope in your situation that you don't have hope in conquering whatever you're in. But then you have another part in you—You have another place that you get to where you're not allowing your situation to determine where you go in life, and where you want to go in life.

Very clearly stated, hope is a way of knowing in the dark. To liken hope as a way of knowing in the darkness is to recognize that when people are in situations of despair, they may actually feel like they are steeped in darkness. The anxiety comes from not knowing or anticipation of the not-yet. A very bright future may appear darkened when clouded by not knowing. Hope moves in darkness toward the not yet. It presses through with an “in spite of” knowing characterized by courage and resiliency.⁴⁰⁴To sustain hope in a place that embodies despair requires internal and external resources that enable one to exist in alternate spaces. Often times, the alternate spaces that women name are found in interpersonal relationships, divine encounters, or empowering programming in the prison. These spaces offer support and open one's

⁴⁰³ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher Inc, 2014), 4-5.

⁴⁰⁴ Paul Tillich, *The Terry Lectures* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), 161.

imagination so that they do not feel confined to the darkness. Further, these spaces actually become spaces where women experience human hope—the ability to live in their own skin as they walk on this dark journey. In the next section, I explore the ways that divine-human encounters as well as hoping in the past, present, and future all became powerful ways of coming to know hope in the darkness.

Divine Encounters: Divine Being and Transcending Darkness

The knowing that presses in spite of all odds, for many of the women, was actually grounded in unwavering confidence in God. Transcendent knowing seeks to perceive the possibilities that might emerge even out of the contradictions of life. Theologian Paul Tillich argues that the mystical experience provides a transcending power that goes beyond the anxiety prompted by the threat of death, the feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness, and condemnation. He further argues that mysticism, in fact, becomes a source of courage to face threats to one's humanity.⁴⁰⁵ Similar to Moltmann, women came to know “God in the dark of the night—God as the source of hope.”⁴⁰⁶ Womanists might refer to this Transcending Darkness power as the courage of God that lives in the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰⁷

Namely, one's identification with the Transcendent actually serves to provide self-affirmation. To identify and be in relationship with the Divine is itself powerful, because God is transcending darkness. Thus, a person's identification with a God who transcends darkness repositions this person as one who transcends darkness as well. Even in moments when meaninglessness and despair seem to prevail, “their courage to be is reduced to the acceptance of even this state as a way to prepare through darkness for light, through emptiness for abundance.”⁴⁰⁸ For example, in this instance, women describe that relationship with God seemed to be the primary mode of knowing hope. God served as a mediator, bridging hope in the typical circumstances of life. When one forged a connection with God, one seemed to simultaneously forge a connection with hope.

⁴⁰⁵ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 155-157.

⁴⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, 8-9,

⁴⁰⁷ Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God*, 128.

⁴⁰⁸ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 159.

For example, Indigo returning citizen who was busy navigating daily life describes how her intentional engagement with God helped provide hope for her:

Imagination and creativity. I believe of course that in our relationship with God we receive hope. The other night I was feeling disconnected and as I laid down and went to bed, I said God, I've been running around. I haven't spent time with you. And even this—I'm saying this because I know I should, I know I should just pray and trust that you hear, but I just choose to experience you now as pure liquid love holding me in this bed, letting me know you are present, you are here, you are part of my life, you know everything I'm going through, you forgive me, you love me. I'm precious to you, and I felt like I was back in my mother's womb, and that experience just gave me hope again, like as long as God and I, we're cool, there's lots of hope. So feeling that connectiveness, which I did purely in an exercise that utilized my imagination helped me reconnect again with God.⁴⁰⁹

What's fascinating about her description is that hope was not necessarily gone, but the rigors of the day seemed to block out the awareness of hope. Thus the process by which she reconnected with God actually helped her become more aware of hope, thus enabling her to experience a sense of peace due to her and God being “cool” with each other. This relational knowing between a human spirit and God's spirit has many dimensions of mystery. Yet, the relational knowing prompted emotional experiences that contributed to restoring hope amidst the busy-ness of life. In other words, seeing and speaking to God became ways to express connectedness with God. This perceptual imaginative connection with God, in turn, gave her hope again. God, then, became a mediator of hope.

Disconnection or the loss of the felt presence of God, on the other hand, creates a sense of abandonment and disconnection which disrupts hope. As one woman states quite frankly, “For me, hope is intrinsically tied to God, and when I feel disconnected from god, I lose hope.” She later discusses how this loss of connection with God actually created a pipeline to prison where she was more willing to make “stupid decisions.” The anxiety of what Tillich calls “emptiness or meaninglessness” seems to foreclose courage and the will to live. “The anxiety of meaninglessness is anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. This anxiety is aroused by the loss of a spiritual center, of an answer, however symbolic and indirect, to the question of the meaning of existence.”⁴¹⁰ It can

⁴⁰⁹ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

⁴¹⁰ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 47.

even invite unwarranted thoughts of ending one's life. Thus, hope requires a great deal of risk and courage to live life, especially in the context of darkness. Indigo shares concerning her own faith struggles when she feels like God is not there. She writes:

What I find is when I have faith struggles, it's not, "God—How come God you're not hearing me? How come God I'm not feeling a connection with you?" It's "God are you even there?" Because I had that very strong atheist leaning that I came to know God more when I was older, so my development of the concept of God didn't happen in my baby, toddler, childhood years when you're saying to your baby say Thank you, Jesus. I didn't have that. So Jesus -- It's almost like being adopted when you're age 9 or 10, and that's who you know as your parents. Something is still missing. So that's what I struggle with. So when I lose hope, I feel very dead, I feel like there is nothing beyond what is visible, and so very much so the thinking of the future and imagining the future becomes even more of a challenge, because even if you are atheists, you can imagine your future, but if your future imaginings are tied into there is nothing, which is what atheist leanings taught me, it becomes even more challenging. So nothingness means complete death to me... and that absolute nothingness that this is the end, there's absolutely nothing beyond this moment, that is what always comes up for me when there's situations in my life where I've lost hope.⁴¹¹

God seems to rescue her from the abyss by reminding her that there is something beyond the nothingness. God re-establishes humanity by dissipating the threat of non-being thereby restoring hope. To speak of faith in a Transcendent One while one suffers through incarceration is to call on a God that is not distant but with those who suffer. In this sense, faith is actually a gift that enables one to know that God is greater than the situation at hand, thus providing meaning for what may feel meaningless.⁴¹² Overall, knowing and connecting with God in the moment enabled her to know hope.

For women who have to fight not to be subsumed in darkness, it is actually important for them to be able to differentiate themselves from the darkness. When I asked Toya to share with me what hope looks like when it was restricted, she wrote a poem that illustrates how all-consuming darkness can be. She writes:

*Darkness is all around
It's on me
It's in me
At times, I close my eyes and think I recognize something
Is it light?
Darkness
It's all around me
It's on me*

⁴¹¹ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

⁴¹² Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 178.

*It's in me
It is me⁴¹³*

The experience of darkness becomes so pervasive that it is no longer outside of herself; it is her. The label of “sinful” or “criminal” perhaps confirms this sense of having a dark sense of self. For her, prison represented darkness.

To identify with a God who is able to see one’s humanity as human and not as darkness offers a source of comfort. Grasping for a God who transcends darkness is a fight to experience hope and humanization in one’s own humanity. Indigo describes God’s Transcending Darkness as being able to transcend sin and offer forgiveness and fresh starts. She says.

You're telling me that permanently I will never have a fresh start? I will never get over my sins. It's the antithesis of what my faith reflects. You sin, you repent, God forgives. Community in the area of criminal justice should reflect that. There's no deity that doesn't forgive. So even with Catholics when you're supposed to do penance, I did my penance. So at what point do I get restored back to my community? If I'm not restored back to the community at large, how can I have hope?⁴¹⁴

In this sense, forgiveness is a way to transcend darkness. Even when people “sin,” they do not have to be “sinful.” A fresh start, then becomes a way out of the darkness. When fresh starts are not granted, it is easy for women to remain in darkness and subsequently begin to see their humanity as dark.

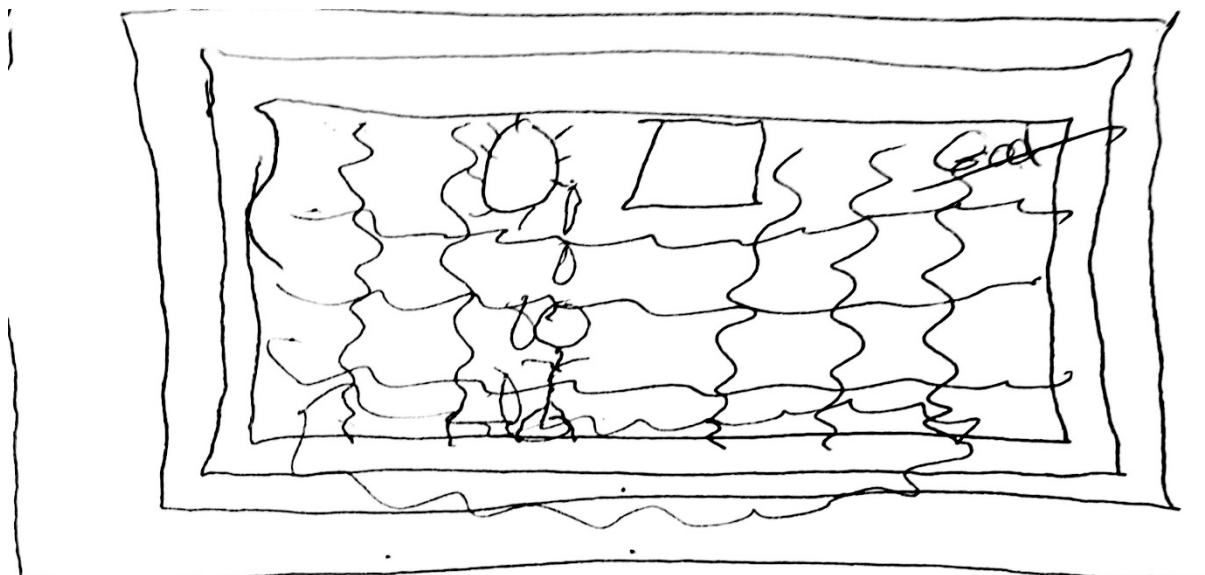
Hope seems to be a connection away. When individuals begin to see and know themselves in relationship to others, and more particularly God, they seem to move toward a more holistic sense of self. The human-divine encounter contributed to positive emotions towards others and the world; even more so, relational knowing contributed to an enhanced sense of being. In other words, one’s relationships with God helped transform one’s feelings and perceptions so that they could know the world in a more open optimistic way. The optimism and openness, however, may not always be directly grounded in hopefulness in the world but may be grounded in a renewed sense of purpose and meaning despite being in an unstable, unjust, and sometimes unkind world. Thus, transcending darkness actually emphasized a being-in-relationship to

⁴¹³ Toya, Interview, 15 September 2014.

⁴¹⁴ Indigo, Interview, 21 March 2014.

others as a being that can participate in the world in ways that contribute to the sustaining of these relationships.

Seeing God as one to whom they could surrender their lives actually provoked hope. In a space that forces certain forms of surrender, one woman talks about how letting go the desire to know everything is empowering. She writes: “Hope and God are almost the same for me maybe. So I don’t understand everything, but I’m so happy I don’t. And I’m so okay with the fact that I don’t, and I don’t have this incredible drive to figure it all out, and that comes with the whole empowering feeling you get from a certain type of surrender for me.”⁴¹⁵ Hope enables people to let go of “knowing” the future and be okay with trusting the God who is beyond the future (while also within the present). This image of God as transcending darkness became so clear in an image someone drew. I prompted her by asking, what does hope look like when it is restricted? What does it look like when it breaks free? With less than one minute, she responded with the following image:



Even more compelling is Eden’s description of the image. She writes:

There is a girl inside of the different stages of life, not having what she needed in the beginning. She’s surrounded by all the different phases of life. This is hope. She’s the girl.

⁴¹⁵ Lisa, Interview, 25 February 2014.

And she's in the middle of it and she don't see a way out. Hope don't see a way out. But somewhere the sun shines. But the sun cries. So that's the reason I said about God. God, there's no way you could have gotten it out of there. There's no way, because he didn't do nothing but lead from the cradle to the penitentiary, you see? There's no way in the world it could have happened. You can put it in words. I've given it to you, and you can put it in words, and you can use the little girl as hope. And that's pretty much the best way I can tell you, when you're locked in total darkness. Somewhere there's a little bit of candle light. And it had to be God, because my life didn't produce light, and the choices that I made didn't produce light. It was like -- I don't know what words you could use to describe it.⁴¹⁶

In other words, God is both “the way” and “the light” that transcends the darkness in her own life. Her mystical experience with God actually enabled her to see God as a way maker or “making a way out of no way.” Her depiction of hope and God’s transcending power begs to question, “How does God transcend darkness.” I am left with the same conclusion Barbara Brown Taylor draws from the scriptures, “darkness is not dark to God; the night is as bright as the day.”⁴¹⁷ In essence, God as transcending darkness was a God who made passageways or provided light as women learned to walk in the darkness.

Hope and Time: Future, Present, and Past

Hope is not just for the world beyond; it is also for the world in which we live. To embrace this dialectic truth is to say that hope is future-oriented with a strong grounding and purpose for the present. While hope provides a language of possibility, it is not just future-oriented. Hope transcends time. It sits on a continuum between past, present, and future. It functions as a redeemer of the past, a healer of the present, and a prophetic impulse into the future. I propose a hope rooted in a trans-worldly reality, where past, present, and future are equally valued in building a just world. Hope speaks. Whether from the past, present, or future, hope’s words enlist the will, desire, passion, and imagination of the present moment to live for an expected end or a future of possibility. Hope enables the past to speak to the present so that lessons learned and struggles overcome can recruit the will of a person to press on in the here-and-now.

Throughout the interviews, three equally dominant themes surfaced: anchoring hope in future possibility, using the past as a way to know hope, and having an open-orientation to life that is rooted in

⁴¹⁶ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

⁴¹⁷ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, 16.

the moment-to-moment encounters. Hope on the continuum of time performs the following functions: 1) Enables the future to speak to the present so that future possibilities can recruit the passion of a person to press on in the here-and-now; 2) Enables the future to speak to the past so that the expected end is not dictated by past hurts, actions, or labels but by the possibility of there being more tomorrow than there is today; and 3) Enables the past to speak to the present so that one's agency is recruited in the here-and-now to work for a just tomorrow.

The Future Speaks: Hope in the Future

Prison can damage a person's sense of self-worth. The walls that confine one's physical body in a historical moment can confine a person's vision so that they cannot see beyond that historical moment. This vision lends itself to a future of impossibility—one that often mimics the impossibilities of the present and sometimes those of the past. To enlarge one's vision requires what one woman describes as "looking outside the window;" outside the window lurks possibilities--"hope that one day I'll be free to go towards what my call is or what I wanted to do with my life." In other words, just because the prison represents a dark place does not mean the future also has to be dark. One way for women to feel a sense of humanization and hope in present darkness is to see a future with possibility. In the words of Indigo:

Hope says there's a red carpet ahead unfolding. I just envision this unfolding, unrolling of a red carpet, and you're following it, and hope says I have a future. Hope says I have value. Hope says I can contribute, and because I believe all of those things, when I see you I smile and I immediately think the best of you first before I let you prove something else to me. I give you a chance. I meet you half way or all the way. I have expectation. I can dare to plan and dream... It's envisioning a good future.

Hope, in this sense, unfolds before one's very eyes. Hope speaks to the existential realities of people. It speaks to people's sense of self. It speaks to the seemingly minute but very important details of a person's life. The unfolding red carpet is actually symbolic of a positive future unfolding. This definition of hope describes an already, but not yet reality that engenders expectation in the present moments. Hope, in the words of Moltmann, is "forward looking and forward moving, and therefore moving, and therefore also

revolutionizing and transforming the present.”⁴¹⁸ When one can no longer see the red carpet unfolding, that’s when one’s hope goes in crisis mode. The path ahead is darkened and women must find new ways to experience hope.

In *Man and His New Hope*, Gerald O’Collins captures this unfolding yet existensial reality clearly. He writes, “[Hu]man’s existence seems to be defined by the notion of ‘I will be’ rather than by the assertion ‘I am’....[humans are] animal[s] with a sense of the future, being[s] in quest of reality. He [or she] is threatened by fear and encouraged by hope, as he [or she] reaches beyond himself for that which is yet to come.”⁴¹⁹ This quote affirms that much of the quest of human existence is toward the not yet, rather than the here-and-now. The challenge with always looking toward the not yet is forgetting the value of the here and now, the being that is here in the now.

The Present Speaks: Hope in the Here-and-Now & Moment By Moment

Too often hope scholars have focused on hope as a future with possibility. Women on the incarceration continuum challenge that notion. In particular, a consensus seemed to emerge that hope in the future sometimes was too overwhelming; instead, the moment-to-moment experiences of hope seemed to breathe life into the future. Lisa, shared how hope operates when the store clerk hands her back her money and smiles or through a friendly conversation with a neighbor. On another occasion, she shares how she began to practice seeing God in the mundane. She shares this experience about being in the barber shop,

T]rain yourself to remember to see God in something at least once a day, spend like -- So I started doing that. And then it happened to where I didn't have to think about doing it, and then this experience happened where I saw as I was getting my hair cut, I saw God in a broom stick. I was just sitting there getting my hair cut... and there was a broom stick there. (laughs) And so I know this sounds weird, but this meant a lot to me. This moment meant a lot to me. So I'm getting my hair cut and people are talking or whatever, and so you know how in wood you see the different lines and patterns of the wood? So in that broom stick I saw that, and I'm just like that's nothing but God. You can't just do that. You get what I'm saying? Like how does that happen, and it brought me back to I can't understand that, but I know it's happened. To have the different textures, but it's always the lines in it. I was just looking at it and it was amazing to me at that moment, and I totally saw God in it, and I couldn't understand it, and I couldn't explain it. And that goes with

⁴¹⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

⁴¹⁹ Gerald O’Collins, *Man and His New Hope* (New York: Herder& Herder, 1969), 21.

*my whole thing of like just being okay with not being able to explain or know things, I mean, explain or give the answers to things, but still just knowing there's no doubt that God is behind is.*⁴²⁰

Her incident with the broomstick actually confirms the way God manifests in momentary experiences to instill hope. She challenges hope to illuminate through brightening one's moment, which then propels them into the next moment of life. In other words, hope cannot just be futuristic; it must find that the present is also pregnant with possibility. In fact, an overwhelming response from many of the women is that sometimes thinking about the future was too overwhelming; they could only think about today. Those whose hope was rooted in God still lived moment to moment. Their hope in God gave them "a passion for the possible;" it was not articulated as an eschatological hope but as an immediate existential hope.⁴²¹ The existential nature of hope does not foreclose its eschatological character; instead, it recognizes God as both in history and beyond history. As discussed in Chapter 2, an eschatological perspective that is rooted in the historical moment sees God as breaking into the present to stand against injustice and inspire hope.⁴²² As discussed in the work of Jones, it is God's presence, then, that makes it possible to hope in a future or even a moment that is not yet.⁴²³ In this sense, God breaks through the present moment when a neighbor smiles or a store clerk engages in conversation. The incarnational presence of God through the activity of others makes possible hope in the moment.

From a political and existential perspective, God's incarnational presence depicted in the name Emmanuel ("God with us") represents God as interested in fighting against the political reality of structural injustice while also fighting against the personal realities that attack one's sense of being. In this sense, God is actively engaged in the present moment to fight with and stand on behalf of those grasping for hope. In other words, the hope of God is rooted in the God that sits with people in their personal lives as they wrestle with the very big questions that centers on their own sense of humanity. God's transcendent presence beckons believers to press toward and believe in the promise that all things will be made new. While hope

⁴²⁰ Lisa, Interview, 02 February 2014.

⁴²¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 32.

⁴²² James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 128.

⁴²³ Major J. Jones, *Black Awareness*, 135.

lives in the here and now, it also grasps for the not-yet. Or while the not-yet anchors hope, hope's activism actually creates new possibilities for the future.

The Past Speaks: In Search of the Generative Voice and Hope as Memory of Lessons Past/Passed On

To say hope is only oriented toward the future is short-sighted. For while future expectations are a significant aspect of hope, the past serves as a resource of dogged determination and will power to survive. The importance of the past emerged as another dominant theme in hope-talk. When asked to describe an example of hope, several examples were captured by the phrase, "I remembered what I knew." The past served as a powerful repository of lessons learned from previous experiences or lessons passed on. For example, the memory of struggles overcome serves as a memorial of a material reality where impossibilities manifested; it provides encouragement for what seems insurmountable in the current moment. Further, the memory of past mistakes can become a resource to choose wisely in the present.

Not only are memories of personal experience of the past significant, but many shared how a generative voice emerged from their grandparents or parents. Oftentimes, a maternal figure represented the primary voices of care in the narratives of these particular women, helping them transcend the darkness of the prison space.⁴²⁴ Lillian exemplifies this negotiation between societal voices and voices of care. She says:

*For me and my generation...the mother or the father, but especially the mother, has been such an influence in our life. I remember growing up in South Georgia in the projects... We used to call it the circle, but in that circle all of these women were single women, and they were very, very strong, and they influenced us. Like I said, sometimes all of those good values that they gave us, they never went away. They were just buried for a while because we were so busy participating in the world. We were participating with whatever we thought the world was handing us that was fun and good. We didn't know that we needed to hold onto those values that our parents have given us. So my generation had good influence and now I have influenced my children, who in turn have influenced their children.*⁴²⁵

⁴²⁴ Not all women on the incarceration continuum have mothers that serve in the role of the generative. For many, grandmothers or other family members, including male figures, occupied this role; it is they who shared their love and concern in the form of a generative voice.

⁴²⁵ Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

The misperception of fun and joy attracted many to the life that society offered and away from the generative voice. Nevertheless, the generative voice, even after years of going down one path, still resounds in the ear and heart of the daughter. Remembering the values spoken by the generative voice helped to reposition Lillian's heart; Lillian now eagerly passes these values to her children.

As revealed in Lillian's response, many of the women had a preoccupation with their maternal role. Women in and out of prison who may experience a strained relationship with their children seek to be the generative voice for many of their children. They recognized their lives as connected with the lives of their children. For those without children, they also displayed a deep concern for their nieces, nephews, and god children. Their carceral awareness created a hypersensitivity to the possibilities of their offspring falling into a cycle of incarceration if they too, ignored the generative voice of care.

A preoccupation with the past can be a hindrance to the future; yet, a preoccupation with the past can be a catalyst to revolution that transforms the present and past. Sankofa, the Akan Adrinka symbol of the bird, is invocative of this claim. This bird's head is turned to take an egg of its back. Sankofa, which stands for "go back and retrieve it" recognizes the importance of re-membering the past and its lessons so that the experiences of the present and possibilities of the present is not darkened. The work of retrieving what was lost or forgotten is generative in itself. This Afro-centric wisdom teaches us that the past is a resource for hope and knowledge. In other words, the past actually sheds light on ways of being and doing now. Without resourcing the past one can easily live into insanity, where one becomes entrenched into repetitive cycles of mistakes.

Even more so, when women have trouble facing their past, women use a re-framing strategy where they are able to revise the past in order to live the present and live into the future. Reframing helps to mine the past in ways that help frame the present and future through a lens of possibility.⁴²⁶ Oftentimes, the lessons they shared with others from their past actually was a reframing of their lives."⁴²⁷ Whether remembering is centered on the political ways that forbears resisted in history, the didactic lessons taught

⁴²⁶ Ellison, *Cut Dead But Still Alive*, 125-126.

⁴²⁷ This is what Maruna refers to as "redemptive scripts. Shadd Maruna, *Making Good*, 54.

from parents, grandparents, and faith communities, or the faith-based perspective on Christ's life, death and resurrection, all of these practices emphasize the past as a way of knowing. The knowing is not just about what was done in the past; the knowing is about possibilities of what can be done in the present. Ultimately, hope helps discern a path between the competing messages from society, voices of care, and one's own voice. During challenging times, drawing on a generative voice of the past actually contributed to hope. The past can be harnessed as a tool to wrestle with and overcome the challenges of the present.

Overall, restorative hope is not solely rooted in a "this-worldly" or "other-worldly" reality, but finds the world we lived in, the world we live in, and the world we hope for to be equally important in the construction of a new reality. An overemphasis on the other-worldly or the world that is yet to come may be a distraction to the grasp toward a meaningful existence in this world. However, restorative hope also acknowledges that an overemphasis on the world as it is can provoke an overwhelming sense of despair that is difficult to defeat. Hope invokes resilience in the present moment so one chooses not to quit. The response to the world as it is, however, is not an invitation to disengage but to recognize that engagement requires comprehensive cross-sector collaboration. This "trans-worldly" reality invites partnership and engagement with a transcendent being so that the world we hope to live in can become the world we are actually creating. The ways women on the incarceration continuum know through darkness has implications for us all. Re-mem-bering the past, pressing toward the future, living in the present, and trusting God in darkness can actually be a way out and light for us all.

Part 3: Ways of Doing: Generative Praxis along the Incarceration Continuum

The previous section introduced the concept of human hope as a way of being and becoming in the world toward an expected end. This section explores restorative hope as a way of doing within the world. How one is and becomes in the world is intricately connected to what one does in the world. In other words, a woman's agency flows from a grounding in a hopeful self that sees and knows the world through a lens of possibility even in the midst of darkness. In particular, restorative hope acts toward an expected future when women on the incarceration continuum begin to see themselves as active agents in their world and in

larger society. Hope, as a human need, requires an anchoring in practice.⁴²⁸ Generative hope, then, is the process by which one's seeing, knowing, and becoming leads to direct actions in the world; these actions then produce something new in the world. These actions are grounded in care and moves toward personal and communal wholeness. In particular, this section explores generative hope through the generative praxis of biological, parental, and societal generativity that tends to external practices of care. I argue that generativity provides a new form of agency where women can be "productive" through their care and nurture of the next generation. In this sense, they become agents of hope who restores hope in the world.

Generativity, Generative Hope, and the Emergence of Generative Praxis

Coined by Erikson in the 1950's, the term generativity refers to the way a person cares for the next generation. Generally described as a crisis that emerges during adulthood, generativity vs. stagnation marks a stage in one's life when one desires to care for society and those within society so one will not become self-absorbed. This term encompasses procreativity, creativity, and productivity. In a generative process, people produce and subsequently care for the new persons, new ideas, or new products that help further the next generation.⁴²⁹ On the other hand, those who do not produce or seek to ensure the survival and growth of that which is produced fall into what Erikson calls stagnation and subsequently become self-absorbed.⁴³⁰ Critical to the concept of generativity is its cyclical, interdependent nature. Those who have entered the stage of generativity have actually hit an age-stage that creates a desire to care for others through various practices that promote a healthy future. In other words, their "need to be needed" translates into investing their lives into people, things, and ideas that broadens the future.⁴³¹ Bringing generativity to bear on what it means to be human and have human hope opens up the conversation for women on the incarceration continuum regarding being productive or living a productive life and ultimately introduces care for self and other as a major component of generative behavior.

⁴²⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 2.

⁴²⁹ Erik H. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 67.

⁴³⁰ Donald Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2008), 126.

⁴³¹ Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implication of Psychoanalytic Insight* (New York: Norton, 1964), 103.

As advocated by Carol Gilligan exploring the concept of care may actually lead to a more generative, or should I say productive, life.⁴³² Women who learn ways of caring for others not only feel more productive but they feel more hopeful. Their lives are not stagnant behind bars; instead, they are sharing their lives with others. Their act of sharing is ultimately a generative act of care that enables them to see themselves differently while at the same time being seen differently.

Generativity communicates that seeing, knowing, being, and doing are interconnected and always in conversation with one another. Each process—that is to see, know, be, and do—is generative in its own right, thus generating an awakening in the other processes. For example, when one begins to see one's possibilities for a productive future, they are more likely to be productive. Inherent in this concept of generativity lives hope. When generativity leads to care rather than stagnation, it becomes a manifestation of hope. Thus, generative hope anticipates a desired outcome through generative actions upon one's self, others, and the world. These generative actions are known as generative praxis. Generative praxis refers to practices rooted in providing nurture and care for persons in order for those persons to mature into their authentic self. Generative praxis also applies to the nurture and care of ideas and products that promote care. Generative praxis is the active manifestation of hope that expresses generative concern for self, others, God, and the world. Giving birth to new perceptions, knowledge, selves, and practices may require discomfort and even pain; thus, generative praxis preserves the idea that both nurture and trial may be necessary in restoring hope. Generative praxis not only supports the cared for; it supports the caregiver. It not only generates action now but future action. In this sense, generative hope seeks to sustain life by creating a cycle where life-giving becomes mutual. It confirms hope as both/and in that generative hope enlivens the here-and-now through those who engage in generative praxis while at the same time thrusting toward the not-yet.

Generative praxis demonstrates the dynamic interchange that gives way to generative hope—that is seeing, knowing, being, and acting in the world from a posture of possibility that enables one to care for

⁴³² Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 174.

themselves and others. While there are a variety of ways to demonstrate the generative cycle that help women on the incarceration continuum see, know, be, and act differently, I have only selected the three that stand out to me both through the interviews and throughout my experience of teaching in the prison. In particular, generative praxis expresses generative hope through women's attempts to care for others and themselves and the faith community's attempt to care for women. Using the theories of generativity and generativity chill, the next sections describe the way generative praxis, specifically societal generativity, manifests along the incarceration continuum.

Generativity along the Incarceration Continuum: Asserting Generative Praxis in Motherhood

Generativity is marked by human motive.⁴³³ Those whose generative concern focuses solely on preserving the self represents an agentic mode of generativity while those who focus on preserving people, things, and ideas outside of themselves represent a communal mode of generativity.⁴³⁴ In other words, the emphasis on the human motive behind generativity brings into sight not just the generative work that has been done but also why that generative work was done. My use of generative praxis takes into account both the agentic and communal modes of generativity. The concept of generativity, in fact, recognizes a certain degree of self-absorption.⁴³⁵ Caring for self is integral in caring for others. Many women constantly negotiate this balance between prioritizing their own self-care and providing others with care.⁴³⁶ Resolving this conflict of care for others and care for self is a generative theme in the prison. Failed attempts to negotiate this balance prior to prison actually become an entry to a pathway to incarceration. Thus, it is critical to emphasize that generative praxis can be self-directed and internal. In this sense, you are the self that benefits from nurture and care of self. Generativity can also be other-directed and external when others are others and the world benefit from one's care. From the insights of women on the incarceration

⁴³³ John Kotre, *Outliving the Self: Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), 16-17.

⁴³⁴ John Kotre, *Outliving the Self*, 16-17.

⁴³⁵ John Snarey, *How Fathers Care for the Next Generation*, 26.

continuum, I propose the praxis of a womanish generative hope that promotes wholeness of both the self and community.

The concrete maternal issues Black women face before, during, and after incarceration oftentimes contribute to their experience of confinement. The concept of maternity persists as a theme in prison. Women are concerned with both how to be a mother and how to live into motherhood while they are behind bars and upon their release from prison. Women could not bury their identity as mothers. In fact, wearing the role of mother seemed to provide a sense of refuge from the carceral identity that confined the production of new selves. Motherhood countered the carceral identity that sought to define a woman's identity as a non-productive citizen. I do not seek to romanticize the task of mothering behind bars but to pay close attention to the ways in which mothering behind bars becomes even more complicated. In advancing this claim about generative hope that is primarily maternal in the women's prison, I also acknowledge the ways that identities and desires are shaped within a patriarchal and hegemonic society, thus influencing how women seek to perform their role as mother. Thus, I also take into account the diverse cultural and racial perspectives that may impact the practice of mothering and maternal thinking. With that said, the theme of maternity must be explored on the incarceration continuum.

The prison inhibits many forms of agency, limiting what a mother can do for her biological children while she is incarcerated. But the prison cannot inhibit who women are, that is the identity of mother. Similarly, prison may inhibit many forms of agency—that is the behavioral dimensions of what a woman can do for and to be generative while incarcerated. But the prison cannot inhibit who women are as generative agents. Thus, in spite of the many challenges to generativity that exist along the continuum, women still find ways to produce, create, and care for children, ideas, and the products they produce. Some of the ways women demonstrate generativity fall outside the context of biological parenting. Expanding Erikson's notion of generativity, the concepts of biological generativity, parental generativity, and societal generativity holds value for this work. John Kotre describes four types of generativity—biological generativity, parental generativity, technical generativity, and cultural generativity. In keeping more with Erikson's original intent, John Snarey makes the claim that technical generativity and cultural generativity

can be more accurately described as societal generativity, which entails the activities of both technical generativity and cultural generativity.⁴³⁷ Biological generativity focuses on caring for and continuing one's genetic heritage through nurture, nursing, and other childrearing practices primarily in the early stages of life. Parental generativity focuses on —parenting that promotes a child's healthy development throughout the lifecycle and underscores parenting as essentially a moral enterprise. Societal generativity is caring for younger adults either through interpersonal relationships such as mentorship and leadership roles or through efforts to promote an ethically sound society in which younger adults can live.⁴³⁸

Generativity on Lockdown: Fighting the Urge of Generativity Chill

Maternal apprehension emerged throughout the formal interviews but more specifically in the informal conversations after or before the interviews. Sifting through the delicate issues of restraint to offering parental nurture and care to their children resulted in real angst, presenting a serious crisis for hope. In fact, this crisis seemed to stand out above the others. A restrained maternal self seemed to have much further implications for a person's human self. A question that seemed to loom is: If I cannot fulfill my role as mother, then who am I? The doing of motherhood seemed to presuppose a particular type of being—a generative being. When women whose efforts to be a mother were met with acceptance, a genuine joy and pride emerged. The crisis of hope, however, often surfaced when the love and support offered to their children seemed to be futile attempts to care. Their children did not receive their efforts, their children's guardians refused their efforts, or the space to demonstrate care never presented itself because of the nature of their crime. Deep despair and even a sense of meaninglessness in life resulted from this loss of generativity. A more fitting term that captures the sheer crisis of hope that women experience behind bars is “generativity chill”—“a type of anxiety (awareness of the self as finite, limited, bounded) that results from a specific type of existential imperilment (the threatened loss of one's child, creation, or creativity).”⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ John Kotre, *Outliving the Self*, 11-14. John Snarey, *How Fathers Care for the Next Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 20.

⁴³⁸ Snarey, *How Fathers Care for the Next Generation*, 19-23.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

In other words, generativity chill emerges from the possibility of losing one's real or imagined child and feeds into a threat against the generative self, which may result in stagnation or death.⁴⁴⁰

Women in prison experience the nearness of death, which is one of the markers that spark generativity chill. They experience generativity chill on a couple of levels. First, they experience it with regard to their own death, which is the ultimate loss of a generative self. Even those who committed white collar crimes and were not career criminals taste death in prison. With their eyes, they talk about seeing brutal fights. They see people dying from disease and old age. They hear about those who they left behind dying. This is also foreshadowed by the persistent suicidal thinking, attempts, and completions that may also be witnessed. Coupled with the nearness of death is the loss of biological generativity that they experience as a result of their incarceration. Women expressly feel this generativity chill because of their loss of parental control during and sometimes after incarceration. More specifically, women face the loss of biological and parental generativity when they can no longer ensure the biological survival of their child by nurturing and disciplining their child from birth throughout their teenage years. Further, during prison, they are stripped of the possibility of having new biological children. To be clear, those who are not biological parents can also experience generativity chill; thus, I use the term "generative" to account for the multiple expressions of generativity that takes place within the prison context. With that said, I also want to draw direct attention to the shifting energies between the real existential maternal issues happening with women and their biological children and the ways they work out their existential maternal challenges when they cannot be with their biological children/grandchildren, ultimately leading them to seek out other ways to "mother" or be generative.

Eden shares a story that gets to the heart of many women's generative concern even during incarceration. She talks about a time in Atlanta when a serial killer was kidnapping and killing young boys. The great fear and generative concern for her son's life generates action. She breaks out of prison to ensure her son's safety. The sense of urgency she felt about her son's life created a crisis whereby she chose to

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, 24.

respond by breaking the law. While there is not always a serial killer on the loose kidnapping and murdering black boys and girls, the racial hostility and police brutality that marks our society still makes death a genuine concern for black parents, especially parents who may have little to no control over the life trajectory of their children. In other words, in a stand-your-ground society where the safety of black boys and black girls is always at stake, questions around protecting and caring for the next generation hold urgent value.⁴⁴¹ The tension of living in a society that seemingly either kills or confines black poor bodies while also being a black confined body either a provokes generativity chill or can lead to generative praxis.

Another less direct approach to generativity to counter the chill along the incarceration continuum is the transfer of wisdom from women on the incarceration continuum to others. The interviews reveal several examples of this generative praxis that seeks to transfer and share knowledge with young people to prevent them from falling into the foothold of incarceration. For example, Lillian demonstrates generative praxis in her interaction with two young boys she sees at a convenience store. She says:

“I was on my way to a meeting with the Department of Corrections and stopped at a little convenience store on the south side of town, and there were kids out riding their bicycle. They were asking for money. Whenever I see that, I think, “I’m sure they got some food at home somewhere. They’re on bicycles. But they’re limited. This is why they’re out here asking.” They don’t have the privilege like some kids where they can just go into the fridge and get chips or a drink out. They don’t have it at home like that. I’m sure there’s a meal out there like that that they get, but they don’t have these little extra things. So, I said to them, “Are you guys in school?” One of the kids said to me that he was in 1st grade. I was overwhelmed that he was in the 1st grade and out asking for money with confidence. I could tell that he had been doing this for a while. There was another kid along with him on the bike who was kind of shy. This kid didn’t have the confidence that this 1st grader had... [B]y talking to kids like this I can say to them things like you should go home now. Do your mom know you’re out here? I can have some sort of influence on them. And you would be surprised about little things like that that leave an impression on people. And you never, never, never know why you’re dealing with this person, but you’ve got to know if somebody is crossing your path, it’s always for me a reason as to why this person is crossing our path, so again, my mantra in life is to do that which is best, that which is right, and that which is good. So whatever you can find good, and right, and best in this type of scenario, you need to be mindful of it.”⁴⁴²

Lillian exercised generative praxis by wearing the parental role and challenging the young kids to go home

⁴⁴¹ Leah Gunning Francis, *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*. First Edition. ed. (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2015); Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015), 168-200.

⁴⁴² Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

instead of asking mother. Her comments to the children were an attempt to make a lasting impression upon them. For Lillian, this incident was more than coincidental, it was a divine opportunity to “do that which is best, that which is right, and that which is good.” In other words, talking to the youth represented an ethical obligation to care for the survival of all kids, even those who are not her own.

Incarcerated and returning citizens possess narratives that might prevent incarceration. Sharing preventative knowledge invites the next generation to imagine new possibilities for their future and present self. Sharing these narratives became an intentional way to preserve, care for, and promote the survival of both their biological children and children who were not their own. In a youtube video entitled “[Eden] and her life, Eden further transfers knowledge to young girls who might be on the path to incarceration. She says:

I know what molestation is. I know what it means for your innocence to be gone. What's it's like to be brutally raped in the back of the church and thrown to the pavement and left to make it the best you know how. ...I know what's it's like to see your mother stomped by your father and she just had a child. I know what it's like to lay in bed and listen to big black rats fighting each other and all you can't smell nothing but the stench of the blood from the rats. I know what it's like to live in a basement. ...These are the accumulative things that, and I'm not going to just say African American, but people, poor people experience. I know what it's like to not have love from your parents...to be born dead and it didn't bother anybody. I know what it's like to go after a man because you didn't have love at home and you would do anything that he asked of you...just to have some attention from him, just to get him to say I love you. My father said you are the ugliest MF I ever saw in my life. So, as far as physical experience, that didn't even matter...when I looked in the mirror, I didn't see who I see today. I didn't see anything.

The things that I've mentioned here are the things a large percentage of females will have to go through or have been through. I know what's it's like to see incest in your family. All that was like a volcano growing and growing and erupted. But, who did it erupt on? Myself and society...Even a flower need water to grow. It needs love and attention. So how could we as human being expect another human being to turn out any different?...so we, as a collaborative community, have to bring this effort together... You're going to have to deal with the children who are growing up in my situation. We are going to have to deal with that on a community or individual level. Crime is not going to stop, but we can curtail it a little...by being proactive.”⁴⁴³

Transparency seems to be the bridge that connects women on the incarceration continuum to younger adults/youth who may be experiencing some of the same things they have or are walking through. Not all

⁴⁴³ “[Eden] and her Life,” Youtube video, 39:00, posted by “God’s Deliverer’s, Inc,” March 25, 2013. *Please note, in order to protect her identity, I did not put the url where the interview can be viewed.

the women share this story, yet all of the women's narratives have something to offer to those who may be on a path to incarceration. In this sense, their narrative may be used to redeem the life trajectory of a younger adult. Women on the incarceration continuum share their narrative as testimony. They have a genuine desire to interrupt some of the mistakes that the younger generation might make by sharing the nitty-gritty of their mistakes and triumphs over their mistakes. At the heart of generative hope is the understanding that "generativity can find expression in productivity or creativity as well as procreativity."⁴⁴⁴ Eden goes on further to say, "I'm getting older now. And we are being left to the maintenance of younger people. Now, be honest, with what you see today, do you want to grow old and let them take care of you?...But they are at an impressionable stage. We can tell them the truth."⁴⁴⁵ Her comments point to the need to be generative in order to care for society and care for herself.

Eden's proposal for "collaborative community" efforts and proactivity is similar to what Giroux calls "educated hope," as discussed in Chapter 2.⁴⁴⁶ Her transparency not only illumines real social problems that stem from poverty but also is a direct call to exercise political agency. She raises awareness through her shared narrative to openly acknowledge and raise awareness about the various faces of oppression in order to move toward social change. The fulfillment the next generation feels from this nurture and support feeds back into the fulfillment women on the incarceration continuum feel. This cycle of mutual interchange not only produces positive affect but also contributes to human hope. In this sense, the affirmation that women on the incarceration continuum has done something meaningful and positive for one person lives into this attempt and possibility that women on the incarceration continuum can become more than society has deemed them. Not only do they see themselves differently, but society sees them differently.

The experience of generativity chill is one of the primary concerns that place hope in crisis for women. Yet, there is also a sense that women who taste the nearness of their own death or the death of their

⁴⁴⁴ Erikson, *Life Cycle Completed*, 255.

⁴⁴⁵ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

⁴⁴⁶ Henry A. Giroux, "When Hope is Subversive," 38-39.

children awaken and embrace other forms of generativity. Generative hope may often emerge from attempts to resolve the maternal crisis that takes place when motherhood seems to be on lockdown. Women on the incarceration continuum, in turn, find other ways to care for the next generation.⁴⁴⁷ To combat generativity chill, women embrace a generative hope that enables them to either resolve or live with the complexities of their maternal crisis. Their inability to fully integrate “biological generativity” leads women on a quest to fulfill their roles within parental or societal generativity more fully. This threat of the loss of generativity, or generativity chill, often provokes women to be more intentionally engaged in the lives of their children or the lives of other women within the prison. This move towards being what womanists have identified as an “othermother” or Snarey identified as “societal generativity” contributes to a renewed sense of purpose in and vision for society.⁴⁴⁸ In many ways, the generative self questions are directly connected to the existential question of living a meaningful life. In the carceral space, limitations to the types of activities one can engage to be generative often prompts real reflection about what productivity is and specific ways one can be productive in the midst of threats to live a meaningless life.

Societal generativity finds expressions within the prison culture in the form of mentorship or older women mothering younger women. One woman who does not have any biological children and experienced several abortions prior to prison actually talked about how prison became an opportunity for her to mother. It also finds expression in how women try to mother from afar—providing advice through letters and during visits to their children or other people in which they care. Upon reentry, familial reintegration becomes a primary concern, particularly when women have sat with and continual to sit with the emotional complexities of regret, guilt, and deep desires to care for their loved ones. Furthermore, rather than being an isolated familial act, biological, parental, and societal generativity are communal and requires the

⁴⁴⁷ To be clear, this is only one response I identified during this research. More research should be done to see whether this is a phenomenon that persists among many women in the prison. Further, it would even be important to explore this phenomenon based on the age of women in the prison to see if women are more likely to demonstrate generative concern during the mid-life than other stages of their life. Lastly, it’s important to explore what stagnation looks like in this context, particularly because so many woman’s desire to care for their biological children becomes stagnated as a result of them being within the criminal justice system.

⁴⁴⁸ Evelyn Parker, *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls*, 62.

village's participation. The village becomes particularly significant in contexts where mothers rely on extended family to help nurture and care for their children. It extends to those who function in the role of "othermothers," older siblings, neighbors, mentors, adoptive parents, and compassionate co-laborers.⁴⁴⁹

Overall, countless maternal concerns surfaced in the interviews and my conversations with women in the prison; these conversations undergird the concept of generative hope. Women in prison express clear maternal apprehension. Maternal loss of control often experienced once women are behind bars and even when released coupled with sincere love for their children creates a crisis of hope that forces women to reconstitute their generativity in unique ways. Generativity chill takes on a unique manifestation in the prison context. To break the ice of generativity chill and overcome self-absorption and stagnation, women on the incarceration continuum express generative hope and subsequently generative praxis.

Ultimately, generative praxis is the manifestation of hope. What at once has been hoped for now is *becoming* realized through generative praxis. Without the proper environment, hope will die. Hope must be nurtured, fed, and responded to in order to emerge. Those who provided nurture and care actually became bearers of hope in the prison context. Hope in itself is a birthing process by which people see, feel, know, and experience life differently. As one engages in the practice of giving birth to his or her child, they are moving into a new identity, where they are wearing the role of mother. This act of giving birth also enables them to know things about themselves and their body they had not previously known—namely that their body responds to the needs and concerns of their child. This knowledge is dualistic in nature—they come to know and see themselves as an incubator for the next generation. Extended beyond biological birth, generative praxis is about giving birth to new possibilities in the world through intentional acts of care upon one's self and others. Birthing is interventionist in nature; it is a direct action upon the world, where a created self partners with the Creator to produce new life on earth. This new life has marked the world and can eventually make their mark on the world in a tangible way.

⁴⁴⁹ Evelyn Parker, *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls*, 62.

Conclusion

This section illumines the voices of women who have experienced the challenge of incarceration into society upon their release. I explore the ways that women along the incarceration continuum have exercised agency through the way they see, do, and know in the world. Seeing within restorative hope reveals that possibility can emerge when one uses the things at hand to transform the situation or when one chooses to prioritize the things that matter most in their lives. Knowing within restorative hope reveals that one can survive in darkness by relying on God and resources in the past, present, and future to transform their perspective. Lastly, doing within restorative hope reveals that women along the incarceration continuum find creative ways to be productive and generative amidst the collateral sanctions placed on them by society.

These voices reflect responses to questions centered on the function and meaning of hope in situations of confinement, namely their journey from incarceration until now. Their insights are rich, honesty refreshing, and experiences touching. Their endurance reminds us that hope is a language of possibility that matters within and beyond carceral settings. The type of human *being* that restorative hope produces and sustains—namely authentic, resilient, and connected selves—has real implications for pedagogy within the prison setting. Chapter 5 explores these connections by building on the insights from this chapter to construct a pedagogy of restorative hope. I argue that a pedagogy of restorative hope creates space for authenticity, connection, and resilience.

CHAPTER 5

RESTORATIVE HOPE PEDAGOGY: CREATING SPACE FOR AUTHENTICITY, CONNECTION, AND RESILIENCE

Introduction

In order to construct a restorative hope pedagogy, I take seriously the insights of women on the incarceration continuum while also drawing on the rich body of literature that already exists. Feminist, womanist, and critical approaches to pedagogy inform my proposal of restorative hope pedagogy. These pedagogies rely on the wisdom of multiple articulations of pedagogies that seek to transform the self, community, and world. Restorative hope pedagogy, as both holistic and broad-based, embraces teaching and learning as a constant re-vision and bolstering of ways of seeing, ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing within the world; this dynamic inner and outer praxis is always acting upon the self, others, God, and the world to transform self and society.

This chapter builds on the insights of Chapters 3 and 4 by exploring the ways pedagogy might help re-orient someone's being so they can see, know, do, and be differently in the world. Specifically, I explore the ways of being presented in Chapter 3—authenticity, relationality, and resiliency—to propose ways of knowing that become powerful resources in restoring hope in adverse circumstances. I draw on examples teaching a class in the prison to illustrate concrete ways this might work in a prison context.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will draw mostly from the 12 week *Exploring Spirituality and Identity through the Arts* course I taught in 2012. This course invited women to explore Erikson's stages of psychosocial identity formation through the use of art. For each of Erikson's eight stages, the class used art to reflect on psychosocial concepts while also reflecting on their own identity formation. Every other week, guest artists came to lead the class in different artistic crafts that enabled them to experiment with different modes of art. Because it was in a prison setting, the course had to be creative because of restricted use of art supplies.

Further, I explore some of the prominent reasons why dominant forms of pedagogy, what I refer to as "lockdown pedagogies" can disrupt hope and ultimately hinder connection, authenticity, and resilience.

Instead, I propose restorative hope as an alternative way to do pedagogy, particularly in spaces that are already confining. To counter these confining spaces, I argue that restorative hope creates spaces of authenticity, resiliency, and connection that bolsters a sense of humanity. In this chapter, I highlight metaphysical knowing and self-authorship in the process of developing a more authentic self, relational knowing in forming connection, and critical knowing in developing resiliency. Finally, I offer some generative practices that religious educators can employ to help create spaces where people feel comfortable becoming more fully human, and being more fully themselves.

Part 1: Exploring Restorative Hope Pedagogy

Hope is the primary aim in restorative hope pedagogies. Restorative hope pedagogy's quest to overcome internal and external chains that limit transformation feeds into a re-articulation of ways of seeing, knowing, being, and doing that restores hope even in the midst of confinement. Responding to the deep hopelessness that emerges from contexts of complex trauma and social death sets the agenda for how religious educators approach their ministry in communities, churches, prisons and the public square, places that require critical visibility. Critical visibility within restorative hope requires an ability to see within and without, beyond and between, on the surfaces and crevices, the here and now and on the horizons. It requires attentiveness to the concrete reality but an expectation for the not-yet. Critical visibility seeks to inspire hope by responding to the basic human need to be seen, or even more so, to be known in the quest for wholeness.

Rooted in a deep sense of urgency, the broad aim of restorative hope pedagogy is to provide a site of learning, where learners can see, know, be, and do in ways that revitalize and transform self, others, perceptions of God, and the world. The motivation for learning in restorative hope pedagogy is the desire to live a meaningful life that contributes to the healing and wholeness of society.

. For pedagogies of restorative hope, raising consciousness is not just about becoming more aware of one's own ability to enact social change; it's about seeing, knowing, and believing that there is a Divine presence that also interacts and partners with humanity to transform the self and the broken structures within

society.⁴⁵⁰ Put simply, restorative hope pedagogy does see God as Transcending darkness, even within the most unlikely places. This is best articulated in the process of self-authorship, where one draws on metaphysical knowing to become more grounded in one's sense of self.

While restorative hope pedagogy understands that learning can take place in any environment, it is also critically aware that certain practices, policies, power dynamics and people within the setting may inhibit or augment growth and learning. The learning environment contributes to how and sometimes how much learners come to know. It also holds significance for the type of content that is produced. This is particularly true for carceral settings, which can simultaneously shatter and reproduce the spirit of domination. To this end, restorative hope pedagogy is both critical and imaginative in how it sets up the space. As a result, teachers also take into account the actual place of learning. Teachers become more reflexive and aware in their attempts not to reproduce the status quo.

Restorative hope acknowledges the multi-faceted functioning of pedagogy. I establish that most forms of pedagogy can be social, psychological, theological, physical, and generative. I outline these dimensions of pedagogy in more concrete terms below:

1. ***Pedagogy as social:*** pedagogy can both challenge and reproduce the status quo. This is particularly important to think about in the context of prison. Because prison is already such a rigid space, teachers are sometimes forced to reproduce the status quo. For example, as other prison educators have indicated in their research, the mere fact that students have to be referred to us by our "Mr or Mrs (last name)" while we can call students by their first name inscribes the power differential in the classroom. One way that I tried to neutralize the power differential in this space is to ask students to introduce themselves by their "stage name" as opposed to their regular name. This provided students with a sense of agency about how they became known to me and their classmates in the

⁴⁵⁰ There is one primary distinction between restorative hope pedagogies and critical pedagogies. The God-consciousness in pedagogies of restorative hope set this form of conscientization apart from other forms of critical pedagogies. Critical pedagogies intend to raise the consciousness of those who have been marginalized so they can become active subjects of change within history. Restorative hope pedagogies build upon these principles while at the same time embracing a theological dimension that acknowledges the presence of a Divine being that is actively engaged in the world.

first moments. Needless to say, these moments become quickly confined; officers can choose to interrupt these emancipatory moments at will.

2. ***Pedagogy as psychological:*** pedagogy can enable one to experience a greater sense of well-being and diminished sense of well-being, can be empowering and disempowering, integrating and fracturing; The psychological impact of pedagogy in prison manifests in the way students' work are graded, feedback given on assignments, and discussion engaged within learning environments. For example, the Certificate Program adopts a check/check+/check- system to avoid using the standard measures of A,B,C,D,F. We notice that even with this system, teachers have to be extra careful how they engage some students. To know that prison is a place where women have to already "prove" so much, the classroom can become yet another space where they feel they have the burden to prove they deserve to be in that particular program. Quickly, it can shift from being a graded assignment to being a graded human. When learners feel they are being graded instead of their work, a learning environment can quickly become counterproductive. When grading goes wrong, it can easily become a ritual of degradation that affirms one's already low sense of self-worth. On the other hand, the Certificate Program also recognizes that grades can become a place of affirmation and accomplishment when educators are intentional and reflexive about the ways they measure students.
3. ***Pedagogy as theological:*** pedagogy enables learners to be more discerning about or equipped to fulfill their sense of call and vocation or can reinforce a diminished sense of purpose and place in the world in relationship to God and human agency. The theological dimension of education becomes really clear when women begin to question the traditions that have held them captive to a low self-image for so long. Their renewed sense of self and renewed "seeing" of God has powerful implications for how pedagogy can enforce or shatter negative perceptions of God and self. The mere opportunity to question is a pedagogical tactic that enables fresh images of God to emerge. However, in non-overt ways as well, it is not uncommon to hear women talk about gaining a sense of purpose as it relates to their vocational work. To see themselves as "productive" or "generative"

in a setting that has socialized women not to be is a theological insight about God inviting all to partner in the quest to transcend darkness.

4. ***Pedagogy as physical:*** pedagogy can enable the senses to be awakened through immersion in practices that contributes to the acquisition of knowledge and formation but it can also awaken the sense in visceral ways. For example, during my *Spirituality through the Arts* course, there were a couple times that the intensity of class content invoked a peculiar heaviness in the room. One class, in particular, one of my students noted the heaviness after engaging an intense dialogue about suicide. In that moment, I invited the class to participate in a Theater of the Oppressed activity that enabled them to move their bodies and release the heaviness that had begun to settle in their bodies. With that, we also prayed to a God that most in the class saw as able to transcend and walk with them in darkness.
5. ***Pedagogy as generative:*** pedagogy gives birth to, provides nurture for, and engages life with learners throughout their ages and stages of development. Pedagogy becomes a site where students can enter from multiple stages and ages and still grow, develop, and be formed. While my use of the term “generative” has been positive, I am clear that pedagogy can also generate attitudes and behaviors that counter authenticity and connection. Thus, creating spaces that enable students to think for themselves and voice their opinion without being attacked become spaces where students begin to feel safe enough to take risks. For example, when students first came into the *Exploring Spirituality through the Arts* course, they were reluctant to identify themselves as artists. Needless to say, it was also clear students had already begun to stratify one another based on their talents, picking out students who could dance, those who could draw, and those who could sing. To create a generative environment, our first assignment was to begin to breakdown some of the traditional understanding of art. This assignment actually broadened people’s image of themselves as artists and became a generative space where they could nurture their own unique craft. So many students commented at the end of the class that they never viewed themselves as an artist until now.

Overall, knowing that pedagogy can both harmful and beneficial to learners places an ethical responsibility upon educators to think concretely about the aims of education, particularly within the prison. Even more specific, restorative hope pedagogues seek to know, what is my pedagogy generating? Women on the incarceration continuum have provided insights about some key components that generate hope and combat non-human-being-ness. Based on the analysis of their insights, I propose that restorative hope pedagogy should create sites where authenticity, connection, and building resilience flourish. What I propose here are not the sole aims of education but seemed to be the themes that resonated most with hope along the incarceration continuum.

Part 2: Lockdown Pedagogy: Guilty Until Proven Innocent, Wrong Until Proven Right

Restorative hope pedagogy reacts to dominant forms of pedagogy that privileges rational knowing over other forms of knowing. I name these hyper-rational pedagogies “lockdown pedagogies” because of their tendency to arrest other forms of knowing as wrong. My articulation of restorative hope is not a new response to the silencing and marginalization of experiences of confinement. It re-envision transformative pedagogies—such as critical-liberatory pedagogy, womanist pedagogy, and hope-centered religious education pedagogy—as part of a larger trajectory of a pedagogy that seeks to transform individuals, relationships, institutions, communities, congregations, and society in ways that build, restore, and even create hope. In this sense, the construction of a restorative hope pedagogy stands on the shoulders of those pedagogues who have sought to articulate that woman-oriented and transformative pedagogy, as a praxis of care and compassion, must be different from more dominant forms of pedagogy. It also stands on the shoulders of women who have embodied hope and have learned what it means to be human despite dehumanization. Thus, I propose a pedagogy that contributes to humanizing and hope-building spaces. In doing so, I am also intent on identifying places that may shut down hope. Restorative hope pedagogy counters pedagogies that promote unhealthy competition, division, stratification, commoditization, othering, fragmentation, and low self-esteem; it names those pedagogies as pedagogies on lockdown.

My description of a pedagogy of restorative hope simultaneously juxtaposes and problematizes lockdown pedagogies. Pedagogies on lockdown are an uncritical approach to teaching and learning that focuses solely on one-dimensional learning (that is usually cognitive-based learning) in exchange for learning that impacts transformation. Lockdown pedagogies unintentionally shut down the very authenticity, connection, and resilience that restorative hope seeks to produce. Whereas restorative hope grapples for a paradigm that is paradoxical in nature, lockdown pedagogies prefer a tacit acceptance of the status quo. This tacit acceptance of the status quo allows various forms of social death and complex trauma to thrive since there is no reassessment and re-envisioning of the ways in which things are done in learning (in specific) and society (in general).

In favor of competitive, hierarchal, individualistic, and rational forms of learning, lockdown pedagogies devalue imagination, exclude the incarnational, limit the improvisational, and dismiss the intuitive. Those who do not conform to the given standards often sit on the margins of the academy seeking legitimacy. This does not demonize lockdown pedagogies because of its emphasis on cognition; cognitive learning holds great value and is inherent in my understanding of restorative hope pedagogy. Rather, the issue is the privileging of teaching and learning that yields the fruit of a disconnected and carceral society. Lockdown pedagogy functions around three primary principles: 1) There is only one way to know; 2) To know is the only right way “to be”; and 3) One only knows when they can prove it.

There Is Only One Way to Know: The Privileging of Rational Ways of Knowing

A pedagogy on lockdown chains knowing that falls outside of its standards. It also creates distinct guidelines about who can judge what is considered right or wrong knowing, both in how we come to know and in what we come to know. The wrong-until-proven-right culture assumes that knowledge is binary and objective. Knowledge is seen as outside the self and separate from the knower. In other words, knowledge is either right or wrong; there is no middle ground. Only knowledge that can be verified or measured is real knowledge, which in turn stratifies knowledge-content and modes of knowing. Knowledge that can be proven right is seen on a higher level than knowledge that cannot be verified. No statement can be true or

false at the same time. Unfortunately, because this knowing is often objective, subjective and embodied forms of knowing are dismissed. It does not embrace the knowledge that women on the incarceration continuum possess.

Women on the incarceration continuum possess carceral awareness, a type of awareness about the criminal justice system that has the potential to enact social change. Women who are or have been incarcerated possess special knowledge that makes them privy to aspects of confinement that non-incarcerated people do not possess. This special knowledge, carceral awareness, can place them at odds with society. At the same time, if taken seriously, it can help to transform society. Lillian says, for example, “I do think that in order for society to really get it right, that they have to do more of what you're doing. They have to talk to people who's been through it.”⁴⁵¹ She demonstrates confidence in a type of knowing that enables her to envision new possibilities for practices and policies that can be implemented within society. She knows her experience has taught her some things that have implications for how society as a whole might think about becoming more generative in its approach to women on the incarceration continuum. In the same interview, Lillian goes on to say:

I think as society, the United States like to base everything on bachelor's and master's and PhDs. What I describe as the naked people are commoners like myself. Finish high school, have some college, no bachelor's, no master's, none of that, but people who went through some difficult times, had an opportunity to have a time out to look at their lives, to develop their lives, to develop their souls and get it right. I am a homeowner, have been one for almost 20 years. I've been pardoned by the state of Georgia. I do motivational speaking, no formal training in that. Just a naked person...A naked person who has gotten it right in the end.⁴⁵²

Lillian describes a different knowledge base that develops when one goes through difficult times and have had an opportunity to reflect and make concrete changes to enhance the interior. In other words, her material accomplishments rather than the essence of who she is still seems to be the tangible proof used to legitimate her interior growth and qualifies her to do motivational speaking despite her limited formal training.

⁴⁵¹ Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

⁴⁵² Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

Further, her characterization of “naked” and “commoner” demonstrates a rather complex understanding of vulnerability. Vulnerability can leave one with feelings of shame, incompetence, and a sense of inferiority; yet, it can also empower one to be authentic, confident, seek meaningful bonds, and feel a sense of liberation. Lillian describes herself as being “a naked person who has gotten it right in the end.” In her case, her ability to recognize her nakedness while also pointing to her accomplishments elevates her from the “wrong” or “guilty” status to the “right” or “innocent” status. Her equation of naked and commoner assumes that those with particular academic degrees are something more than common, although they are often seeking the same material legitimization as women on the incarceration continuum. Lillian’s comments demonstrate a complicated picture of the standards western society uses to measure itself; these standards also impact how women on the incarceration continuum measure themselves.

In one sense, women on the incarceration continuum understand that they are valuable and have critical knowledge to share with others. On the other hand, they still navigate the conundrum of fitting into society’s sometimes unrealistic expectations such as material possessions (i.e. a degree, a house, employment) as tangible proof of their value, which a criminal record makes harder to achieve. They operate from a rationale that believes if others see that I am on a pathway to enjoy the American dream through my accomplishments, and then they will affirm that I have gotten right in the end. In other words, women on the incarceration continuum must still prove their worth to a society that deems incarcerated individuals as unworthy, my usefulness to a society that deems incarcerated individuals as discarded, my knowledge to a society that deems incarcerated individuals as ignorant.

One Only Knows When They Can Prove It: Burden of Proof

Wrong-until-proven-right learning communities feed on the principle of epistemological valuation. To be right, then, is to hold value in the status of “knower.” Epistemological valuation refers to the valuing/devaluing of a knowledge which automatically creates a valuing/devaluing of a person for what they know. This valuing/devaluing of a person for what they know feeds into an internal (done by the knower) and external (done to the knower) valuing/devaluing of who they are. In other words,

epistemological valuation has severe consequences for one's human formation. If one comes to see and know themselves based on the standards and expectation of others, they may develop a false sense of self, detached ways of knowing, and confined ways of perceiving the world around them. Further, they are left in a perpetual state of trying to prove themselves; this constant obligation to provide proof of human-beingness actually has detrimental consequences on one's sense of self.

Victor Anderson's analysis on the state of the scholarship of Blacks provides a useful way for describing the impact of valuation. In *Beyond Ontological Blackness*, Victor Anderson coins the term "ontological blackness," which describes the reactionary posture many Black scholars take in their scholarship.⁴⁵³ Anderson points out that this defensiveness reproduces a reality that Blacks are still defined by who they're not rather than who they are. Within this framework, white superiority places the very being of Blacks under arrest. Similar to ontological blackness, people who have committed crimes must constantly take a posture of defense to prove to others *who they are not*. In their emphasis on proving who they are not, they have limited opportunity to show people who they are.

I would even argue that the beginning of this cycle actually precedes the arrest and begins when women start to transgress the socially ascribed norms. The stigma associated with being a Black woman, who is poor, makes it even more challenging to fit into society's standards. This triple jeopardy means increased social surveillance. Women who are not acting right, in other words, need to be watched and sometimes put in place by those in authority. The transgressing of social norms, then, becomes a powerful contributor to the pipeline to prison. It fragments beings so that aspects of them that are transgressive receive hyper-visibility and increased emphasis. Unfortunately, what is hyper-visible often ends up defining individuals. Ultimately, humanity that has been degraded, stripped, and fragmented may easily find his or herself in exile. To find its way out of exile or maintain a sense of being in spite of exile requires a sense of being that is grounded in hope. Thus, restorative hope counters human confinement by promoting a human hope that is not based on what you know but who you are.

⁴⁵³ Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism*. New York: Continuum, 1995.

Learners come to academic spaces to learn but when they admit to not-knowing in that space, they can easily be categorized within the “non-knower status.” To place one in a non-knower status ultimately dismisses the fact that they bring knowledge with them into the learning space. It also dismisses the fact that all of us occupy the space of non-knower at times. To not know the designated content does not mean one is not valuable in the learning community but provides opportunity for the learning community to produce knowledge together. Yet, when one must prove their worth based on what they know, it becomes really difficult to distinguish if one’s worth is based on what they know or who they are.

To Know is the Only Right Way “To Be:” Human Valuation

The movement in restorative hope pedagogy is toward recognizing human-being-ness as a central aspect in how we come to know and what we come to know; that who we are impacts the lens by which we interpret life has profound implications for our epistemological standpoint. That what we come to know matters for who we’ll become has profound implications for our ontology. This “epistemic ontology,” Thomas Groome argues, acknowledges the interdependence of knowing and being.⁴⁵⁴ The interdependence of knowing and being should influence pedagogy; it influences how people come to know their being in relationship to God, self, others, and the world. Equally important, however, is the perception (how we see) and our praxis (what we do) also forms our being and what and how we come to know. To separate who we are from what we know is difficult because what we know is always filtered through the lens of who we are.

I emphasize these connections between epistemology and ontology to highlight the danger of epistemological valuation. Epistemological valuation can lead to a denigration of the self, where learners internalize these values as truth claims about who they are. Learners either obsess with proving themselves as “right” or as a “knower,” which ultimately is a human attempt to prove one’s worth or value. In other words, epistemological valuation becomes an internal panopticon gaze that influences how a self performs

⁴⁵⁴ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis*. 1st ed. (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 8,11.

in a learning community. As a result, 1) learners surrender their authority as knowing agents to those who think they know, 2) non-western epistemological resources are underutilized or dismissed as “other,” 3) learners become valued simply for their minds and not their whole selves, and 4) learning promotes human confinement. Ultimately, lockdown pedagogies work presents the danger that people will be driven to receive epistemological valuation at the expense of becoming authentic selves.

Pedagogies on lockdown privilege a non-critical form of seeing, a panoptical gaze that reinforces hypervisibility, invisibility, and mis-visibility. Themis-seeing confines the physical, theological, political, social, and generative roles inherent in the very act of seeing. The panopticon gaze functions in education, even religious educational settings, as a tool to socialize students into the status quo of religious and political ideals that counter some of the basic understandings of what it means to be human. The doctrines of traditions and traditional epistemologies passed down serve as laws that cannot be broken. The space is identified by distinct and rigid categories such as sacred/secular, private/public, and academic/non-academic. Instead of reading the codes of conduct, these rules are meant to read us. They function to control and define us, to be tacitly accepted as true with little to no questioning.⁴⁵⁵ Those who do not obey these codes of conduct find themselves labeled as deviants. The gaze functions as a way to distinguish, expose, and moralize those who do not conform to its standards.

Because this panopticon gaze is so prevalent in the prison, women are hungry to be in places where they can be seen through a lens of hope rather than through one of surveillance. The prison often runs on lockdown pedagogy, whereby women are constantly gazed upon. Very few spaces exist within the prison context where women can experience privacy. Only strict adherence to the rules and policies will be tolerated.

Part 3: Epistemology in Restorative Hope: In Favor of Multivariate Knowing

⁴⁵⁵ To be clear, I am not arguing against the concept of an All-seeing God, but against the idea that the traditions and doctrines we hold become tools that read us and hold us to particular standards that cannot be questioned. The standards are not God.

Women along the incarceration continuum challenge one-dimensional knowing that privileges objective over subjective, disembodied knowing over embodied, or cognitive over multiple ways of knowing. As referenced in Chapter 4, hope as a way of knowing in the dark is about adjusting one's vision to see possibility even in contexts that are confining, carceral, or challenging. Restorative hope is rooted in a deep sense of knowing; thus, epistemology is critical to pedagogies of hope. Epistemology seeks to understand how we come to know what we know. Not only is it important to understand how we acquire this knowledge, but it is important to understand why acquiring knowledge in these particular ways becomes a distinguishing factor in restorative hope pedagogies. Restorative hope pedagogies embrace ways of knowing that counter purely scientific and objective modes of knowing. To this end, the question of epistemology is directly related to modes of knowing that include the body, soul, mind, and spirit. Restorative hope epistemologies extend beyond cognition to embrace ways of knowing that are relational, embodied, critical, and metaphysical. These ways of knowing help shape and form hope in unique ways. In other words, restorative hope pedagogy finds resonance in drawing on the multiple epistemological resources that restore hope within a learning community. To this end, I propose multivariate knowing as an epistemological approach within restorative hope pedagogy. Multivariate knowing privileges the multiple modes of knowing that take place simultaneously in our quest to understand ourselves, God, others, and the world.

Multivariate knowing avoids confusing cognition as *a* way to know with cognition as *the* way to know, since it recognizes that one comes to know in multiple ways simultaneously. In this sense, although one may be using their body to know, they may also be using their emotions or relationships to know as well. The process of acquiring knowledge in alternative modes transgresses the wrong-until-proven right culture that pervades institutional knowing. The legitimacy of knowledge depends not only on cognitive processes of knowing, but also on the discursive quality of a vast body of epistemological processes leading up to what and how one knows. Hope is rooted in concrete reality but does not solely rely on factual knowledge. Factual knowledge assumes that everything can be quantified. If hope relied solely on these modes of knowing, then it would be difficult to awaken the imagination to new possibilities, which is critical

to the experience of hope. Thus, restorative hope pedagogy draws on multiple ways of knowing as critical to epistemology.

Research on the multiple intelligences, done by psychologist and educator Howard Gardner, highlights this idea that there are multiple ways to know. Initially only encompassing six intelligences, Gardner's theory has been expanded to include nine multiple intelligences. These nine multiple ways of knowing are as follows: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial-visual, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential intelligence.⁴⁵⁶ Research indicates that, while most human beings possess all of these intelligences, some people function in two or three of these multiple intelligences more succinctly than the others.⁴⁵⁷ While there is nothing wrong with these differences, the privileging of particular intelligences over others exploits the differences of some while rewarding others. Verbal-linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical are heavily used to measure and thus reward learners within academic settings; these intelligences also fall in line with the “wrong-until-proven-right-epistemological framework.” Furthermore, educational approaches that privilege cognition as *the* mode of knowing conditions learners to privilege this mode of knowing over others as well.

Part 4: The Quest for Authenticity: Human Hope and Self-Authorship

Critical to human hope is providing spaces where women are invited to be their authentic selves, be in relationship to others in a life-giving way, and be challenged to grow. These sites actually create a context for resiliency and sustaining hope. Sites of appearing, becoming, and connection become critical especially when women on the incarceration continuum find themselves in circumstance of intense existential questioning and meaning-making. These spaces invite introspection, dialogue, and resources to help one reframe their story. These spaces become non-carceral spaces in numerous ways. Women did not have to embrace a carceral identity in order to survive; these spaces provided opportunity for them to be

⁴⁵⁶ Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 9.

⁴⁵⁷ Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed*, 9-10.

themselves. Having spaces within the prison that gave them something to “look forward to” or put their hope in actually helped create a sense of resilience and optimism for women while incarcerated.

For women who have constantly been placed under a non-critical yet highly judgmental gaze, the Certificate in Theology classroom seemed to represent one of the few places where they felt a sense of freedom to be themselves. One reason is because women are actually seen; they are not just physically visible but humanly visible. One concrete example of how critical visibility functioned within the classroom is by inviting students to participate in artistic activities that encouraged them to express their true identity.

The concept of human hope serves as a robust pedagogical lens to elucidate how we be and how we become in restorative hope pedagogy. Human hope manifests in the movement from a being a person-formed-by-others to a being a person-formed-by one’s own sense of self. It is the process of moving from one state of being to another that produces integrity through the articulation of a more authentic self. The underlying question in restoring human hope in pedagogy is: In what ways can we invite the essence of persons into a learning environment that both affirms who they are but challenges them to become who they are to become? Within restorative hope pedagogy, I propose that human hope manifests through processes of self-authorship as students actively engage in creating themselves.

Human Hope: Authenticity as Self-Authorship

The question of authorship becomes particularly important in carceral settings that reinforce human confinement. Carceral settings tend to operate on an “obey what I tell you to do, believe what I tell you to think, be who I say you are, and imagine only what I say is possible” basis. To be immersed in a setting where primacy is placed on external authorities to be the guiding voice in how one organizes experiences and shapes identity has severe consequences for one’s ontological formation. Learners immersed in carceral learning environments engage in a process of becoming when they begin to differentiate what they believe about themselves, others, and God from what others have told them to believe about themselves, others, and God. Self-authorship emerges from an human hope that refuses to remain content and constrained by the boxes of others.

To illustrate human hope in the midst of threats to confine one's being, I draw on Marcia B. Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship. Self-authorship, a term coined by Robert Kegan and expanded by Baxter Magolda, is a constructive-developmental approach to meaning-making and the development of self.⁴⁵⁸ I resonate with Baxter Magolda's theoretical framing of self-authorship because her theory moves beyond the cognitive developmental approaches to self-authorship and takes seriously the relational and circumstantial impact of external influences in the making of self. Self-authorship is "characterized by internally generating and coordinating one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties, rather than depending on external values, beliefs, and interpersonal loyalties."⁴⁵⁹ In other words, self authoring people assume responsibility for their thoughts, emotions, and actions.⁴⁶⁰ Baxter Magolda's theory, like my own, understands the interlocking influences that contribute to the development of an inner self. Epistemology (How do I know?), intrapersonal (Who am I?), and interpersonal (How do we construct relationships?) are key questions that learners respond to on their journey to self-authorship.⁴⁶¹ Learners move from following external formulas given to them by others to a transitional space (known as the crossroads) where learners seek to integrate the self influenced by the expectations of others with the self influenced by his or her own values. During the crossroads, learners see a need to develop their own values but are not quite ready to do so. From this transitional space, learners move toward self-authorship. Self-authorship represents the phase where learners choose their own beliefs, values, and identity despite external influences.⁴⁶²

Because self-authorship is grounded in the work of a being coming to voice, self-authorship is a manifestation of human hope. Self-authorship represents the process by which one becomes. To be an author of one's life refers to a person's ability to make decisions about one's own life based on their internal voice rather than seeking to accommodate the demands of others. In other words, to be an author of one's

⁴⁵⁸Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), 185.

⁴⁵⁹ Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, Elizabeth G. Creamer, and Peggy S. Meszaros, *Development and Assessment of Self-Authorship Exploring the Concept across Cultures* (Sterling, Va.: Stylus Pub., 2010), Kindle location 137.

⁴⁶⁰ Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, Kindle location 137.

⁴⁶¹ Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, *Making Their Own Way: Narratives for Transforming Higher Education to Promote Self-Development* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2001), 3-8.

⁴⁶² Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, 71-105.

self is to take authority of one's voice, one's identity, one's relationships, and one's narrative. It is no small coincidence that the word author is the root word of authority. This reclamation of self-ownership ultimately shapes the orientation of one's life trajectory. It is the realization that while several external influences may contribute to who one is and is becoming, it is the author who has agency about who and how others will contribute to his or her life.

Educators have a unique challenge in working with learners who have been socialized to believe that only external authority figures have voices worth following. To assist learners to come to voice, to know one's self, and to understand and value one's internal self are key tasks that restorative hope pedagogy seeks to fulfill. In the context of the self-in-contemplation, the self-in communion with God, and the self-in-community with others, restorative hope pedagogy intends to offer sites of becoming, where learners engage in the process of meaning-making and self-authorship in order to create a more authentic self.

In Search of Meaning: Been, Be-ing, and Becoming

Meaning-making is the work of the interior self; thus, it is important for educators to acknowledge inner formation as critical to restorative hope pedagogy. Meaning-making possesses great ontological significance in the movement of selves. The act of meaning-making contributes to a person's process of becoming. It is a stark protest against human confinement. It renounces the self that has been in a perpetual state of stagnation and non-formation and announces a self that is open to formation and more developed meaning-making capacities. In the words of constructive-developmental psychologist Robert Kegan, "The activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making. There is thus no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception, independent of a meaning-making context in which it *becomes* a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception because we *are* the meaning-making context."⁴⁶³ In other words, meaning-making cannot be separated from the self who is becoming; meaning-making drives how a person experiences and makes sense of the world. At the same time, meaning-making becomes more complex as

⁴⁶³ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 11.

one can identify his or her socialized self and enact agency even while the self is being co-constructed with the world and relationships around them.⁴⁶⁴

Restorative pedagogy resists the tendency of learners to simply submit in the context of authority; instead, restorative hope pedagogy encourages learners to develop a sense of personal integrity that enables them to exercise agency and authority over their own self, thoughts, and decisions that the self makes. Educators invite learners into the process of meaning-making within the learning environment. Educators do not ask, “what did you learn from what others have said?” Educators ask, “how are you coming to understand and make meaning out of what you have heard? How does this new understanding fit into your world?” Educators approach learning with the understanding that learners are not only coming to know the content; learners are coming to know themselves in relation to the content. Educators then reinforce a self that is able to handle, reflect upon, and apply the knowledge rather than just consume it. A major task of restorative hope pedagogy is to help provide a context where students can share how they interpret their experience and actively seek out and consider new perspectives about their experience.

To be clear, sometimes the process of coming to know oneself can be messy. One comes to know the good, bad, and ugly that marks the condition of being human. For example, in a focus group conversation, we were talking about this process of authenticity and becoming when Linda began to share about her process of authenticity. She says,

“Once you’ve begun to realize things about yourself. You have to figure out how to maneuver with that information things that you’ve accepted about yourself...Like with my family...I’m a people pleaser and I wanted everyone to be good. That’s just my personality. And I was always falling short, not because of me but because of their expectations, not my expectations...So I had to release myself from their expectations, and I know the consequences of that is that when they call, I might not be able to run to their assistance. So I know they may feel X,Y, and Z. But I have to allow them to be who they are so I can be who the f—k I am.”⁴⁶⁵

Critical to this act of becoming more authentic and developing a sense of voice is this process of differentiating herself and her own standards from those of others. To become authentic is not to become

⁴⁶⁴ Robert Kegan, 1994, 32.

⁴⁶⁵ Lisa, Interview, 25 February 2014.

perfect but to be on a quest to become more whole, honest, and transparent with one's self. Education that invites beings that are not perfect in the class reinforce the understanding that humans are always engaging in a process of becoming. In other words, the story of one's life is not complete but continues to be written.

Authoring the Self-in-Contemplation with Self

One of the benefits of prison is that it provides a setting where reflection can take place. This is especially so in classrooms that expect students to engage in introspection and reflection around course material. As Kaia Stern notes in her research with on prison education with men, introspection can be a faith act that reminds incarcerated persons of their dignity and provide a sense of freedom.⁴⁶⁶ Contemplation with self often represents a context where people can develop and clarify their sense of self and emergent voice. Authoring the self-in-contemplation represents the process of the self *knowing* the self more genuinely. Contemplation may be characterized as a “theology by heart,” whereas the self gives primacy to the interior life in its quest for a solid internal foundation.⁴⁶⁷ Amidst the competing voices that contend for one's loyalty, contemplation attends to the often muted voice that yearns to become comprehensible to the self. The emphasis on self-authorship is really an invitation to become intimately acquainted with one's self so that one can truly be authentic. As educator Maxine Greene illuminates:

To be yourself is to be in process of creating a self, an identity. If it were not a process, there would be no surprise. The surprise comes along with being different—consciously different as one finds ways of acting on envisaged possibility. It comes along with hearing different words and music, seeing from unaccustomed angles, realizing that the world perceived from one place is not *the* world.⁴⁶⁸

While people are constantly making meaning throughout the day, contemplation provides an opportunity for the internal voice to rise above the alternate voices that seek to make meaning for one. Contemplation provides space where one can listen to his or her inner self and discern the things that matter most in life. Self-authorship is not solely cognitive-based or focused on one's consciousness; it focuses on building a

⁴⁶⁶ Kai Stern, *Voices from American Prisons*, 146.

⁴⁶⁷ Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (Long Lane, London: SCM Press, 2005), 18.

⁴⁶⁸ Maxine Greene, 20.

solid internal foundation so that learners learn to listen to and trust their internal voice amidst external influences.⁴⁶⁹ Contemplation builds an interpersonal intelligence that enables one to understand the self so that the self can function effectively in the world.⁴⁷⁰

Furthermore, the contemplative self-in-reflection model is not a disembodied experience. To have a strong internal foundation means embracing one's whole self—body, soul, and spirit. To this end, one's ethnic and cultural identity becomes a critical framing lens for restoring hope. Within self-authorship, learners begin to name their selves, their beliefs, and their contexts. They become more conscious of their ethnic identity and their bodies, in turn using both as resources to know the self more intimately. Subsequently, the mere practices of self-definition, self-determination, and self-awareness are aroused, providing the internal resources to differentiate between the multiple selves that one has created to obtain approval. To practice self-contemplation is to leave one alone with the self so that he or she can truly discover who "I" really is. The contemplative self has the capacity to reposition one's consciousness so that the body is seen as an embodiment of hope. The fact that Black bodies and Black consciousness still exist in a world that has attempted to exterminate all forms of Blackness is something to reflect on. The resiliency of Black existence transcends confinement. Contemplation creates opportunities for fragmented selves to gain a sense of coherency and integration. The end of self-awareness is not an elevated sense of self but a more grounded self.

Self-authorship is ultimately a process of coming to see, know, and be in a way that creates inner peace. Restorative hope pedagogy encourages self-authorship by creating spaces of theological reflection and contemplation. Critical to the development of self-authorship are periods of reflection so that students can integrate their experiences with what they are coming to know about themselves and the world. Concrete practices of contemplation include journal writing, spiritual autobiographies, and letter writing. These "turn-life-into-text" forms of writing become a "living human document" in which the self can

⁴⁶⁹ Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, 2001, 155-191.

⁴⁷⁰ Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons*. Rev. and updated ed. (New York: BasicBooks, 2006), 9.

reflect.⁴⁷¹ A self that is more grounded can be critical of competing voices while also discerning of one's internal voice. This moves ontological valuation from the hands of others to one's own hands. One no longer measures one's being from other people's standards and values but against their own internal standards, which finds ultimate value in communion with God. Particularly, within a Christian restorative hope framework, one may attempt to locate themselves apart from God, but may find even more value and meaning when locating themselves with God as a primary reference for and with the self.

Metaphysical Knowing as a Resource for Communion with Self and God

As evidenced in Chapter 4, being able to grasp a Divine power that could transcend darkness emerged as a critical resource for hope along the incarceration continuum. Thus, restorative hope acknowledges metaphysical knowing as valid. Metaphysical epistemologies recognize that not all knowledge is rational. Intuition, memory, imagination, and faith play a role in how one comes to know. Although often deemed as uncritical, these sources of knowledge, in fact, become critical to one's ability to hope. Most closely related to this idea of metaphysical knowing is the concept of existential intelligence. Although originally termed "spiritual intelligence," Gardner shifted the language to existential intelligence to appeal to his own inability to talk in depth about the content of such intelligence.⁴⁷² Within existential intelligence, questions about one's humanity, the nature of God, death, and life emerge in this form of knowing. According to Gardner, existential intelligence refers to:

the capacity to be able to locate oneself with respect to the furthest reaches of the cosmos—the infinite and the infinitesimal—and the related capacity to locate oneself with respect to such existential features of the human condition as the meaning of life, the meaning of death, the ultimate fate of the physical and psychological worlds, and such profound experiences as love of another person or immersion into a work of art.⁴⁷³

This form of knowing is also an activity of the whole self even though it privileges understanding the unseen.⁴⁷⁴ While Gardner cannot adequately explain the "spiritual" or mysterious in concrete terms, he

⁴⁷¹ Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, 18.

⁴⁷² Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed*, 53-54.

⁴⁷³ Howard Gardner, 60.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 54.

values its existence as a significant form of knowing. To discount this knowledge is to discount countless mystics and even those embodiments of hope that have been the bedrock of diverse religious traditions. In other words, this mode of knowing does not have to legitimize itself; it exists with or without approval from dominant modes of knowing.

Metaphysical knowing draws on resources outside the self to understand the deep meanings of life. In this sense, intuitive-spiritual knowing takes precedence over detached forms of cognitive knowing.⁴⁷⁵ Overall, to acknowledge there are other modes of knowing that contribute to our experiences and feed into how we come to hope is critical in restorative hope pedagogy. This is particularly significant if teaching is viewed as a sacrament that mediates the Holy.⁴⁷⁶ Whether the teacher serves as an embodiment of metaphysical engagement or invite the Holy Spirit into the space to engage with students on their own terms, there is a clear drawing upon resources outside of one's self to help embolden the teaching and learning moment. Within religious education, the least we can do is acknowledge the metaphysical as a resource for knowing that may influence teachers, students, or the learning environment itself.

Within the Certificate Program, the courses provide an opportunity for women to explore their faith. In prison, faith can quickly become a weapon against the carceral system.⁴⁷⁷ Several of the women talk about how the classrooms within the Program help them explore their image of God and challenge some of the religious doctrines and traditions that confined them in the past. One compelling story came from Sherry who spoke directly about the impact of the Certificate Program on her faith. She says, "The theology program was wonderful and happened at the perfect time. It really put me back into studying and understanding the Word for myself. It put me back into self-reflection, and it was wonderful. It put me back on track in my prayer life and study of the word."⁴⁷⁸ She goes on further to talk about how she feels like she incarcerated her family, and that part of her battle was for her family. What was particularly significant

⁴⁷⁵ Norman Harris, "Afrocentrism: Concept and Method." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 16, no. 3 (1992): 154-59.

⁴⁷⁶ Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 30-31.

⁴⁷⁷ Kaia Stern, *Voices from American Prisons*, 148.

⁴⁷⁸ Sherry, Interview, 3 January 2015.

was the practice of drawing, which was re-awakened through her participation in the Certificate Program, continued to sustain her throughout her time of incarceration. For her, drawing was actually a weapon to fight. In particular, she talked about how the *Exploring Identity through the Arts* course enabled her to open up. She would draw scriptures in order to visualize them. She described one image where she drew a woman with armor on. She communicated that looking at the completed art helped her gain insights. She says, “You don’t actually see God, but the winner. It helped me remember my place and where God is in the picture.” She says further, “it doesn’t take a large person to win the battle.”⁴⁷⁹ Overall, she says, “The theology program helped a lot because I never really knew I was standing on faith.” The Certificate Program became a space where people could expand their imaginations and faith; they saw themselves as resilient warriors that were able to win this fight called “incarceration.” Connection to God ultimately helped provide a resiliency against the difficulties of incarceration and separation from her family.

Further, several activities were built into the Arts course that encouraged women to explore their inner self. One assignment, for example, invited students to walk down memory lane. They had to bring to the class something to illustrate their most formative memory. People shared about grandma’s biscuits and bedtime prayers. They also shared about divorce, death, love, and loved ones. These were the memories that shaped and made these women who they are. Another assignment I asked them to complete is to write a eulogy. I asked them to write what they want others to remember about them. They shared these in front of the class. The objective of the assignment was for them to explore the things that matter most in their lives. Both of these activities created space for women to reflect on and share their authentic selves with the learning community.

Comments from the course evaluation reflected the course’s ability to create a site of authenticity. I asked students in the class, What have you learned about your identity that you did not know before entering this class? Some of these comments included: “I learned not to be shy, but to open up more and go after my goal to help teenagers;” “I learned about my parents (after reading *Becoming Abigail*) and the

⁴⁷⁹ Sherry, Interview, 3 January 2015.

struggle with grief she experienced after her Mother's death. I have struggled with my identity for the last 35 to 40 years;" "Before this class, I never really did any soul searching. Lately, I've been trying to figure out what events in my life have made me, me;" "I learned that there are parts of my identity that I was covering up. I knew about my gifts and talents, but tapping into the experiences and circumstances that make me...me." Overall, the course invited women into introspection so they could develop and hear their inner voice amidst the competing voices in the prison.

Part 5: The Quest for Connection

One of the markers of incarceration is isolation. Yet, connection is also a marker of hope. The Certificate Program actually counters this isolation by providing spaces where women can connect with each other and those from the outside. These connections within the class invite women into a space where they can share their authentic self and become an agent that helps construct knowledge. As evidenced in Chapter 4 with the interaction between one of the participants in our program and the death-row inmate, connection to one another inspired hope. Also, witnessing the humanizing impact of the Certificate Program on the death-inmate actually created a desire for that same type of connection. In this particular case, once Nona got into the program, she never received another disciplinary report. The program itself did not make her choose to refrain from activities that would get her a disciplinary report; she made this decision. Through priority-driven seeing, she chose participating in this learning community rather than the isolation that she had previously experienced in lockdown. Overall, connection is a human desire that pedagogies of restorative hope seek to provide.

Connection: Authoring the Self-in-Community with Others

Community often represents a context where people can develop and claim their sense of self and emergent voice. While it appears that I have made the primacy of self as central to self-authorship, my understanding is much more nuanced than that. Self-authorship requires contemplative and communion-oriented practices; however, self-authorship also requires a communal context in which learners claim their

voice. Having voice is significant apart from others; yet, it becomes even more relevant and transformative in interaction with others.

Self-authorship pays particular emphasis to strengthening one's internal voice rather than simply listening to the external voices around them. To possess a strong inner self makes learners better participants in the mutual construction of knowledge that happens when all learners make meaning. As Carol Lakey Hess notes, beyond simply self-expression (although important), voice refers to "the ability to express oneself *and* the right to be heard; it means knowing one's mind *and* will and trusting that one can express oneself in one's community. Voice is one's feelings of 'presence, power, participation, protest, and identity.'"⁴⁸⁰ To disregard and dismiss voice is to disregard and dismiss what a person knows, how a person sees, who a person is, and the possibilities to be transformed by that person. To trust one's own voice and to understand that voice as a meaningful contribution to the world is critically important in this formative phase of the self-in-community. The communal affirmation that the learner and their voice is significant, however, also contributes to the process of self-authorship. Being in community does not mean that dissenting selves won't emerge from within the community; instead, the self remains assertive in their truth-telling, humble in their truth-seeking, and assured in their truth-sharing.

Authors do not simply write themselves into being; they write the world into being. Their lives help shape history and the meta-narrative of the world. Their life becomes words against the backdrop of a larger narrative that they are helping to shape. In one sense, a person's life is a text that continues to be written. The author decides which main characters will be a primary part of their plot and how the main characters respond to the major events that take place in one's life. Considering that one narrative life intersects with other narrative lives lends itself to an intertextual reality—that our lives always impact the lives of others. We are constantly being written on to the stories of others as we engage others with our life. In this sense, self-authorship presumes an intertextual authority, where one not only writes their own lives into being but also help as people seek to revise and re-envision their life.

⁴⁸⁰ Carol Lakey Hess, 69.

One's voice enters the class when educators open up the space for the narrative of learners into the space. As learners engage in storytelling, story-linking, and sometimes the process of restorying, teachers and the learning community listen attentively. The process of articulating voice is formative, not only because it illustrates a self-in-the-making, but it demonstrates a world-in-the-making. Teachers partner in the process of self-authorship by creating spaces that welcome the learning community to engage one another in authentic, life-giving ways. The learning space becomes sacramental in that it mediates the presence of God by making the God-in-others more visible. To claim one's own life as not fixed is one thing; but to claim one's own being as an artist who can bring color to a dull and bleak reality opens up a whole other world of possibilities where one can see, know, be, and do in the world differently.

Connection: Restorative Hope as Relational Knowing

Because restorative hope promotes connection rather than individualism and competition, it is important to name the importance of relational knowing that undergirds restorative hope pedagogy as an epistemological resource. Restorative hope pedagogy views relationships as a significant epistemological resource for the construction of knowledge and new meaning. The primacy of relationships in restorative hope pedagogy recognizes that being-in-community offers a way to access and sustain hope in the midst of crisis. Relationships ultimately contribute to the knowledge of self, knowledge of other, and knowledge about subject-matter by enabling people to know themselves apart from others while also knowing themselves in relationship to others. According to Gardener, relational knowing represents an interpersonal intelligence that enables one to understand other people and how they work in order to employ that knowing in relationships.⁴⁸¹

Relational epistemology assumes that we come to know things subjectively. In other words, we come to know what we know from within various contexts. Multiple perspectives help verify what we know. To know others in relationship apart from one another requires some degree of differentiation.

⁴⁸¹ Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons*. Rev. and updated. ed. New York: BasicBooks, 2006), 9.

Relationships provide a significant context where learners can differentiate themselves (that is their thoughts, philosophies, practices, and essence) from others. This differentiation from other is not a way to privilege autonomy and individualization over dependency and community; instead, it values the unique self that brings diversity to a space. This unique self becomes “iron that sharpens iron” in the midst of a community of other unique selves. Those in relationship are willing to ask hard questions that provoke new insights and lead to new structures for making-meaning. Being around other beings helps one become more clear about his or own sense of self while also challenging him or her to become more. In other words, to know oneself is to be one’s self in the midst of community. This birth into a more formed self manifests human hope within the context of relationship. When two beings engage in dialogue around a particular subject-matter, they approach each other from their epistemological standpoint; this epistemological standpoint shapes the content of dialogue and helps provide the milieu for a robust discovery of new meanings. The fruit of their engagement results in new or more clearly defined ways of looking at the subject matter as well as new ways of seeing the Other. The task of the educator, then, is to encourage diversity and difference rather than uniformity and fused selves. As people come to know themselves more clearly, they also have the opportunity to know others more clearly, which precipitates a communal encounter.

One activity in particular demonstrates a communal encounter that occurred in my *Identifying Spirituality through the Arts* course. What I observed throughout the course is that this “I see you” and “I hear you” dialogue emerged organically when women shared their art with the class. The understanding that testimony reaches out for a sacred community undergirded the design of the session entitled “Establishing a Sense of Identity in Contested Spaces.” In response to four significant questions, the women created identity maps. They responded to the following set of questions: 1) Who do I say I am? 2) Who do others say I am? 3) Who does God say I am? And 4) Who do I want others to see me as? Following their identity maps, we gave each woman the silhouette of a face. Their task was to draw eyes on the face that reflected their response to the questions above. The guest visual artist made connections between the “eyes”

with the “I,” feeding into a paradoxical understanding of visibility. Namely, how others view us may be completely different from how we want them to see us and ultimately how we see ourselves.

After they completed their identity maps and drawings, we asked each person to share her visual art, using the four questions as an outline. What stood out to me about this session is the way the students yearned for a response from the class. They did not just want to present what they thought about themselves; they wanted verbal responses from the class of how the class perceived them. When an adequate response was not given, the women actively sought the community’s response out by asking them questions about the community’s perceptions of who they are. Out of all the sessions, this session of call and response became one of affirmation, vulnerability and confidence-building. After this session, I noticed the ways in which the confidence of particular students increased. One student was so inspired by the words of the learning community that she overlaid her journal with eyes. When she showed the journal to me, she just smiled and shared the transformative impact of the class session on her confidence.

Ultimately, the performative aspect of sharing art became complete for the women when met with affirmation from the community. Even more than an affirmation of the art, it served as an affirmation of the reality of the experiences and transformation that the women names within their art. Within the prison, surveillance complexifies this idea of visibility. Not only are they aware of how their peers view them, they are hyperaware of being seen by the guards. The paradox, however, is that their peers and the guards can both see them physically but still may not be able to see them holistically. Performing testimonial-art coupled with sharing it became a source of a more holistic visibility. Ultimately, it was the acknowledgement that “I see you” and “I hear you” beyond the beige jump suit that allowed the women to see and hear themselves more deeply. In other words, the practice of sharing art had created a communal encounter where they were free to share their authentic selves with others who also shared their authentic selves.

A communal encounter is to know the other as self and know the self as other. This form of relational epistemology invites unique selves into conversation with one another as to produce new forms of consciousness that welcomes new ways of seeing subject-matter. To find common ground offers

opportunities for collaboration in the struggle for a more just society. Relationships help mediate hope in a learning environment by providing affirmation, accountability, and a stage to rehearse agency. Communal encounter place learners in contact with others so that connected knowers gain empathy in a way that helps shift and expand their lens.⁴⁸²

Lockdown pedagogies tend to blind learners from seeing the deep dissonances and resonances in others as a resource for knowledge. Instead, they teach difference and disagreement as a negative that needs to either be converted or denied value. Restorative hope pedagogy counters this perspective by seeing disagreement as an entry point into deeper engagement with the subject-matter and/or person. To discourage this type of stagnation, teachers should encourage the practices of critical visibility, empathy, hospitality, and respect in the learning environment. Overall, by seeing-the-self-in-other while at the same time seeing-the-self-as-uniquely-other offers a lens by which people come to know people, places, philosophies, and practices differently.

Part 6: The Quest for Resiliency in Restorative Hope Pedagogy

As referred to in Chapter 3, resiliency is the ability to bounce back and sustain one's self through difficult circumstances. Resilience is a protective factor that often generates a sense of well-being and hope.⁴⁸³ It is, as Westfield describes resilience, "about mastering the terrain of the oppressive context so well that one re-creates and heals the self in the midst of chaos. It is mastering the ability to see one's self in a life-affirming light while the world around would shroud her in a shadow."⁴⁸⁴ To hope in words and thoughts may not always capture the hope that manifests when one simply chooses to live and be in a world that is unstable, unjust, and often unkind. Thus, restorative hope highlights the generative praxis that surfaces when one simply lives and engages in practices that

⁴⁸² Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 115.

⁴⁸³ George A. Bonnano, "Loss, Trauma and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?" *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (2004) 20-28.

⁴⁸⁴ Westfield, *Dear Sisters* 8.

help sustain their life. This embodied resilience, particularly in the lives of women on the incarceration continuum, seemed to be most alive when women decided to resist death and persist in life. The resistance to death made bold claims against and in spite of the social and emotional death that seemed so prevalent against the bodies and lives of women.

It is difficult to pinpoint specific things that build resilience, especially within education. Further, it is often wondered if resilience is an inborn personality or something someone learns over the course of encountering great difficulties. However, insights from the women reveal that one can form a sense of resilience when they have critical knowledge about structural and personal situations that place hope in crisis. This critical knowledge invites the capacity for them to embody resilience that enables them to weather challenges. Within restorative hope pedagogy, I assume that resilience emerges organically when people have been able to author their human-being-ness in relationship to self, God, and others. Further, I emphasize critical knowing as an epistemological resource that restorative hope pedagogy can draw from in its pursuit to embody resilience.

Several of the women I interviewed openly named injustice. The naming of injustice armed them with a resiliency to fight against injustice in the world. Critical knowing helps inform this type of resistance.

Of my culture, of me being an African-American, I understand that foul play was involved in the beginning. Yeah, yeah, I do, and that's very important, and I'm not just talking about slavery. I'm talking about the things that has been set in place for control, and having that knowledge gives me an opportunity to persevere against it. When I was younger and participated in that schematic, that scheme of things, when I say that scheme of things, it was as if well, you come out the ghettos, and something is supposed to happen to -- A perfect example, I can bring it up to speed today. Now they are testing children, African-American children and according to those test scores they're building prisons. I know you've heard about that. I'm not making it a color thing, I'm just telling you there are certain things that's in place that it only upgrades, it doesn't go away, and knowing that gives me reason to persevere from a knowledgeable perspective and not just to prove anybody wrong, but to prove that it's okay, that it's okay to live. No, I don't go around holding no banner being no -- trying to -- I don't have any points to prove. It was just a knowledge will allow you to be able to work in an area where your awareness is up, and you understand what's going on, you understand the permanent scars that you've chosen for yourself, the gulf...where you are like a leper. You've set yourself apart from people from the choices that you've made, but you can change even that. You can't take that record back. You can't take that back, but you can create a life...it's okay to live and let live. I

*can't hate you because your choices were better than mine. Whatever your choices were, they were yours, and whatever my choices were, they were mine. And we can co-exist.*⁴⁸⁵

Non-critical knowing feeds into selves that are complicit in their own dehumanization while critical knowing informs people about the odds stacked against them. Eden, for example, points out how before understanding the system she participated in; however, when she began to recognize some of the structural patterns that contributed to incarceration, poverty, and injustice. One clear example is the relationship between education and prison; those who fall into the non-knower status are already deemed “lost” or “prison worthy.” Her recognition of structural patterns is not a dismissal of accountability for choices nor is it a way to prove the system wrong. Instead, she uses this knowledge to “persevere against it.”

It is clear from our conversations that Eden, like many of the women, would attribute critical knowing to some of the prison education programs. Critical knowing does not just include knowing about the system but learning from one’s mistakes. This type of learning that creates critical knowing that gives knowledge on how to respond to the issues of life is significant for both personal and social transformation. Upon release, Eden shares this critical knowing to help build resilience and perseverance in others and to ultimately derail them from the pipeline to prison. There is a clear belief that if people become more critically aware they may make different choices. Thus, restorative hope pedagogy embraces critical knowing as a way to build resiliency against suffering in the world.

Critical Knowing as a Tool for Resiliency

At the heart of resiliency is this deep desire to respond to hardship by pulling on the very life-force from within. To know that injustice exists then becomes an important contributor to a resilient persistence against injustice. Critical knowing refers to the consciousness that sees and responds to injustice deep within the structure. Critical knowing takes into account not just the reading of the word, but the ability to read the

⁴⁸⁵ Eden, Interview, 21 April 2014.

world. Reading the world means one has the ability to decode the world and systems in the world, even including one's own positionality within the situation.⁴⁸⁶ When learners can know their world, they have a better chance of using their voice to name their world. It is from this space that we understand people's personal narrative and historicity as an effective place for critical knowing. This narrative-dialogical approach to learning finds precedence in critical pedagogy. In the words of Paulo Freire:

Dialogue is the encounter between humans, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of dehumanizing aggression. If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human being.⁴⁸⁷

To name the world, particularly in the context of a learning community, is an act of resistance. It counters the muteness that marginalized selves are taught to maintain. The act of naming, then, both facilitates a critical knowing in oneself as well as a critical knowing that the learning community can claim as a whole. The task of teachers then is to create this space where students can name, reclaim, and ultimately voice their protest against the backdrop of paralyzing silence. When learners share their voice, they shatter the unconscious identity confinements that we as teachers and students put upon other people in the learning community. Multiple shared voices in the learning community open the door to consider the complex nature of humanity and the interlocking influences, including one's own perception of others, that detain other selves and their action upon the word.

Critical to this idea of naming is voice. The way in which teachers navigate voice in the learning community is primary. Those who invite voice into the space can use voice as entry into understanding the vast racial, economic, and structural injustices experienced by learners in the room. Critical pedagogue Peter McLaren provides resources for thinking about the different voices that appear in the learning environment. Voice refers to "the cultural grammar and background knowledge that individuals use to

⁴⁸⁶ Paulo Freire, 2003, 87-134.

⁴⁸⁷ Paulo Freire, 69.

interpret and articulate experience.”⁴⁸⁸ In the context of critical knowing, voice refers to the development of consciousness and authorship in institutional and structural settings.⁴⁸⁹

McLaren claims that there are three voices at work in learning environments—the school voice, the student voice, and the teacher voice. Voice, as a pedagogical concept, relies on its situatedness in history and culture as mediator; in other words, one’s voice depends on interaction with others.⁴⁹⁰ The student voice functions as a force that mediates and forms reality. Critical knowing postures one’s hearts and imaginations towards hope. Peter McLaren describes this heart posturing:

Hearts gesturing toward hope create an arch of social dreaming; that is, such a gesture amounts to hope bolstered by critical reason and that turns on action; it is a hope bound to a vision of what could be possible, a vision fired by righteous anger. It is a vision that accounts for the totality of capitalist exploitation yet does not become totalizing in its own right.⁴⁹¹

Critical knowing refracts the world by disrupting what has been tacitly accepted as normal.⁴⁹² More than an act of imagination, it is an act of re-imagination. It promotes students and teachers reimagining their relationship between each other and in the world. It reconstitutes power relations by naming the way ideology has configured selves in favor of perpetuating the status quo. The reconfiguration of self, then, takes place from a heightened consciousness that has come to know the forces of oppression critically as well as one’s own possibility as a builder of just futures.

Critical knowing names the globalized oppression at the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality by giving voice to structural injustices and hegemonic ideologies that normalize the submissiveness and non-activity of marginalized bodies, voices, and modes of knowing. Instead, critical knowing calls people who have been oppressed to become actors on this grand stage of history by unmasking the character of varying “isms” that would rather remain hidden. Critical knowing rejects the claim that systems, including dominant epistemologies, are value free and neutral. Instead, it unveils these

⁴⁸⁸ Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, (Los Angeles: University of California, 2003), 245.

⁴⁸⁹ Peter McLaren, 247.

⁴⁹⁰ Peter McLaren, 245.

⁴⁹¹ Peter McLaren, 297.

⁴⁹² *Ibid*, 257.

frames of reference as actors that have been behind the scenes. While behind the scenes, the presence of dominant ideologies have been made known as an influencing factor in the social interactions between those deemed as “main characters” and those deemed as “supporting” characters in the backdrop of America’s meta-narrative.

Critical race and womanist pedagogues commit themselves to a critical knowing that places race as a central lens for naming some of the practices and policies that teach learners to ascribe and re-ascribe marginalization to particular bodies and ways of knowing.⁴⁹³ Critical knowing, then, is not just about knowing injustice in structures; it’s also about coming to conscious awareness of one’s own biases and prejudices, which impedes deep connections and perpetuates the status quo. In other words, critical knowing is just as much about unlearning as it is about learning. The unlearning that inherently takes place in spaces of human hope and self-authorship requires hard truths to be declared. Those who speak these truths about the structures of injustice may be the very ones others fear. These painstaking truths may be difficult to listen to but are also the truths most powerful for creating transformation. This is not new knowledge in the academy.

In the midst of a long struggle, womanist voices, Black theological voices, and other religiously and socially marginalized voices are still carving space at the table. The academic community, oftentimes, would provide them their own table to create an appearance that they are listening rather than create space

⁴⁹³ To remain within a particular scope, I want to acknowledge but not provide a robust analysis of these critical race pedagogues whose work helps shape the conversation in educational arenas. These scholars have much to offer to the thinking and re-thinking of religious education. Bryant Keith Alexander, *Performing Black Masculinity : Race, Culture, and Queer Identity*. Crossroads in Qualitative Inquiry. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006.; Michelle Fine, *Off White : Readings on Race, Power, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Keith Gilyard, *True to the Language Game: African American Discourse, Cultural Politics, and Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 2011).; Stephen Nathan Haymes, *Race, Culture, and the City: A Pedagogy for Black Urban Struggle*. Suny Series, Teacher Empowerment and School Reform. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).; Zues Leonardo, *Critical Pedagogy and Race* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005).; Glenda MacNaughton and Karina Davis. *"Race" and Early Childhood Education: An International Approach to Identity, Politics, and Pedagogy*. Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood. 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).; John T. Warren, *Performing Purity : Whiteness, Pedagogy, and the Reconstitution of Power*. Critical Intercultural Communication Studies (New York: P. Lang, 2003).; Lois Weis and Michelle Fine. *Construction Sites: Excavating Race, Class, and Gender among Urban Youth*. The Teaching for Social Justice Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000).; Pratt- Menah A. E. Clarke, *Critical Race, Feminism, and Education: A Social Justice Model*. Palgrave Macmillan's Postcolonial Studies in Education. 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

at the table of academic and theological discourses. To bring this scholarship to the table calls the very epistemological, axiological, ontological, and methodological assumptions that higher education in particular and a carceral society in general espouses to question. To avoid this challenge, the academy mutes the voice of particular scholarships and makes invisible particular bodies. Yet, as critical knowers, these voices continue to raise questions. Questions serve as a sociopolitical tool of hope that promotes awareness, access new possibilities, protests compliance, and explores the self.⁴⁹⁴

This critical knowing manifests with womanist theological and pedagogical discourses around hope. Womanism represents the multiple contradictory voices of many Black women in the academy. Black women, in particular, had to be creative in developing new strategies to become even in the midst of dehumanization. Thus, womanists gave themselves over to the “rigorous intellectual exercise in defining, determining, defending the Black women’s revolution of self-actualizing in a death-dealing context.”⁴⁹⁵ In other words, womanists became self-authoring in a theological enterprise that had always sought to author them. The intellectual rigor invested in differentiating the womanist voice from the normative white male theologians, from white feminists, and from Black male theologians, expanded the modes of knowing that Black women and other bodies could engage within the Academy. Their survival and expansion into third and fourth wave womanists demonstrates that womanists have successfully written themselves into historical repertoires of theological discourse. Notwithstanding the oppression dealt by a carceral society, a womanist epistemology of hope integrates an ethical consideration of care for self and other; this knowing possesses the capacity to care for even those who have oppressed them.⁴⁹⁶ Hope, in this sense, manifested in womanists’ ability to provide spaces of epistemological hope for Black women while also inviting those who have typically “othered” black bodies or womanist modes of knowing into a theo-epistemological

⁴⁹⁴ Nancy Lynne Westfield, ““Mama Why . . . ?” a Womanist Epistemology of Hope.” In *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, edited by Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 137.

⁴⁹⁵ Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, “Introduction: Writing for Our Lives—Womanism as an Epistemological Revolution,” In *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, edited by Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Nancy Lynne Westfield, ““Mama Why?””, 134-135.

revolution of wholeness. Womanists also helped open up the conversation for the primacy of the body as an epistemological resource for knowing. Overall, the vast body of pedagogical resources that underscore the importance of critical knowing affirms a key aim of restorative hope—to prepare resilient beings that are open to and pressing towards social and personal transformation.

Embodied Resilience and Critical Knowing in Pedagogy

Women within my course found spaces to name injustice within journal entries, informal conversations, and class dialogue. The act of naming injustice in a system that is fundamentally unjust is a manifestation of resistance. However, what stood out more to me than anything was not the critical knowing around structural injustice within the criminal justice system; it was the critical knowing about themselves and their circumstances. They claimed knowledge about the difficult things in life; yet, they faced hard truths courageously. This embodied resistance and critical knowing manifests in the words of a chorus of a song written by two women in my course. The words are, “Hidden from Existence, but I will not Hide.” These words demonstrate the critical awareness that prison intends to lock and hide people from society; yet, the song resists this act by boldly proclaiming that they will not hide. They take agency over their ability to be visible despite the intent of the criminal justice system.

Persistence in life is the generative praxis of staying alive in the midst of constant threats to emotional, physical, spiritual, and social death. Fighting to be human takes away the power of the prison system to dominate a women’s life trajectory. Freire would even say that fighting against human oppression, especially one’s own, restores humanity.⁴⁹⁷ Even when hope cannot be articulated in words, it can be manifested and accessed in the lived expressions and experiences of individuals and communities. Rituals, dance, yoga, walks in nature, persistence in the struggle all represent embodiments of hope that generate new experiences and expressions of hope, either in oneself or others. The subjective transfer of hope that happens within a person cannot be captured by tangible means; yet, to hope is to live in resistance to the

⁴⁹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 56.

death. Persistence in life, in fact, often came in the form of specific practices that tended to the care of self and others. These practices nurtured resiliency and the ability to withstand the darkness in the prison. These examples included exercise and opportunities to reflect and share with others.

Some persisted in life by participating in practices that cared for the self. Exercise, for example, became a generative praxis that contributed to life in the prison. Exercise in the prison context can actually serve to enhance public and personal image while at the same time serve as a form of self-preservation.⁴⁹⁸ In a women's prison, exercise is generative in that it actually nurtures and cares for the body, which contributes to emotional and physical sustainability. As Eden points out:

*Hope...to me? Every day I jogged in the prison because I didn't want to take medicine. A lot of times people will contribute everything to your mental status and it's not always that. When you try to look at too many bad situations at one time, it will become overwhelming, so I would jog and use that as my medication. And in that, there was always a good stretch of a feeling, and that would be my hope. And in my mind, I seen my family and what I could do to contribute to making that situation better.*⁴⁹⁹

Choosing wellness is an act of resistance and thus an act of freedom.⁵⁰⁰ This is particularly the case in carceral spaces where one may feel uncared for and many come into the space with chronic and mental illness; to care for self is a declaration about one's own value. It is an act on the physical self to be healthier so the possibility of being a generative self is sustained along the incarceration continuum. In other words, the simple act of exercise simultaneously resists death and persists in life. A resilient humanity, in other words, embodies hope through their resistance to death and persistence in life. In other words, they demonstrate hope through the generative praxis of bouncing back and through creating the internal bandwidth that can illustrate such human resilience.⁵⁰¹

Experiences where women could reflect and share happened often in the course. One of the most transformative sessions in the course is the session when the generative theme of suicide emerged. Every

⁴⁹⁸ Yvonne Jewekes, "Men Behind Bars: "Doing" Masculinity as an Adaptation to Imprisonment." *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 1 (2005): 59.

⁴⁹⁹ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

⁵⁰⁰ Westfield, *Dear Sisters*, 106.

⁵⁰¹ For the sake of this research, I am only pointing out instances of embodied resistance. Yet, in future research, I hope to provide a more in-depth theoretical grounding for this concept of embodied resistance as it relates to incarcerated women.

incarcerated woman in the course, except one, had either tried to commit suicide or engaged in activities of self-mutilation to gain some type of control over the pain they encountered on a daily basis. As an impromptu assignment, I asked them to share their experiences with other women and young girls who may be wrestling with the same thoughts. In fact, one student shared how her and seven of her cousins made a pact to commit suicide before they turned eighteen. The obituary she brought to class reminded her of these seven funerals that were held in her church. That day in class was the first time she ever shared the pact with anyone else. That day in class, she realized she was alive! A thick heaviness shrouded the classroom as woman by woman shared their battle scars. As the sharing came to a close, the heaviness was still there. I invited the women to stand. I asked them to embody some of those suicidal feelings. We did this as a community. I invited them to look around. I then asked for them to move from that position to one of life. We discussed what it felt like to physically move out of that position. It is at this moment that I reminded the women they were survivors. The movement helped shift the atmosphere. It helped invite a spirit of life back into the classroom.

In response to this moment, I invited the students to participate in creating an anthology that spoke to their narratives of resilience and survival. I realized they had something important to share with others who may be entertaining suicide. Because they were still alive, I wanted to know, “how did you make it through?” Despite the difficult questions they raised, God’s activity resonated as a predominant theme in the anthology entitled, *Learning to Live: Rethinking Suicide.* The purpose of this anthology within the *Exploring Spirituality and Identity Course through the Arts* provided women a space to engage critical reflection and offer a generative voice to young women who may have similar thoughts of suicide. While I never intended to this type of activity, this moment of creating space for these women to share their experience was building something in them and in our learning community.

Two assignments, in particular, stood out to me. One assignment is from a woman who remains incarcerated while the other is an assignment done by a woman who participated as an interviewee. The first is a letter written to a young girl. The incarcerated woman describes to this imaginary girl how she’s been where she is. After being locked up for sixteen years, since the age of seventeen, she tells the young

girl she wishes she had someone she could have talked to when she encountered her challenges.⁵⁰² This letter begins to expound upon the lessons learned while incarcerated. The wisdom shared in the letter could itself be an avenue for transformation for young girls. The letter is generative. The words of encouragement, transparency, and hope shared in the letter embody resistance against the criminal justice system. It serves as an attempt to reroute the pipeline.

Another assignment is a poem written by Sherry entitled “Trapped Inside Myself.”⁵⁰³ The poem, which is below, shares feeling “numb,” “empty,” “like giving up” “But LUV.” Luv seemed to be the force that continuously intervenes as she experiences “life’s raw deals” and her own “worthlessness.” Love serves as an awakening force to motivate and encourage her to survive. These examples illustrate the way practicing art unearths one’s own capacity to survive. As students created art, this class seemed to allow the artist to feel themselves, to recognize gifts in themselves and others, and participate in a process that helps heal past hurt.

⁵⁰² Because this woman is still incarcerated, I cannot share many details of the letter.

⁵⁰³ Sherry, “Trapped Inside Myself,” *Exploring Spirituality and Identity Course*. Certificate in Theological Studies Program. Prison in Atlanta, Georgia. October 2012.

Trapped Inside Myself

Ah, I feel like givin' up 2 day, NUMB
 Yeah, empty
 I feel like givin' up, But LUV
 TRAPPED INSIDE MYSELF—LUV
 Episodes of reality
 Get 2 ME
 Loose ME, LUV
 Life's raw deals feels calloused
 My worthlessness
 TRAPPED INSIDE MYSELF—LUV
 Zeroes feel nothing—NOT A 'THANG'
 But pain, divided LOVE
 Deadened pain
 ME, A body battlefield of landmines
 Cuts, scars of past abuse
 In time, ooze—moan luv
 The WAR, TRAPPED INSIDE MYSELF
 Dreams scream Luv's silent cry
 A silent cry 4 ME
 NO ONE here hears!
 But LUV, Trapped N-side myself
 LOVE—echoes, Love ME, LUV U
 Sings Love MEEE 2
 Trapped inside myself
 LUV's echoes blast a claim & survive the
 Shame game 2 blame, LUV
 Life ain't bad I L-O-V-E-S ME
 Mad, sad, bad
 LOVE TRAPPED N-Side, ME

ME! Myself
 The think tank 2 live
 ME, I motivate myself Luv
 Power, strength
 Trapped inside myself
 Even hurt, I survive
 LUV
 Choose, change, Xcept
 I challenge LOVE
 2 maintain, sustain, 2 recognize ME
 LUV
 UC the Love jewel my,
 Inside, shining light
 TRAPPED INSIDE MYSELF
 LUV, courageous
 Victor of the mind battle
 4-self release, cleanse, re-do ME
 TRAPPED INSIDE LOVE 4 ME,
 L.O.V.E.S. U
 Feel thoughts of LOVE hugs
 Recall feelin' LOVES snug joy
 NEED 2 LOVE
 TRAPPED INSIDE MYSELF

Overall, participation in the *Exploring Spirituality and Identity* course gave students an opportunity to build their confidence in a way that contributed to a sense of stick-with-it-ness. Linda, who for the first time ever wrote a poem in this course, talks extensively about how she saw transformation. She shares that she saw “transformation in other people's view of themselves, like where at one point they may have come in with this bad stuff, and then in the midst it's like something happened.”⁵⁰⁴ She goes on further, to speak how she thought the course began a transformation process in a student she knew well. She shares, “I saw like a happiness in her when she was talking about her artwork. I saw like when people appreciated it and people were like that's awesome, I saw like a boost of something in her, even though she might go back and complain about her shitty circumstances, just for that moment, I still saw that boost in her.”⁵⁰⁵ In this sense, the very act of participating in art countered her circumstances so that, in the moment, she could experience a boost. These boosts contribute to resiliency; it proclaims life and resists death, at least in that moment. To be clear, critical knowing takes place during art when participants have an opportunity to name injustice or when observers have an opportunity to become critically aware of a grace that transcends pain even for a moment.

Part 7: Generative Praxis within Restorative Hope for Religious Educators

Generative praxis within restorative hope pedagogical frameworks reveals hope as an active force that connects one's desire with the will to do something about it. In other words, hope generates action that orients itself to the realization of wants, which in turn produces a generative hope that moves learners toward action. Generative hope produces, restores, and sustains generative praxis amidst a world and self-

⁵⁰⁴ Lisa, Interview, 15 September 2014.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

in-crisis. Generative praxis places agency as a central force in restorative hope. Generative praxis is more concerned about actions than behavior; action focuses on future openings, possibilities, and initiations from the vantage point of active agents.⁵⁰⁶ The task of educators, particularly religious educators, is to remind students of their responsibility to act while also affirming their transformative power to enact change.

The term “praxis” is critical to understanding ways of doing in generative praxis. Praxis involves liberation for the oppressed and the oppressor.⁵⁰⁷ Traditional Latin American liberationist see-judge-act praxis models emphasize an increased awareness (see), a critical analysis (judge), and faith-based action (act).⁵⁰⁸ Pastoral theology expands this hermeneutical circle by making theological reflection a central component of this model—insertion, theological reflection, pastoral planning, immersion/experience, and social analysis.⁵⁰⁹ The prominence in these models is orthopraxis (right action) rather than orthodoxy (right belief).⁵¹⁰ This marked a shift from an intense focus on the content of theology to an intense focus on the methodology and accountability of theology. Both the point of departure for doing theology and the ending point all rested in just actions in the world addressing the systematic oppression of the poor.⁵¹¹

In other words, the circle of praxis, a form of critical thinking, is a faith-in-action model that seeks to take reality seriously by becoming more aware of the world, analyzing and viewing the world as God would see it in order to identify its shortcomings, and employing actions that move toward a more just vision of reality. Within the context of religious education, the analysis within the praxis circle includes theological reflection, whereas learners place their observations of and experiences with reality into conversation with religious traditions in order to mutually challenge, clarify, and expand understandings of

⁵⁰⁶ Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 15.

⁵⁰⁷ Arthur L. Pressley and Nancy Lynne Westfield, 150.

⁵⁰⁸ "Young Christian Workers - See. Judge. Act," 2016, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://ycw.org.au/seejudgeact.php>.

⁵⁰⁹ Joe Holland and Peter J. Henriot. *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Rev. and enl. ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983. 7-8.

⁵¹⁰ Juan-Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982), 32.

⁵¹¹ Juan-Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, Translated by John Drury. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), 5.

a lived faith.⁵¹² The task of religious educators is to remind students of their responsibility to act while also affirming their transformative power to enact change.

Generative praxis is a performance based model that responds to injustices in the world that put hope in crisis. At the heart of generative praxis lie two questions: “Who will one be in a world that needs hope? How will one act on the world in desperate need of hope?” Generative praxis emerges from performative knowledge, wherein one cannot separate what they know from what they are doing.⁵¹³ It also emerges from ontological-praxis. One cannot separate who they are from what they are doing. The generative praxis model urges for a see-know-be-do cycle of praxis that builds upon traditional models. Restorative hope claims that the actions upon the self are just as important as the action that one acts in the world. By inserting “be” into the cycle, the centrality of self comes into view. The self engages as one whose actions upon the world shapes the world as well as shapes their sense of self. It is the self that sees, judges, and acts as an outside agent but these movements in the cycle develop the self into who the self is becoming. In other words, as one reflects and makes decisions about how to be a more faithful self, they are making decisions about the essence of who they are. These ontological decisions move into the public sphere as one seeks to be a more faithful self by living faithfully and bringing about a more just reality. More specifically, generative praxis encourages learners to explore narratives of hope, vocation, spiritual formation, agency, and community in the role of restoring hope in self and society.

Narratives of Hope, Exemplars of Hope, and the Practice of Hope-Imaging

Religious educators employ narrative to vitalize the imagination so learners can see new possibilities. Through narrative, religious educators can introduce learners to exemplars of hope. Exemplars of hope demonstrate a keen sense of authenticity and vocational discernment, which enables them to take risks for and within their community; seeing these narratives affirm a sense of interdependence and hope. Narrative holds a privileged position in restorative hope pedagogy because it enables learners *to see* the

⁵¹² Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), viii.

⁵¹³ Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, 170.

lives of real people who have overcome real obstacles while at the same time experiencing real change. The narrative of hope exemplars functions as a welcome reminder that since others have persisted through great challenges, so can you. These visions of hope ultimately help learners re-vise their current modes of thinking and re-orient their hearts to a posture of possibility. Exemplars of hope embolden learners to act by creating a vision for what is possible even amidst great difficulty. One question that rages within a person struggling to exercise agency in response to systemic oppression and ontological confinement is: Can I enact change in a world that is steeped in crisis while I myself am constantly faced with internal crisis? This question wells from deep within the recesses of a person's heart and forces religious education to "go back and fetch it," that is learn from the rich traditions of those who have blazed the trails and made it possible to act upon the self and world relentlessly.

Exemplars of hope can function through narratives of historical and contemporary figures as well as through the lives of mentors. They enter the classroom by way of story-telling. These exemplars persevered through insurmountable odds in order to fulfill a sense of call to self, God, and community. Historical figures like Fannie Lou Hammer, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Ella Baker, and Jesus may fall into this category. Their lives exhibited an authentic sense of call that urged them to take risks for and with their community. Their lives demonstrate courage, diligence, civic duty, faith, and respect for others and self. Intergenerational connections such as the narratives of mentors and living elders also serve in the role of hope narratives; these embodied narratives help learners differentiate between themselves and their crisis.

Learners no longer just see the exemplar in word but try to emulate the exemplar in deed. They do not intend to be like the exemplar but rather exhibit the same type of courage, resiliency, and stick-with-it-ness that their contemporary and historical hope exemplars demonstrated when their hope was on the brink of despair. Exemplars of hope may become known from within the learning environment. Teachers, for example, may be incarnations of hope, whereby their lives become texts that the students read. In addition, other learners in the community may emerge to testify and share of the ways they have navigated their own crisis of hope. Overall, hope exemplars model and communicate values that learners should take seriously

when facing tough times or when their hope goes into crisis.⁵¹⁴ Their lives, although not perfect, personify character traits and virtues worthy of modeling. Ultimately, hope exemplars help generate agency by restoring a vision of possibility.

Religious educators who bring hope narratives in the class seek to restore hope by illuminating the image of hope incarnated in lived realities. Too often learners get stuck in their crisis of hope with an inability to see beyond it. For learners to differentiate their self from their crisis is the primary objective of hope-imagining. In other words, hope imagining refers to the generative process of learners coming *to see* possibilities beyond their current situation, coming *to know* the internal resources of courage and resilience to draw upon, coming *to be* a prophetic witness in spite of, and coming *to do* the work that seems most applicable and authentic to their vocation in the world.

Hope-imagining may provoke a story-linking process, whereby learners begin to link their lives to the lives of others in order to muster up the courage and resilience to navigate their crisis of hope. The story-linking process functions in the following way:

- (1) The telling and retelling of the stories God's activities in the Scriptures; (2) linking those ancient stories to contemporary stories in a praxis of transformative imagination; and (3) discerning or 'seeing the world' in which they live through the stories of God's activity recorded in the scripture to the end that they are renewed and energized for prophetic living through their growing awareness of God's presence in the course of contemporary events.⁵¹⁵

Critical to this story-linking process is the active connection between liberation and vocation.⁵¹⁶ God's activity in the world and the personal narratives of learners situates the learners as characters on the stage of history that is ever-becoming. The introduction to, reflection on, and active hope-imagining placed on narratives of hope exemplars provide a useful strategy for restoring hope. Observing their ability to overcome, particularly those who come from marginalized backgrounds, provides resources for problem-

⁵¹⁴ Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Saint Mary's Press: Winona, MN., 2000), 89.

⁵¹⁵ Charles Foster and Grant S. Shockley (eds.), *Black Religious Experience: Conversations on Double Consciousness and the Work of Grant Shockley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 151-152.

⁵¹⁶ Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 21.

solving in a complex world. Their narratives not only serve as examples of problem-solving but serve as useful subject-matter to engage learners around the systematic issues that marginalized groups encounter.⁵¹⁷ Overall, hope-imagining enables the character virtues of hope exemplars to emerge as a resource for restoring hope.

Vocation, Reflection, and the Practice of Discernment

Beyond reflecting deeply on the lives of moral exemplars, one must also contemplate on everyday experiences to hear the self and what is the vocation of the self. Discernment within restorative hope pedagogy extends beyond simply tending to the mind; discernment tends to the soul. Most comprehensive in his definition of discernment is religious educator David F. White who describes discernment as: 1) God speaking through affect and intuition, which is language of the heart; 2) God speaking through intellectual analysis, which is the language of the mind; 3) God speaking through social analysis and theological imagination, which is the language of the soul; and 4) God speaking through practical exploration, which is the language of the body.⁵¹⁸ This praxis-oriented cycle of discernment engages the whole self in the process of speaking with God in order to know and become. As part of creative praxis, discernment invokes a generative hope that provides aim and direction for one's labor in the world. Based on the insights of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and the movements in White's discernment model, I embrace the following insights about the process of discernment:

1. As a language of the mind, discernment emboldens one's intellectual capacity to contribute to new understandings of self and the world. These new understandings actively engage one's ethnic identity as well as other aspects of the essence of a person's being.

⁵¹⁷ Arthur L. Pressley and Nancy Lynne Westfield, "Teaching Black: God-Talk with Black Thinkers," In *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies*, edited by Nancy Lynne Westfield (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 150.

⁵¹⁸ David F. White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 66-67.

2. As a language of the soul, discernment awakens one to their own confinement to meaningless things that captivate one's attention. It generates a reflective posture...a grasping for more than what can be conceived with the mind.
3. As a language of the heart, discernment generates a desire to be in communion with a Transcendent power that invokes a sense of knowing beyond one's own. It also generates a desire to be in intimate relationship with others. In other words, a genuine desire to know and be known emerges.
4. As a language of the body, discernment generates practical actions in the world that counter society's attempt to act upon the self in ways that objectify, commodify, and confine the body to particular actions. Even something as simple as smiling can represent an act of resistance against confinement. It is a bodily response that communicates resilience in spite of.
5. As a language of the self, it generates a desire to see, know, be, and do differently in the world...to denounce emotional, mental, and spiritual confinement...to announce participation in the work of God's liberating presence and practice in the world.

In other words, discernment calls upon the whole of a person to be in communion with God in order for the whole of person to be a faithful participant in community and faithful actor in the world.

Discernment is about the ways in which God speaks to individuals; vocation is about the way God speaks through individuals to the world. In other words, vocation is the response to one's discernment about being in the world. The truth of one's existence in the here-and-now becomes clearer as one seeks to know and become. Vocation is a revelation of a being's engagement with the world revealed through a process of discernment. One enters the process of discernment to gain revelation about their work in the world. Discernment "is the intentional practice by which a community or an individual seeks, recognizes, and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in concrete situations."⁵¹⁹

In other words, discernment is not commitment to an ephemeral reality that one cannot touch or see; discernment is commitment to a revelation that is real and active. It sees the impossible becoming

⁵¹⁹ Frank Rogers, "Discernment," In *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, edited by Dorothy C. Bass, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 105.

possible, the unknown becoming known, the nonbeing becoming Being, the undone being done. It is a faith committed to seeing revelation spark from a person's actions in the world. In the words of Cone on the intersections between faith, revelation, and liberation, he writes:

By making revelation a historical happening, the Bible makes faith something other than an ecstatic feeling in moments of silent prayer, or an acceptance of inerrant propositions. Faith is the response of the community to God's act of liberation. It means saying yes to God and no to oppressors. Faith is the existential element in revelation—that is, the community's perception of its being and the willingness to fight against nonbeing.⁵²⁰

Faith is the substance of hope restored; vocation is the fruit of it. I do not dismiss the eternal revelation that also takes place during discernment; in fact, it is my understanding that the Eternal Revelation is what anchors one's hope to fight for transformation of self and society in the concrete historical reality. But I do advocate for a vocation rooted in the concrete building of hope in lived reality.

One way to approach discernment is through theological reflection, whereby learners place their self, and experiences in conversation with their religious traditions to refine and create new understanding of themselves, others, and their work in the world. As defined by Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer:

[T]heological reflection is the discipline of exploring individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions, and perspectives, as well as those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection therefore may confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our own experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth or new meaning for living.⁵²¹

To encourage the task of theological reflection in learning communities is to invite students into the interpretation and re-interpretation of important aspects of their faith and their faith's engagement with the world around them. Deep and intimate learning begins when teachers care for and respect the soul of their students.⁵²² The revealing of vocation is not the work of the teacher. Also, the task of the teacher is not to make moral judgments about what does and does not matter; the task of the teacher is to create a space,

⁵²⁰ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 20th edition., (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 48.

⁵²¹ Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), viii.

⁵²² bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.

where students can discern their internal voice and God's voice clearly. Even more so, the teacher and learning community serve as a site of affirmation and appearing when learners come to know how they are to work in the world. The learning space allows critical visibility as it opens up for learners to feel a sense of purpose and meaning in life. These learning spaces combat the sense of meaninglessness and voids one feels when confined to practices, principles, and purposes that do not matter much in the world. The task of discernment is not for the student alone, but teachers become "mutual sojourners" in the quest for vocation and liberation.⁵²³ Practices of discernment and theological reflection, then, are not to retreat from the world; it is to become more faithful and effective in one's engagement with the world.

Spiritual Formation, Cooperation, and the Practice of Authenticity

To grow and develop the whole self is more than a practice of forming the mind; it is a practice of forming the soul and spirit of humanity. Religious educators must be attuned to integrating pedagogical strategies in the class that not only help learners imagine, reflect, and discern but also help learners engage in the formation of the inner self. Spiritual formation as a pedagogical aim within restorative hope frameworks pays close attention to the divine-human partnership that enacts inner and outer change. The cycle of generative praxis, whose primary goal is to be a more authentic self who lives a more faithful life, relies on the spiritual formation that takes place at every phase of the see-know-be-do cycle. In this sense, spiritual formation represents the divine-human partnership that forms the inner self in ways that produce a more authentic self who engages with the world and others in integrity.

Considering that religious educators, particularly those in theological education, must help prepare students to lead in congregational and public spaces, spiritual formation must be an active component of what we do in our learning environments. To welcome communion with God is to welcome the entire self—body, soul, and spirit into communion with God. In this sense, spiritual formation incorporates a transformation of the whole self, not just the spiritual self. A transformation of the spiritual self, however,

⁵²³ Anne Streaty Wimberly, 21.

precipitates transformations in the thoughts, emotions, will, and practices of learners. This transformation restores hope in the understanding that the work to transform systems is done within partnership with the Spirit of Christ. To neglect spiritual formation in restorative hope pedagogy would be to neglect an aspect of a person's being that constantly yearns to know and be known. Whether learners choose to serve in congregational or non-congregational settings, spiritual formation contributes to student's understanding of how they can be a more faithful witness in the church, academy, or world.

My own Christian theological lens prompts me to invite the Holy Spirit into the learning environment as a partner in the spiritual formation process of learners. In this sense, teaching becomes more than a gift to students; it is an offering to God. Religious education (that is distinctly Christian religious education) seeks to incarnate the presence of Jesus Christ in direct or indirect ways. Christian religious educators do not seek to enforce spiritual formation; instead, Christian religious educators seek to entrust and assist with spiritual formation by living into their authentic self in word, thought, and deed. To set the space for divine partnership is to embrace discernment, active listening, and flexibility during the teaching and learning moment. The Holy Spirit's presence in the learning environment transforms the teaching and learning moment in ways that humanity cannot. Religious educators who understand their own fragility embrace a posture of humility. To invite the Holy Spirit into the learning environment is to welcome mystery, transcendence, and the loss of some control. It is to welcome a new Teacher and Guide into the space who interacts and facilitates formation within the depths of a learners' being during the class. In this sense, what appears to be non-generative to most may actually be catalytic in how learners gain a renewed sense of self, God, and others during the teaching and learning process.

While inviting the Holy Spirit into the space is a partnership between the Spirit of God and the teacher, spiritual formation is a divine partnership between the learner and the Spirit of God. Religious educators, then, give primacy to cooperative formation within generative praxis. Cooperative formation calls on the agency of learners to allow the Holy Spirit to have access to their hearts, minds, and souls, and spirits. Ontological hope cannot be denied in a space where the Holy Spirit has been invited in to engage the students. While students have agency to resist the work of the Spirit in their lives, they also have agency

to allow the Holy Spirit to do a new work in their inner self. To capture in words what takes place during the inner-working of the Spirit is quite difficult; however, people who encounter the Holy Spirit in the process of teaching and learning often emerge from the learning space with a renewed vision of justice in the world and fresh insights into one's own identity.

The theme of a Divine Spirit that transcends darkness reminds me that there are specific practices that give rise to the felt and formative presence of God in one's life even in confined spaces. As I give consideration to the insights of incarcerated women coupled with my own pedagogical insights, there are concrete practices that religious educators can employ within their learning environments to contribute to the spiritual formation of students. These include but are not limited to the following practices:

- 1) Encourage students to consider spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, simplicity, service, meditation, Sabbath-keeping, worship, study and as central to their own spiritual growth;
- 2) Invite students to identify other formative practices such as art, generative cooking, book studies, small groups, caring for animals, choir, and knitting that have been significant in their spiritual growth;
- 3) Provide opportunities for students to share and explore their vocational passions within the classroom space;
- 4) Create space for students to learn from and about people who are different from them;
- 5) Refrain from always feeling the need to "rescue" students from darkness, but allow them space to question and wrestle in the midst of the darkness they may be experiencing;
- 6) Trust the Holy Spirit and be transparent with students about your trust in the Holy Spirit's power to transform lives and systems that seem immutable.

These practices retain the intentionality of spiritual formation in learning environments while also letting go so that the intricate details of what that spiritual formation looks like is in the hands of the students and Holy Spirit. Students exercise agency in how they choose or don't choose to engage these practices.

Generative praxis within restorative hope ultimately holds claim to partnering with the Holy Spirit in the process of transformations of self and the world, which leads to a more authentic being that acts more

faithfully in the world. Furthermore, the act of spiritual formation is not an isolated act; those within the learning community are formed together. The process of spiritual formation is an immersion into seeing, knowing, being, and doing more authentically in the world; thus, learners see, know, be, and do in fresh revelatory ways that often requires risk-taking.

Communal Encounters, Hospitality, and the Practice of Community

In hosting a space for communal encounters, the role of religious educators is threefold—to create space for strangers to enter, set the table for learners to partake, and become a host of intense dialogue. One of the primary tasks of the teacher is to create hospitable spaces for communal encounters. This intentionality in creating space has relevance for both how students engage the course material and how students engage each other. I use the term “encounter” to denote the unexpected moments when learners actually “see” the other; that seeing makes the one who once was a stranger someone more. Avoiding essentialist notions of Blackness or criminality, encounter also includes recognition of the vast diversity that exists within one community.⁵²⁴ The textures of their humanity become critically visible even as one explores the textures of their own humanity.

Hospitality becomes a way to create space for students to engage in deep dialogue while simultaneously modeling for students what hospitality looks like. Hospitality welcomes strangers or those who have been “othered” by society into our learning space as an active participant in shaping how we come to know. As learners, teachers sit at the table and become active partakers of the fruit of that dialogue. Critical to my understanding of generative praxis within restorative hope, the process by which I come to see the “other”, know the “other,” and “be” in relationship with the other is extremely important for how I do hospitality. In particular, I discard top-down approaches to hospitality that emphasizes grace being extended to the marginalized from those in power. This positionality only places the marginalized in the

⁵²⁴ Arthur L. Pressley and Nancy Lynne Westfield, 155.

location as “stranger;” this means the stranger is the one who needs to be observed and known. The stranger must prove they are worthy to be seen as more or they will remain on the margins of community life.

In my search for a bottom-up approach to hospitality, I draw Letty Russell’s definition of “hospitality as the practice of God’s welcome, embodied in our actions as we reach across difference to participate with God in bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis.”⁵²⁵ This bottom-up approach recognizes that the stranger is all of us and that we are all in desperate need of grace in order to struggle together for justice. Russell reframes hospitality “as a form of partnership with the ones we call ‘other,’ rather than as a form of charity or entertainment. Shee emphasizes four key components of hospitality: (1) unexpected divine presence; (2) advocacy for the marginalized; (3) mutual welcome; and (4) creation of community.”⁵²⁶ Within education, this reminds us that the goal of education is centered on communities of difference welcoming each other into learning partnerships that work towards justice. Thus, educational practices must also reflect this same hospitality toward difference.

Diversity rather than uniformity enriches the community. Difference can be both positive and negative. When one scorns difference and those who are different, it reinforces division and confined identities that limit understanding. On the other hand, when one uses difference as a means to know and seek understanding about the other, it enriches the community and the production of knowledge.⁵²⁷ Within these practices of mutuality, learners welcome each other for the purpose of knowing one another and building a robust learning community.

Hospitality, then, centers on the dynamic interplay of “to know and be known.” All within the learning community are strangers. Hospitality as a mutual interchange places responsibility on all participants to risk vulnerability and exposure in order to become critically visible in the communal context. As strangers mutually know the other, the act of being known facilitates an act of becoming more than a stranger. In this sense, as strangers engage one another, they automatically move from the margins to the

⁵²⁵ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 2.

⁵²⁶ Letty Russell, 82.

⁵²⁷ Letty M. Russell, 31.

center. Hospitality disrupts the fear and hostility often felt toward those who have different bodies, beliefs, lifestyles, political persuasions, and personalities than our own.

The practice of hospitality is critical to creating a gathering space where learners feel comfortable sharing their lives with one another, particularly when the experience of inhospitality and unwelcome becomes the norm.⁵²⁸ Practicing hospitality and creating a safe space are two different things. Practicing hospitality is how you welcome and respond to those deemed different. The burden of responsibility rests with me and my own formation within community. Creating safe space, however, can be attempted but never guaranteed, particularly in highly carceral settings. The myth of safe space shatters when those of vast difference leave the learning space with unintended wounds from taking risks. In the words of Russell, “Hospitality will not make us safe, but it will lead us to risk joining in the work of mending the creation without requiring those whom we encounter to become like us.”⁵²⁹

Restorative hope pedagogues no longer spend all their energy in creating safe space; instead, they create sites of becoming, where learners are encouraged to bring and engage their authentic selves in the learning space. Parker Palmer illustrates some of the functions of sites of becoming. He writes:

A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought.⁵³⁰

In other words, hospitality makes possible the seemingly impossible. Hospitality is an alternative way of doing that opens up doors of possibility for the process of becoming in community. Only in spaces where communal encounters occur can true solidarity that encourages metanoia, the honouring of difference, accountability and action, emerge.⁵³¹ Communal encounters sometimes push learners to the limits, a place where they can discover their own boundaries. They can become critically aware of prejudices and wrongly-

⁵²⁸ N. Lynne Westfield, *Dears Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 52-54.

⁵²⁹ Letty Russell, 74.

⁵³⁰ Parker Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003), 74.

⁵³¹ Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformations in a Globalized World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 60-68.

held presumptions. It is also a place for storylistening and restorying, for memory and re-membering, for collaboration and change.

Generative praxis, undergirded by generative hope, represents a comprehensive cycle of seeing, knowing, being, and doing within a pedagogy of restorative hope. More specifically, I propose that creative praxis within restorative hope pedagogy reinforces the see-be-do-know cycle within praxis-oriented education. An emphasis on narrative, vocation, spiritual formation, risk-taking, and communal encounters informs the creative praxis cycle that restores hope within the teaching and learning environment.

Rehearsing Agency, Improvisation, and the Practice of Risk-taking

The mysterious and revelatory newness that is invoked by being in communion with the Holy Spirit, which empowers one to understand their worth as a valued person who has meaningful work to do lends itself to having spaces where learners are encouraged to share that sense of self with others. Thus, the learning community is more than a place where knowledge is constructed; it is a place where theory is tested and practices rehearsed.

The learning space is critically important for producing skills that build hope in the world. Augusto Boal purports that theater is not theater for theater's sake; it is rehearsal for reality.⁵³² Drawing from this notion, I propose that the classroom is a stage that enables students to rehearse for reality. It provides a context where learners can rehearse multiple possibilities. It provides an avenue for learners to memorize what it means to restore hope through dialogue and practice. Particularly within theological education, religious educators must see their work with their students as having a direct impact on the world. For example, if students enter the classroom with an apparent colorblindness, how will they see color if our dialogue does not challenge them to look? Students need spaces of critical visibility where they can practice their voice and lay hold of their self. Yet, they also need spaces where the "Other" can become critically

⁵³² Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 141.

visible. These spaces are ones of accountability; yet, they are also spaces where people are encouraged to inquire, not be politically correct, and have permission to make and learn from their mistakes.

In the midst of mutual vulnerability, learners both partake of others and offer themselves. In other words, learners take risks. One of the most basic yet fruitful ways teachers can enable students to rehearse agency is setting the table for critical-transformative dialogue that will allow seemingly strangers to break bread together. However, because learners enter the space with baggage, there is no guarantee how that voice will be received. Furthermore, “dangerous memories” may emerge which may create discomfort in one’s self and other learners in the environment. To rehearse agency is to rehearse naming; it is to invite conversations that can be perceived as dangerous. For learners, naming identifies structures, including the learning community itself, that confines agency and a self-in-the-becoming. Self-authorship comes alive in communities where teachers encourage learners to share their voice and name the structures that prevent authenticity.

Conclusion

This chapter explored concrete ways that the generative praxis of restorative hope pedagogy counters lockdown pedagogies that reinforce and perpetuate wrong-until-proven-right epistemological frameworks. Restorative hope pedagogies open up space rather than close it, welcome participation rather than disinvite it. For the panopticon gaze within lockdown pedagogies, restorative hope pedagogy offers critical visibility. This invites teachers and learners to align their pedagogical aims with a vision of transforming the self and restoring the world. For a wrong-until-proven-right epistemological framework within lockdown pedagogies, restorative hope pedagogy offers multivariate knowing that privileges the multiples ways one comes to know what they know. This unlocks views of teaching and learning that presents the acquisition of knowledge as a disembodied, one-dimensional experience. For the ontological confinement within lockdown pedagogies, restorative hope pedagogy offers a process of self-authorship that unchains stagnated selves. For non-generative ways of doing within lockdown pedagogy, restorative hope offers a generative praxis that takes into account the call of a self-authored being to join with others

in authoring new futures. In other words, critical visibility, multivariate knowing, self-authorship, and generative praxis become ways to see, know, be, and do within restorative hope pedagogy that promotes authenticity, connection, and resiliency.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has explored how hope functions in the lives of populations in confinement, specifically women on the incarceration continuum. It defines restorative hope as a way of seeing, knowing, being, and doing that takes serious the possibilities of present and future possibilities for personal lives and the world. Building on these insights, restorative hope pedagogy is a broad-based learning rooted in how we see, know, do and be in a world whose hope is in constant crisis. My conclusions have been developed from the ground up—from descriptions and illustrations by individuals who have been incarcerated and are now released. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, I highly recommend further studies that build on these insights about hope, prison education, and transformative pedagogy. This final chapter begins with a summary of the major implications from this study and the contributions it makes to thinking about how we do theological education. It concludes with some questions raised by the study and suggestions for future research.

Implications for Restorative Hope: Building upon Previous Literature

Understanding the concept of hope more deeply represents a major task of this research. The work of re-fining the perception of hope beckons for researchers to ask questions about the things that really matter in people's everyday lives. From questions centered on hope, three primary implications emerge about the nature of restorative hope: restorative hope is holistic; restorative hope is rooted in both the here-and-now as well as the not-yet; restorative hope creates space for authenticity, connection, and resilience.

Restorative Hope as Holistic

Restorative hope acknowledges that one's experience of hope is intricately connected to one's very humanity. Thus, when crises emerge that impact one's sense of human-being-ness, such as the physical, psychological, spiritual, maternal, and social crises named in Chapter 1, the whole self faces severe threats to hope. Because these existential crisis deal with so many aspects of the self, it is important to recognize

the existential nature of hope. In particular, as psychologist Capps points out, the threats to hope that destabilize one's internal being (i.e. apathy, shame, and despair) are the same things that often place hope in crisis and calls upon the resilience of women to withstand its internal assaults. Not only do when face the internal assaults that damage hope, there are external assaults upon's one's humanity that requires theological resources to help understand and elicit

When society or even the faith community looks upon one with shame or treats one as if they are invisible, it is easier to internalize that shame and become inauthentic and ungenerative. Theologically, it works against the healthy sense of awareness that Black theologians urge. It counters the possibility of being whole. Yet, strong and supportive relationships do just the opposite. They bolster one's sense of self and encourage a resilient, authentic sense of self. In other words, the possibility of connection or being known by another is a helpful point of departure to fight against the internal and external assaults on one's humanity.

Hope is not simply a function of the mind but includes the way women see, know, be, and live life. Throughout this research, I described and categorized being, seeing, knowing, and doing separately; however, I understand the intersectionality of these ways of enacting hope. Seeing, knowing, being, and doing is a dynamic integrative process that must be seen in connection with every other aspect. In doing so, I've pressed toward a holistic understanding of hope that takes serious the multidimensional needs of all human-beings.

Behavioral psychologist Abraham Maslow helps us think about human needs as in a holistic way. Maslow's hierarchy of motivational needs can be divided in psychological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization.⁵³³ Maslow places these needs on a hierarchy whereby the lower level needs (such as safety and physical) must be met in order for people to fulfill the higher level needs (such as self-actualization).

⁵³³ Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370-96. Please note that there has been vast criticism of Maslow in later years for his hierarchy of needs. In a journal article, I would like to further explore these concerns in relation to the needs of incarcerated women. However, for the sake of this dissertation, it is important to know that these "universal" needs exist and sometimes drives the motivations of individuals.

In later years, Maslow even adds the motivational need for self-transcendence over and above self-actualization; self-transcendence takes into account a person's need to connect to something beyond the self and/or engage in altruistic behavior.⁵³⁴ Theories of human needs emphasize the importance of taking into account one's needs from a holistic perspective; the body, soul and spirit of a person are equally important and should be equally cared for in order to experience subjective well-being. This subjective well-being is closely related to experiences of hope.

This more holistic approach to hope gives way for us to view hope as an intervention along the incarceration continuum that helps to build resiliency and “stick-with-it-ness” in tough circumstances. Restorative hope creates possibilities for the whole self, seeking to restore the capacity to have courage and resiliency amidst crisis. The concept of restorative hope, then, encompasses tending to and seeing the whole person—body, soul, and spirit. It counters tendencies to view women as just their behavior or just their experiences or just their *you name it*. Instead, it recognizes that our lives are on a continuum, where a variety of internal and external stimuli impact how we are and where we are in the process of becoming who we are.

Restorative Hope as Rooted in the Here-and-Now and Not-Yet

In previous conversations rooted in theology, scholars focused on what anchored hope. Scholars like Moltmann who favored eschatological hope emphasized the promise of the future breaking into the present. Other scholars, such as liberationist scholars, took interest in the here-and-now and ways the socio-political situation could change in order to accommodate people's existential needs. Incarcerated women, however, complicated this bifurcated understanding of hope as either rooted in the future or rooted in the present. Their interviews gave more a more textured view of hope. Hope has depth that is rooted in connection. According to my research, the presence of people or God (or connections) in the here-and-now provides a context in which people can hope in the future. It provides a context in which people can fight

⁵³⁴ Abraham H. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 259-269.

together, arm in arm, for social change and generative futures for our children. Additionally, hope has height. It can reach into the future so that the future can speak to the present. The promise of a future unfolding also contributes to a people's sense of agency and possibility, causing them to be resilient in the here-and-now. Resilience then becomes a major way of viewing how women along the incarceration continuum navigate hope in crisis. When it is too overwhelming to think about the future and too difficult to focus on the circumstances of the past, women on the incarceration continuum just keep pressing until a light appears that helps them navigate their way through the darkness.

Overall, hope-talk in carceral contexts shifts the conversation on hope. Hope is no longer talked about solely as a here-and-now experience grounded in the present context nor is it solely discussed as an already, but not-yet experience grounded in the future. Instead, it is a both/and experience that may take root in the present or future. In the present, hope is rooted in fights against injustice to one's humanity and that of others. In the future, hope is rooted in the promise and possibility of new possible worlds and new possible selves. Both perspectives invite incarcerated women to act upon themselves and the world to bring about transformation. Further, when hope in the present is difficult to find, the embodied resilience of the forbears or those who become images of hope actually holds weight. The past, then, becomes a rich resource for invoking hope. Each point in time—past, present, and future—offers treasures to be unearthed on one's journey toward hope. Overall, time becomes a major consideration in experiences of hope, ultimately illuminating that the here-and-now holds just as much value as the already, but not-yet.

Restorative Hope as Creating Space

Women on the incarceration continuum taught me that hope, within pedagogy, is primarily about creating space. In the prison context, ways of seeing, knowing, being, and doing actually became a way to experience, sustain, and maintain a sense of hope in one's life. Thus, restorative hope itself is a generative praxis that gives birth to authenticity, connection, and resiliency in women. In a world that uses a wrong-until-proven-right framework to make women prove themselves, sites where becoming, appearing, and communal encounters are prioritized or inherent in the space becomes hope-generating for women along

the incarceration continuum. These insights about what generates and sustains hope in women have implications for how we think about and do religious education and theological education more broadly. Theological education aims to remind students of the possibilities in themselves and the world around. From the understanding that all have inherent worth and value, spaces within theological education should also invite students into recognizing their own authenticity, enabling spaces where students can encounter and connect with one another, and build resiliency in students to face a world that is constantly shifting and changing. When education stops meeting those aims, we must reevaluate what it is we do.

New conversations are beginning to emerge from seminaries throughout the United States that take seriously the institutional role of a theological education that integrates issues concerning the mass incarceration crisis. These institutions sit in a unique position to explore some of the distinct benefits and challenges of providing theological education in carceral settings. Does theological education, in fact, offer different outcomes, have different goals, provide different benefits than other credit or noncredit bearing course offering within the prison? These questions also help us re-imagine some of the ways we approach teaching more broadly.

Beyond the Bars: Implications for Education in Non-Carceral Settings

Beyond the prison context, this research leads me to believe that the wrong until proven right epistemological framework also functions in non-carceral spaces. In particular, I have begun to reflect more intently on the way the epistemological valuation drives our educational agendas from elementary through academia. While valuing knowledge is important and necessary within education contexts, I have become increasingly more concerned with the costs of placing such a high value on what one knows that the possibility of who one is may be lost. I would like to share these preliminary reflections in my observations on how a wrong-until-proven-right framework functions in both secondary and post-secondary environments as well as the academy. My overarching claim is that because wrong-until-proven-right cultures measure value based on epistemological valuation, learners in this culture learn to be competitive

in order to receive value. However, their value is based on a performance of knowledge rather than a performance of being.

For example, test-taking from the school yard to academia become a rite of passage that proves one's knowledge. Children learn how much they know by how well they do on the test. Kids who do poorly on tests get stigmatized as slow, behind, developmentally challenged while those who perform well are rewarded for their knowledge. In other words, some are ritualized into a knower status while others are placed in a non-knower status. The non-knower status can make it difficult to trust oneself; it can also create a need to prove knower status, an attitude which ultimately drives competition and individualism. The categorization of non-knower and knower feeds into a utilitarian society that uses knowledge to determine one's usefulness in the world. Those who know more can do more; those who can do more yield more value. This epistemological valuation that is based on external voices imparts a sense of hopelessness to the non-knower. The non-knower begins to view their capacity to know through the lens of others. Consequentially, in a society that rewards knowledge, the capacity to know has direct implications for the capacity to be. The rewards-based system lavishes networking opportunities and other social capital to the knower. While rewards are a good thing, I worry that the capacity to know in a rationalistic way can become so easily fused with the capacity to be. In this sense, their value rests not in their ontological being; it rests in the value placed on the epistemological self, or better yet, the content in their head.

In academia, I want to play out an all too familiar scene. Similar to a courtroom scene, a wrong-until-proven-right culture places particular learners in the place of defendants, judge, prosecutor, and jury. For example, defendants occupy the role of students. In rational epistemologies, students always enter the room as defendants. They must prove to others that they know and that their knowing is valuable and legitimate. Often times, the way they prove this is through persuasive arguments or providing factual evidence. While this is not inherently wrong, what becomes inequitable is that the burden of proof typically falls either on marginalized bodies or marginalized modes of knowing. To undo feeling like and playing the role of "defendant," one has to embrace a new way of being in that space. The teacher is the judge who holds authority to determine whether a knower has met the standards of legitimization. If not, they may be

sentenced to more rigorous forms of proving themselves as legitimate before the academic courtroom. The learners' colleagues often serve as the jury, judging whether the knower is presenting accurate information or false information, whether the knower is secure in their own articulation of the evidence, whether the knower should be given a chance to re-enter the learning community. This form of epistemological valuation not only exposes one before the "judge" but also before the "jury" of other learners. To re-enter a learning community after such strict hazing requires additional internal resources that offer hope in one's own value in spite of the gaze of others. One becomes visible in that space as one who is unsure or uncertain. Invoked in this space is strict competition; this emboldens colleagues within the space to actually occupy the role of "prosecutor." A prosecutor feels like they have to prove the defendant wrong so that they can become visible to the class as "knower." They find some sort of satisfaction in devaluing the knowledge of others in order to receive epistemological valuation in front of their colleagues.

Even more so, for Black women, for example, who are confined by elitist standards, the rush toward legitimization does not just take the form of epistemological valuation; it takes the form validating one's very humanity. In the words of bell hooks, "there is always the need to assert and defend the humanity of Black people, including their ability and capacity to reason logically, think coherently, and write lucidly."⁵³⁵ For if knowledge is not separate but connected to the knower, then what one knows does have implications for who one is (or how one views who they are), thus making a rejection of one's knowledge feel very much like a rejection of one's personhood. To undo the role of prosecutor, one must reassess the purpose of knowledge. Is knowledge to prove one's ontological value or is it to ensure that the world is a hospitable place for all learners despite their multiple ways of seeing and knowing the world?

Beyond the Dissertation: Directions for Future Research

⁵³⁵ bell hooks and Cornel West, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*, (Boston: MA, 1991), 137.

This research leads to broader questions about teaching and learning in theological education and other non-carceral settings. For example, as educators, should authenticity, resiliency, and connection be major objectives within our class? In what ways do creating sites for students to appear, become, and connect become critical to how educators prepare students to be citizens in the world. For ministry contexts, how do restorative hope as a way of being in the world help our students sustain practices of care for themselves and others? Are there assumptions inherent in non-carceral settings that make it difficult to sustain practices of authenticity, resilience, and connection? I am particularly interested in how youth in Juvenile Detention Centers and Group Homes might expand these categories of authenticity, connection, and resiliency. Further, I am interested in how technology might both complicate and enhance this endeavor to create spaces where youth can appear, become, and encounter one another.

Another rich area of exploration that exists is at the intersection of generativity, productivity, and hope in these contexts. Doing a comprehensive study on generativity and generativity chill was beyond the scope of this project. However, the insights emerging from the data create a sense that Erikson and Snarey's theories might be confirmed in a prison setting, where generativity itself is always facing confinement in some shape or form. In order to test this in a prison setting, however, the types of activities that one engages must be reconsidered against traditional ways of thinking about childrearing participation. Furthermore, new ways to conceive of societal generativity must also be taken into account. To explore the ways generativity persists in the prison is itself a study of resilience and one I would like to explore in greater depth in the future.

Theology and art has emerged as an area of great interest in recent years. I initially intended to explore the intersection of art and theology in the context of religious practice, but it turned out to be beyond the scope of this study. However, as is evidenced briefly throughout the pages where art is displayed, art holds great value in these spaces. Like restorative hope, art seems to have spiritual meaning and convey spiritual insights. Mining the rich insights that emerge from art in carceral settings represent an under researched area that may provide resources for pastoral care and pedagogy.

Beyond Research: Social Change in the World

A carceral state suggests that the incarceration continuum not only functions to describe where Black women are situated in relationship to incarceration; it also points to the ways in which even settings outside of the criminal justice system function to support the same peneological strategies of isolation, inauthenticity, and rigidity. The question of social change forces one to ask: how can we expand our sphere of influence. How can the learning environment become broad enough so it includes not just a few prisons here or there but the whole justice system, not just a few universities here or there but the whole educational system? We find hope in the moments where social change happens on a micro level, but these hopes always builds within us an expectation for more. As Peter McLaren states:

Spaces of hope do appear. But rarely by historical accident...these spaces need to be strategically seized. Spaces of hope offer encouragement to the forces of justice but they are not sufficient in themselves. Spaces—often private—must be made public. They must be expanded from spaces into spheres—from personal, individual spaces and private epistemologies into public spheres of hope and struggle and collective identities.⁵³⁶

The broadening of hope-filled spaces resists institutional stagnation, and asks:” What spaces of hope might be possible in our world today?” The work of hope is an ever-expanding endeavor that becomes more comprehensive as humanity becomes more connected. To really create spaces of hope that help disrupt a pipeline to prison forces us to pay close attention to what is happening to emergent generations. Are we, as a society, creating spaces for emergent generations to be authentic, connected, and resilient? Addressing mass incarceration is an ethical and religious responsibility for people of faith. Further, people of faith have resources to offer communities experiencing confinement and dealing with hopelessness. Some of these people of faith are incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women who can offer wisdom and insights that help us understand the many challenges that make it difficult for incarcerated women to hope. This research then challenges authentic engagement and participation in our world to help bring about this change.

⁵³⁶ Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools*, 264.

Being Hope: The Church as a Generative Agent of Social Change

As I bring this chapter to a close, I want to name that this research has direct implication for concrete practices that faith communities can undertake. These suggestions are not mine, but wisdom shared throughout the interviews. In this sense, I want to explore the concept of generativity in relation to the church's potential to be a generative agent of social change. The concept of generativity vs. stagnation has typically applied to individuals. I propose that the concept of generativity applies to more than individuals; it also applies to institutions. Institutional generativity refers to the production and creativity of ideas, policies, and practices that promote the survival, growth, and formation of people, products, and ideas. The survival of these ideas, practices, people, and policies is what enables the institution itself to survive. Institutional stagnation, on the other hand, represents the sheer self-absorption that blinds institutions to human concerns and interests. Prisons, universities, and centers of faith can either demonstrate institutional generativity or institutional stagnation. For the purpose of this dissertation, it is important to explore the institutional generativity and institutional stagnation described by women on the incarceration continuum.

The desire for women on the incarceration continuum to express generative hope toward others holds much value; but the need to have a generative other care for them holds just as much value. Viewing institutional care through the lens of generativity helps recognize that not only are women on the incarceration dependent on the support and care of institutions (i.e. faith communities), but the survival of faith communities also depends on the support and care they receive from women on the incarceration continuum. The import of communal care that emerged from the faith community, in particular, persisted as a theme throughout the interviews. Oftentimes, women communicated that faith communities should occupy the role of generative other throughout their time on the incarceration continuum. Churches who express generative hope toward women on the incarceration continuum recognize that women, even those who have been incarcerated, are part of their family. Thus, institutional generativity represents a felt responsibility by the church to care for and ensure the survival and growth of returning citizens. Women who experienced care from the faith community described how it helped relieve the pressure of the

collateral consequences of returning to society. Those churches or faith-based groups who proved most generative engaged in activities that viewed women as sisters and daughters who needed to be fully reintegrated back into membership in the community. This type of institutional generativity demonstrates a care that encourages women to resist human confinement and feel comfortable being their authentic selves in the community.

Most faith communities described by the women, however, seemed to be stuck in institutional stagnation; they did not express genuine care for God’s children. According to the interviews, churches had become so self-absorbed in their own ideas and productions that they failed to become a generative other to those in prison and those who had been released. The absence of congregations spoke loudly. To be clear, faith-based persons were present through faith-based groups rather than as members of a congregation. One woman described the church as “very surface.”⁵³⁷ They never dealt with the very inside of a person. They never really showed up.” The generative failure of churches to respond to women on the incarceration continuum may even result in what Erikson defines as “rejectivity” or an unwillingness to demonstrate generative concern for specific types of people or groups; this ultimately leads to “pseudospeciation” which refers to distorted beliefs and behaviors about groups who are deemed different than one’s own.⁵³⁸ These perceptual and behavioral distortions result in fear, distancing, and apathy toward providing care. In other words, rather than opening up possibilities that would inspire hope, the silence and indifference of faith communities becomes a threat to hope.

Women who actually still hope in the mission of the church—that the church will become who it should be and act like it should act as it relates to mass incarceration—provide helpful advice for faith communities to consider when engaging women on the incarceration continuum.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

⁵³⁸ Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, 68-69.

⁵³⁹ These solutions primarily focused on the second half of the incarceration continuum—that is during incarceration through release. Nevertheless, there are also clear ways that faith communities can intercept the incarceration continuum and prevent women and girls from riding the track to incarceration. Future research will explore these interconnections.

1. ***Make Your Presence Known in the Community:*** Many women pointed to the myriad of visibilities around the church. Churches may be hypervisible whereas buildings show up on every corner with little fruit of its presence in the surrounding community. Churches may also be mis-visible whereas the churches that appear in the community appear in ways that distort rather than promote the message of Christ. Lastly, churches may also remain invisible whereas they are missing in action when those impacted by incarceration need them most. To combat these false visibilities and be critically visible, women suggest churches make their presence known within the community instead of remaining within the four walls of the church. As Nona clearly articulates, “Show up. Church needs to be everywhere. The church needs to be everywhere but church.”⁵⁴⁰

2. ***Be Aware of Those in Your Congregation:*** Those within faith communities represent returning citizens as well as the mothers, daughters, brothers, and grandparents of those who are currently incarcerated. Practices of awareness and presence then include listening to the narratives of those who are deeply impacted by incarceration. By listening to them and responding to their needs, churches can begin to display institutional generativity. In particular, members in the congregation who share these experiences are invited to share and offer support to others in their congregation.

Lillian suggests:

I feel that they should listen to their community... [M]ore than likely someone in their church has had some experience with prison either by a family member or actually themselves, so what they can do, by far that would be my first immediate thing is to have them to connect with their community and their congregation, ask questions... So I would say being conscientious of your community, of their community. When I say community now, I'm talking about their members in their church. That's their community. That's what I'm speaking of so we'll have clarity right there.⁵⁴¹

3. ***Get to Know People on the Incarceration Continuum:*** The narratives of those who have been incarcerated holds great importance in becoming aware of the people in one's congregation. But,

⁵⁴⁰ Nona, Interview, 30 January 2015.

⁵⁴¹ Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

women are calling people of faith beyond just knowing about women who have been incarcerated; they are calling people of faith to know them. They are asking that they invest time and energy into really becoming acquainted with those on the incarceration continuum. Yet, not only knowing about the words of Lillian, “I do think that in order for society to really get it right, that they have to do more of what you're doing. They have to talk to people who's been through it. They have to talk to people who's been through it.”⁵⁴²

4. ***Become Aware of the Criminal Justice System:*** Becoming aware of the criminal justice system enables one to work within the system. As Eden shares: “During incarceration they can gain knowledge of the prison system with what the prison system actually offers by way of re-entry and join together and create a prison ministry in that church, learn the language of the Department of Corrections, because you have to go through them before you can get to those prisons and sit down and draw up a meaningful program to assist.”⁵⁴³
5. ***Serve as a Bridge between the Prison and Society:*** Two of the greatest challenges that place women’s hope in crisis are the need for housing and employment upon their release. Churches, however, can play a mediating role in securing housing and employment by being in touch with women before they are released in order to connect them with housing and employment opportunities. Churches could intentionally work with prisons and with reentering citizens to help direct their efforts. For example, Eden writes:

*[T]he prison system should have a list of the persons that has...been on the road to re-entry. They've put forth the effort to redeem themselves or to make themselves redeemable, and these are the people that should be evaluated by and referred to the church prison ministries. Say for instance if you were in prison and you didn't have any skills, and you've put forth your effort to whatever skill that was available, you've applied yourself and you have actually done that, because you wouldn't settle for anything less, you know that was what you needed to have a job out here...And when you get to prison ministry, they would need to help you find a job and reacclimate in that field that you've worked in or in a similar field, but...you need a job so that you can be accountable and take care of yourself.*⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Lillian, Interview, 09 April 2014.

⁵⁴³ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

⁵⁴⁴ Eden, Interview, 17 April 2014.

6. *Do something*: Simply put, hope generates actions. Generative hope fights against the tendency to remain stagnant by looking for the myriad of opportunities that the church can care for women along the incarceration continuum. As Nona indicates “Stop preaching and hire somebody. Stop preaching and let somebody stay with you. Stop preaching and find somebody somewhere to stay. Stop preaching and donate some clothes you can’t fit...[S]top—Be a resource.”⁵⁴⁵

Generative praxis for churches includes practices of presence, awareness, and bridge-building that will enable women along the incarceration continuum to effectively reintegrate into society. Overall, women along the incarceration continuum had great suggestions about ways that the church as an institution, some of which they themselves now engage, can combat stagnation and engage in generative praxis.

Conclusion

Overall, this research makes bold claims about what restorative hope pedagogy seeks to create—namely authenticity, connection, and resiliency. It also provides concrete pedagogical practices that teachers can employ in diverse settings. While a pedagogy of restorative hope is grounded in my work in the prison, it has implications for outside the prison and should be put in conversation with other contexts. Restorative hope is not a rigid concept rather an emerging construct that can help re-examine our role as educators. As a starting place, this study makes major contributions to the experience and challenges of hope along the incarceration continuum. In doing so, it does fill a gap in literature that focuses on the lives of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. At the same time, this research only scratches the surface on the vast pedagogical approaches to restoring hope in carceral and non-carceral settings. As an exploratory study, this work presents some compelling insights about hope. These insights will stimulate further inquiry into the connections between pedagogy, populations in confinement, and hope.

⁵⁴⁵ Nona, Interview, 30 January 2015.

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TABLE 1

Pre-Maternal Incarceration in an Already Challenged Family System	During Maternal Incarceration	Post Maternal Incarceration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low education attainment + poor job history = low income • Financial pressures = poor nutrition, bad neighborhoods, e t c • Substance abuse = potential for neglect of child's emotional and physical needs • Little / no / negative involvement of biological father • History of abuse in mother's family of origin = lower likelihood of effective support from extended family, poor parenting role models, early home leaving • Abusive/exploitative relationships = low self-esteem of mother, exposure of children to violence, and elevated risk of abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termination of any employment • Loss of housing/housing subsidy • Loss of relationship • Loss of custody of children • Disruption of social support networks • Stigma/social isolation • Immersion in antisocial environment • Access to substances • Emotional and practical impacts on child • Deceased exposure to relationship violence • Potential for parenting courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-establishing an income source • Finding appropriate/affordable housing for self and children • Re-gaining custody from current caregiver • Reestablishing a relationship with children • Finding affordable day care • Regaining social support networks • Criminal record impacting employability

Table 1: Maternal Incarceration along the Continuum

Source: Alison Cunningham and Linda Baker, "Invisible Victims: The Children of Women in Prison" (London ON: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, 2004), 15.

APPENDIX A

Emory University

**Oral Consent Script/Information Sheet
For a Research Study**

Study Title:

Hope in Confinement: The Role of Art in Critical Emancipatory Pedagogy

Principal Investigator:

Sarah F. Farmer, Doctoral Candidate, Graduate Division of Religion

Introduction and Study Overview

Hello. My name is Sarah Farmer. Thank you for considering this research study. We would like to tell you everything you need to think about before you decide whether or not to join the study. It is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later on and withdraw from the research study.

- 1) The purpose of this study is to gather and examine data on the concepts of hope and freedom among women who have been in prison. This research hopes to give a better understanding to faith communities, religious educators and other persons interested in helping prevent imprisonment especially of vulnerable Black teens and girls. The information will also help us to support and advocate better for those who are confined.
- 2) If you join, you will be asked to take part in one confidential interview that will last no longer than two hours. The interview will be semi-structured which means that there will be some set questions but also an openness to what you have to share on this subject. I will talk about your understandings of hope and freedom during your imprisonment, your participation in the world and any social or personal changes that happened throughout your imprisonment.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-taped so I don't miss important information, but these tapes will be secured so that no one else has access to them. The interview will also be done in a safe space of your choosing. During the interview, you may also share some of your personal artwork (such as writing, music and drawings) and what these have to say about freedom and hope. We believe that your experiences have much to teach us.

You will also be asked if you want to share one or two of your art pieces for use in future presentations. Your name would not be used on your artwork only a generic description which you must approve ahead of time. The rights to the artwork still belong to you.

- 3) The chief risk to an interview is a breach in confidentiality but we have taken the necessary steps in storing and securing the information to help protect your privacy. Your name or other things that would identify you will not be placed with your responses.

Due to the personal nature of the interview, you may feel stressed. You may skip any question, stop or even end the interview, if you find it too stressful. Counseling references will be available to you if you choose for any reason to explore issues raised in the interview. The research will not pay for these services.

- 4) You may not benefit directly from taking part in this research except for the opportunity to share your story about your experiences in prison and how concepts of hope and freedom have shaped you. However, your shared experiences may certainly help others in teaching them how women in situations of confinement view their world and define hope, freedom and themselves. This information may help produce better teachers, advocates and support for people who have been in prison, those still imprisoned and those vulnerable to imprisonment.
- 5) You will get a \$25.00 gift card from Walmart to compensate for your travel and participation in this study. If you do not finish the interview, you will not be paid. If you participate in an interview and focus group, you will receive a one gift card for your interview and one gift card for focus group participation.
- 6) The results of this study may be presented or published in the future, but will not contain any information that could identify you. False names will be used. Much of the data will also be grouped together such as “More than half of the women believed...”
- 7) The audiotapes and study records will be stored in locked facilities at Emory with limited access and on secured, pass-word protected computer systems. Your information will be held in strict confidence. The audiotapes will be kept for five years after the end of the study and will then be destroyed. Transcripts of the tapes may be kept for long-term use, but will be edited to remove all names, descriptions and any facts that might point to you.
- 8) Other persons other than the P.I. may look at the study records to oversee the conduct of the research to make sure that it is done correctly. This includes the Emory Institutional Review Board. Records may also be opened by court order. We will keep your information private to the extent required by law. We will use a study number instead of personal identifiers wherever possible to protect you privacy.
- 9) Information that you share in the interview will be kept confidential unless Emory is required by state law to report it such as child or elder abuse.
- 10) Taking part in this research is strictly voluntary. Your decision to join or not to join will not impact any services or benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- 11) We will give (send) you a copy of this information, if you would like.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this study, your part in it, questions, concerns or complaints about the research, please contact me: Sarah F. Farmer 610-209-5488 or at sfpoole@emory.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints or concerns, please contact the Emory Institutional Review Board: 404-712-0720 or toll-free at 877-503-9797 or by email at irb@emory.edu

Consent

Do you understand or have any questions about anything I just said?

Do you agree to all of the above and to take part in the study?

Participant agrees to participate: Yes No

If Yes:

Study ID # of Participant

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Date

Time

APPENDIX B

Emory University

Oral Consent Script/Information Sheet For a Research Study

Study Title:

Hope in Confinement: The Role of Art in Critical Emancipatory Pedagogy

Principal Investigator:

Sarah F. Farmer, Doctoral Candidate, Graduate Division of Religion

Introduction and Study Overview

Hello. My name is Sarah Farmer. Thank you for considering this research study. We would like to tell you everything you need to think about before you decide whether or not to join the study. It is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later on and remove yourself from the research study.

- 1) The purpose of this study is to gather and examine data on the concepts of hope and freedom among women who have been in prison. This research hopes to give a better understanding to faith communities, religious educators and other persons interested in helping prevent imprisonment especially of vulnerable Black teens and girls. The information will also help us to support and advocate better for those who are confined.
- 2) If you join, you will be asked to take part in one focus group session that will last no longer than two hours. You will be part of a group of four to six women. Everyone will be invited to share with the group, her understandings of hope and freedom during imprisonment, participation in the world and any social or personal changes that happened during imprisonment. We will only use first names or you may even choose to use a nickname or other name during the session.

The session will be audio-taped so I don't miss important information, but these tapes will be secured so that no one else has access to them. The session will also be done in a safe and private space.

During the focus group, you may also share some of your personal artwork such as writing, music and drawings) and what these have to say about freedom and hope. We believe that your experiences have much to teach us. You will also be asked if you want to share one or two of your art pieces for use in future presentations. Your name would not be used on your artwork only a generic description, which you must approve ahead of time. The rights to the artwork still belong to you.

- 3) The chief risk to any focus group format is a breach in confidentiality when a group member shares private information outside of the group. Group members will be encouraged not to share information outside of the group and you will not be asked to share anything that you would not want others to know. Other women in the group may assume that you have also been in prison. We cannot control what the other women will do with that information. If you are not comfortable sharing this information, you should not participate in the group discussion. We have

taken the necessary steps in storing and securing the data to help protect your privacy. Your name or other things that would identify you will not be included as part of the data when the audiotape is transcribed.

Due to the personal nature of the focus group, you may feel stressed. You may skip any question, stop or even leave the session, if you find it too stressful. Counseling references will be available to you if you choose for any reason to explore issues raised during the session. The research will not pay for these services.

- 4) You may not benefit directly from taking part in this research except for the opportunity to share your story about your experiences in prison and how concepts of hope and freedom have shaped you. However, your shared experiences may certainly help others in teaching them how women in situations of confinement view their world and define hope, freedom and themselves. This information may help produce better teachers, advocates and support for people who have been in prison, those still imprisoned and those vulnerable to imprisonment.
- 5) You will get a \$25.00 gift card from Walmart to compensate for your travel and participation in this study. If you do not finish the interview, you will not be paid. If you participate in an interview and focus group, you will receive a one gift card for your interview and one gift card for focus group participation.
- 6) The results of this study may be presented or published in the future, but will not contain any information that could identify you. False names will be used. Much of the data will also be grouped together such as “More than half of the women believed...”
- 7) The audiotapes and study records will be stored in locked facilities at Emory University with limited access and on secured, pass-word protected computer systems. Your information will be held in strict confidence. The audiotapes will be kept for five years after the end of the study and will then be destroyed. Transcripts of the tapes may be kept for long-term use, but will be edited to remove all names, descriptions and any facts that might point to you.
- 8) Other persons other than the P.I. may look at the study records to oversee the conduct of the research to make sure that it is done correctly. This includes the Emory Institutional Review Board. Records may also be opened by court order. We will keep your information private to the extent required by law. We will use a study number instead of personal identifiers wherever possible to protect you privacy.
- 9) Information that you share in the interview will be kept confidential unless Emory is required by state law to report it such as child or elder abuse.
- 10) Taking part in this research is strictly voluntary. Your decision to join or not to join will not impact any services or benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- 11) We will give (send) you a copy of this information, if you would like.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this study, your part in it, questions, concerns or complaints about the research, please contact me: Sarah F. Farmer 610-209-5488 or at sfpoole@emory.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints or concerns, please contact the Emory Institutional Review Board: 404-712-0720 or toll-free at 877-503-9797 or by email at irb@emory.edu

Consent

Do you understand or have any questions about anything I just said?

Do you agree to all of the above and to take part in the study?

Participant agrees to participate: Yes No

If Yes:

Study ID # of Participant _____

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Date

Time

APPENDIX C

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Exploring the Concept of Hope Confinement

- How would you describe hope?
- If hope was an image, what would it be?
- Give me a specific example that helps me understand what hope is from your perspective.
- What are concrete ways that hope functions in your life?
- Did your ideas about hope change in any way once you got behind bars?
- What are threats to hope?
- What are some of the major challenges you have faced to receiving or achieving hope in your life? How have you or are you overcoming these challenges?
- How does one achieve or receive hope?
- Draw a picture or write a poem of hope in confinement (or hope in bondage)? What does it look/feel like when hope has been delayed? Or restricted?
- What does it look/feel like when it is no longer delayed or restricted?
- How does your understanding of hope influence your perception of self? Of the world? Of God? Of the church? Of your children?
- How does your understanding of hope lead you to engage and/or disengage in the world around you?
- What are your hopes? What is one hope you are willing to commit yourself to?

Experiences of Incarceration

- In what ways did you transform as a result of your incarceration? What contributed to that transformation?
- How would you describe your experience of incarceration?
- In what ways did you transform as a result of your incarceration? What contributed to that transformation?
- What does the prison teach about hope and/or hopelessness?
- Were you involved in a church or any other faith community before prison?
 - What was your experience?
 - If not, why not?
- What is one thing the church or faith community can do to assist people before incarceration?
- What is one thing the church or faith community can do to assist people during incarceration?
- What is one thing the church or faith community can do to assist people with re-entry?

The Use of Art in Prison

- How would you define art?
- Did you see any non-traditional art forms in prison?
- While you were in prison, did you use any participate in any form of art? What role did art play in your life during prison?
- How does the sharing or practice of doing art contribute to your understanding of hope?
- How does the sharing or practice of doing art contribute to your understanding of freedom?

Additional Questions for Formerly Incarcerated Women who Participated in Prison Course

- In what ways, if any, did participation in the class inspire hope?
- Give a concrete example from participation in the class where you learned something new about yourself?
- What was the process of creating art like for you in that class?
- What was the sharing of art like for you in that class?
- How did you feel when you looked at your completed art work?
- How did you feel when you looked or heard the completed art work of others?
- Did participation in that class teach you anything about the world? If so, what?
- Did your participation in this course teach you anything about God? If so, what?

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Protocol

Demographic Chart

Age: _____ Gender: _____

Denominational/Religious Affiliation: _____

Vocation/Job: _____

Ethnicity(ies): _____

Geographical Location: _____

Family/Living Community: _____

Length of Incarceration: _____ Length of Release: _____

Art submission? _____

Special Notes:

Focus Group with Formerly Incarcerated Women. Researchers will ask formerly incarcerated women to share their experiences with hope as well as their active participation in the practice and sharing of art. Questions will include:

- Finish the sentence...Hope is?
- What are some of the major challenges you have faced to receiving or achieving hope in your life?
- Draw a picture or write a poem of hope in confinement (or hope in bondage)? In your picture or poem, illustrate what it looks like when hope has been delayed or restricted?
- With thoughts of self, family, friends, career/vocation, and the world around you, what are specific examples of freedom that has been restricted while incarcerated?
- While incarcerated, what were some of the lessons you learned about hope?
- How did these lessons influence your decisions while still in prison? How do those lessons influence your decisions now?
- While in prison, did you participate in art or any means of creative expression? If so, how did art function in your lives during your incarceration?
- How does your understanding of hope lead you to engage and/or disengage in the world around you?

- Please tell me one nugget of wisdom you would offer a young woman who may be on a path to incarceration.
- Please tell me one nugget of wisdom you would offer a woman who is still incarcerated.

Collection of formerly incarcerated women's art and writing.

Researcher (PI) will invite women to contribute their artistic works to supplement the data. The researcher (PI) will invite participants on a voluntary basis to share creations (such as drawings, paintings, dance, poetry, writings or other forms of art) that express what is important to them. Interpretation of these works will be done with the women who contribute them. Questions include:

- What does this work express for you?
- Why is it important to you?
- How does it contribute to your understanding of hope and freedom?

APPENDIX E: Exploring Spirituality and Identity through Art Syllabus

Fall 2012 Syllabus

FRIDAYS 10:15AM TO 11:45 AM

INSTRUCTOR

Mrs. Farmer

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will explore the use of art as a tool to express and discover spirituality and identity. Throughout the course, students will place identity developmental theory in conversation with their own autobiographical narrative. Major consideration will be given to how identity has evolved over the course of life. Readings consist of a combination of scholarly texts as well as fiction. Students will also explore their own identity through artistic expression. Significant assignments in the course include a theological reflection journal (completed during class time), crafting a mini session designed for incarcerated teenagers, a mini autobiography, and a portfolio (with a collection of artwork completed during and outside of class). Ultimately, this course takes seriously the theological value of art in educational ministry.

COURSE GOALS

Students in this course will:

- articulate an understanding of identity developmental theory
- gain insight into their own identity
- engage in research and self-exploratory writing activities
- explore the role of art in self-expression, self-discovery, and generativity
- engage in a variety of art forms as a means of expression of identity
- create a rendering of their own identity by using varied forms of expression, including autobiographical writing

COURSE TEXTS

Abani, Chris. *Becoming Abigail*. New York: Akashic Books 2006.

Aden, Leroy. "Faith and the Developmental Cycle." *Pastoral Psychology* 24, no. 3 (1976): 215-30.

Erikson, Erik H., and Joan M. Erikson. *The Life Cycle Completed*. Extended / ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.

Fine, Michelle, and Selcuk R. Sirin. "Theorizing Hyphenated Selves: Researching Youth Development in and across Contentious Political Contexts." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 1, no. 1 (Nov 2007): 16-38.

Hess, Carol Lakey. "Rebuilding Our Mother's House: Caretaking and Being in Genuine Relation". Chap. 3 In *Caretakers of Our Common House : Women's Development in Communities of Faith*. 87-120. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997.

- Josselson, Ruthellen. "Identity and Relatedness in the Life Cycle." Chap. 5 In *Identity and Development : An Interdisciplinary Approach*, edited by Harke Bosma. 81-102. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994.
- Rogers, Frank. *Finding God in the Graffiti : Empowering Teenagers through Stories*. Youth Ministry Alternatives. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2011.
- Snarey, John, and David Bell. *Erik H. Erikson*. Encyclopedia of Spiritual and Religious Development. Thousand Oaks, CA Sage, 2006.
- Thurman, Howard, and Luther E. Smith. *Howard Thurman : Essential Writings*. Modern Spiritual Masters. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006.
- Wright, J. Eugene. *Erikson: Identity and Religion*. New York: Seabury Press, 1982.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) **CLASS PARTICIPATION (20% of final grade):** This grade is based upon promptness and consistency of attendance, contributions to collaborative learning and to the learning community, timeliness of assignments, evidence of effort and quality of presentation. ***Regular Attendance is expected and mandatory.*** Our life together as a community is essential to the learning process. Class work and discussion are central to the course; therefore, it is crucial that you attend each class and come fully prepared. It is expected that you will make every effort to work through scheduling conflicts that may arise. You may miss one class without penalty. Make up work will be assigned for each class period you miss and it is your responsibility to arrange this with the instructor. ***Come to class prepared*** to contribute your critical understanding of the readings each week. It will be expected that you will have reflected and jotted down notes on the readings. It is an expectation that you engage personal reflection and take thorough notes on the readings. This is an important part of our work together. You will also keep a theological reflection journal and complete a participation self-evaluation.
 - a. ***Theological Reflection Journals:*** Class participation includes the completion of theological reflection journal entries at the beginning of each class and throughout the week. These journal entries will integrate your experiences in the course, particularly with art, and your own understanding of spirituality and identity. The purpose of the journal is to provide a critical yet creative space for students to reflect on course readings while at the same time integrating questions, insights, and concerns raised during the course.
 - b. ***Participation Self-evaluation:*** Towards the end of the semester, each student will be asked to complete a participation self-evaluation that will contribute to your overall participation grade in the class.
- 2) **MEMORY BOX (10% of final grade):** This assignment asks students to gather objects, words or images that represent significant childhood memories for them. Students should have at least three significant memories in the "box." The memories can represent exciting, traumatic, sentimental, or ordinary moments that hold special value for the way they have developed over the course of their lives.
- 3) **MINI SESSION (15% of final grade):** Students are asked to create a mini session using art and creativity that can be used to engage teenage girls who may either currently be incarcerated or who are in danger of incarceration. More details to come about specific guidelines for submission.
- 4) **AUTOBIOGRAPHY (25% of final grade):** Students are asked to complete an autobiography, memoir, or book of poetry that talks specifically about their life.
- 5) **FINAL PORTFOLIO (30% of final grade):** For the final project, students will complete a portfolio that includes all of the art work they have completed throughout the tenure of the course. More details to come about specific guidelines for submission.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION:

- Critical engagement with course readings during class discussion and in course papers
- Evidence of effort
- Quality of presentation
- Evidence of originality, creativity, and collaborative learning
- Timeliness of assignments

GRADING:

All written work will be graded using the ✓+, ✓, ✓- grading scale

LANGUAGE:

The language that we use and hear teaches, shapes, and transforms us in our life together. I am committed to using language that is inclusive with regard to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ableness, and social class. I invite you to make this same commitment. As we speak together, let us avoid exclusive terms and stereotypic images. As we write for one another, let us use language that includes all of humanity. As we teach, let us be bearers of good news to all people. Though we may inadvertently slip up from time to time and depend upon grace and tolerance, let us join to create an inclusive learning environment.

Wk	Date	Topic	In Class	Reserve Readings
I. Revisiting the Past: Exploring Identity				
1	10/5	<i>What is Identity</i> First day of class – greetings, course introduction, community-building.	Community-building exercises	<i>Snarey, J. & Bell, D. (2006). Erik H. Erikson. Encyclopedia of spiritual and religious development AND The Life Cycle Completed, Chp. 3, pgs 55-77</i>
2	10/12	<i>Emergent Hope: Identity Developmental Theory</i>	Community-building exercises	Erikson: Identity and Religion, by Eugene Wright, Chp 9, pgs 148-178 AND “Faith and the developmental cycle,” Leroy Aden, pgs 215-230.
3	10/19	<i>Will over Power</i>	Theater exercises	<i>Becoming Abigail</i> , a novella by Chris Abani
4	10/26	<i>When the Past Visits the Present</i> ***Memory Box DUE	Sharing Memory Boxes	<i>Becoming Abigail</i> , a novella by Chris Abani
II. Unraveling Presence: Performing Identity				
5	11/2	<i>Establishing a Sense of Self in Contested Spaces</i>	Creating Identity Maps****	“Theorizing Hyphenated Selves” AND <i>Finding God in Graffiti</i> , Chp 4. Pgs 98-123 (narrative and critical consciousness)
6	11/9	<i>Writing as Identity Formation</i>	The Poet Within****	<i>Finding God in Graffiti</i> , Chp 2, pgs 51-63 (narrative and personal identity)
7	11/16	<i>The Performance of Identity</i>	Making Meaning through Monologues; In Class Video	<i>Finding God in Graffiti</i> , Chp 5, pgs 124-155 (narrative and creative vitality)
8	11/23	NO CLASS HAPPY THANKSGIVING!		“Identity and Relatedness in the Life Cycle” in Chp 5, pgs 81-102
III. Envisioning the Future: Re-casting the Self				
9	11/30	<i>Called to Care in a Danger Zone</i>	Vision of Care letters	Carol Lakey Hess, “Rebuilding Our Mother’s House: Caretaking and Being In Genuine Relation” Chp 3, pgs 87-120
10	12/7	<i>Re-envisioning her story: A Tapestry of Life</i>	Dancing oneself into being****	<i>Howard Thurman: Essential Writings</i> , Chp. 3, pgs 129-167
11	12/14	<i>Establishing a Legacy that Endures</i>	Creating a Eulogy****	<i>The Life Cycle Completed</i> , Preface and Chps. 5-7, pgs 1-10; 105-123
12	12/21	<i>The Great Finale</i>	Final Remarks, Presentations	