On the Value Integration of Successfully Reformed Ex-Convicts: A Comparison With Moral Exemplars

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Abstract

The issue of successfully reintegrating ex-prisoners into society is a critical one. To assess the process of successful reintegration, we interviewed five male ex-convicts about their past versus present lives. Their responses were coded for self-oriented (agency) and community-oriented values. We found a shift away from "unmitigated" agency, toward community values from past to present, and also an integration of agency with community similar to that found in moral exemplars. This increase in integration was not found in a demographically matched control group. The transitions exemplified in these ex-convicts' narratives help define potential paths for successful reintegration into society.

Keywords

value integration, ex-convicts, moral exemplars, agency, community

Since the 1970s, incarceration rates in the United States have steeply increased, leading to a massive overcrowding of our prison systems (Haney, 2001)—from 1980 to 2001, the incarceration rate in the U.S. state and federal

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prisons increased by almost 240% (Blumstein & Beck, 1999). This, in turn, has led to an increase in the number of men and women being released back into society each year—more than 700,000 ex-prisoners were released from prison in 2007 (Sabol & Couture, 2008).

While the primary objective of the U.S. prison system is punitive—to enforce a prescribed period of punishment for criminal behavior by removing offenders from the community-at-large—it is also hoped that on release, these ex-prisoners will successfully desist from further criminal behavior, that they will be in a better position with respect to their desire and ability to avoid criminal activity than when they were first incarcerated (Maruna, 2001). However, generally speaking, ex-prisoners do not successfully reenter society. Nearly two thirds of ex-prisoners released are rearrested for a new felony or a serious misdemeanor within 3 years, and just more than half are returned to prison (Goodwill Industries, 2009; Langan & Levin, 2002).

Furthermore, this group has a significant impact on the nation's overall crime rate—between 1994 and 1997, ex-prisoners accounted for 10% to 15% of all arrests, and they were arrested at a frequency 30 to 45 times higher than the general population (Farrell, 2009; Rosenfeld, Wallman, & Fornango, 2005). Their incarceration also increases the transmission of criminal behavior to the next generation—children who have parents in jail are six times more likely to be incarcerated at some point in their youth than other children (Benson, 2011).

Yet, even though recidivism rates are high, there are still many ex-prisoners who manage to successfully reenter society and avoid criminal activities. The question is, why? What enables this subset of released ex-prisoners to avoid criminal activities and create lives for themselves as productive, law-abiding members of society?

One of the serious impediments to successful reentry is the wide range of physical, social, and practical obstacles that ex-prisoners face on their release. Without money and the prospects of immediate housing and employment, ex-prisoners often find themselves in a serious bind, having to rely on friends, family, and/or insufficiently funded reentry programs to help them get back on their feet (Glaser, 1964; Irwin, 1970; La Vigne, Davies, Palmer, & Halberstadt, 2008; Nelson & Trone, 2000; Petersilia, 2003). This situation is further complicated by the regulations passed by Congress and many state legislatures that restrict ex-prisoners' opportunities for housing, employment, and general welfare services—along with voting and other civil privileges—which further isolate ex-prisoners from the general population and perpetuate the stereotype of the "common criminal," someone incapable of reform (Farrell, 2009; Maruna, 2000; Petersilia, 2003; Uggen & Manza, 2002).

In addition to these obstacles, ex-prisoners face a significant internal struggle. On reentry into an often much-changed society, ex-prisoners frequently experience depression and anxiety, as well as feelings of loneliness and estrangement from friends and family and alienation toward a society that treats them like social "outcasts" (Ekland-Olson, Supancic, Campbell, & Lenihan, 1983; Irwin, 1970; Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004). To successfully reenter the society, there has to be a significant change in self-identity, a shift from seeing themselves as "bad" (criminals, rebels, gangsters, etc.) to seeing themselves as someone with prosocial values, capable of becoming successful members of a community. This shift can be a struggle for many, especially those who have held onto—perhaps even nurtured—their socially deviant identity during their incarceration (Visher & Travis, 2003). These psychological struggles and deviant self-concepts can significantly inhibit successful integration into society.

Research suggests that of the two (external vs. internal impediments), the latter may be the most important when it comes to successful reintegration. Programs designed to help remove the external impediments—for example, "half-way houses" that provide recently released ex-convicts with free or cheap housing, as well as access to vocational training and job opportunities—without addressing the internal issues ex-prisoners face tend to be ineffective. Resources for internal change must be provided alongside the external opportunities in order for those opportunities to facilitate a successful transition (Farrell, 2009; MacKenzie, 2006).

What does this internal shift look like? Researchers have found that one important component of the shift is an internal locus of control. That is, successful desistance from crime involves an experience of agency—of having self-identified goals and having a sense of control over one's future (Maruna, 2001). Just as importantly, though, is a shift in the ex-convict's self-identity from a predominantly self-oriented concern ("looking out for number one") to a prosocial concern for the well-being of others—family, friends, and community (Maruna, 2001; Shover, 1996). With this insight—that he is not "an island," that his goals and ambitions are intimately tied in with (and responsible to) the other people in his life—comes a rejection of past criminal behavior and the criminal lifestyle more generally (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002). For many, an important aspect of this newly developing prosocial orientation is spiritual in nature. Indeed, research suggests that ex-prisoners' level of religiosity—their feeling of connection to a "higher power" that inspires within them compassion for their fellow human beings—provides an important buffer against recidivism (Farell, 2009; Johnson, Larson, & Pitts, 1997; Maruna, Wilson, & Curran, 2006; Sumter, 1999).

In short, previous research suggests that both a sense of *agency* (of having goals and feeling empowered to strive for personal achievement) and a sense of *community* (of prosocial concern for the well-being of others) are important components of successful reintegration into society. But less is known about the relationship between these two components—for instance, whether they interact or interfere with each other and the extent to which people experience them as linked or in conflict. This study was designed as a preliminary first step to examine the relationship between agentic and community values in successfully reformed convicts.

Relationship to Moral Exemplars

In a study of moral exemplars—people who had received the national *Caring Canadian Award* for their years of extraordinary service to their communities—Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee, and Riches (2011) found that, compared with a matched control sample, exemplars not only communicated stronger agentic and community values but also, more important, expressed a higher degree of internal integration of those values, displaying what Frimer et al. (2011) referred to as "enlightened self-interest", ". . . whereby they best advance their own interests by advancing the interests of others" (p. 33). More common in the matched control sample was the expressed value of "unmitigated" agency, where the individual's self-advancement is treated as separate from (and maybe even in conflict with) the community values one expressed.

Given that both agentic and community values have been found to be important for successful reformation, we questioned whether it might be the case that successfully reformed convicts—people who had left their criminal pasts behind and reintegrated themselves back into society as productive, law-abiding citizens—would display a similar kind of agentic and community value integration. Would they see their own personal development and goals as somehow linked together (rather than in opposition) with their respect and desire to care for other people? This would certainly be consistent with the "redemptive" theme often found in successfully reformed convicts' life narratives (Maruna, 2001), represented as their desire to "make good" out of what had previously been bad, and the recognition that their own fate is intimately tied to the well-being of those around them (see also McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2000).

If successfully reformed convicts' value-structure looks similar to those of moral exemplars—if we see a similar degree of integration, one that is greater than your average individual—then this would suggest that there are several distinct developmental paths by which someone can achieve "enlightened

self-interest", some of which may traverse first through selfish and antisocial, even criminal, inclinations. It would also suggest that (at least one path for) successful reintegration into society involves *getting involved*—finding a way for ex-prisoners to weave together their desires for their own advancement as individuals with the needs and concerns of the people around them, a way of turning their pasts into experiences they can use for the betterment of both themselves and others (e.g., see Bazemore & Karp, 2004).

Method

Participants

The participants were 10 males, 5 reformed ex-convicts and 5 demographically matched controls. The ex-convicts were in their late 30s to early 50s, 1 Caucasian and 4 African American. Their periods of incarceration ranged from 3 to 35 years for crimes such as fraud, distribution of drugs and possession of a firearm, and felony DUI (driving under the influence). At the time of the interview, the participants had been out of jail for 5 to 12 years and had successfully reintegrated themselves into society. Three of them had very active spiritual lives—two with ministries of their own and one as the president of a ministry that offers services to men while they are incarcerated and during their transition to the community after release. In addition, they were all actively involved in their communities (e.g., mentoring men recently released from prison, developing fishing-related activities for at-risk youth in urban centers, and going into prisons to "testify" to incarcerated men about the promises of redemption offered in Christianity).

The control group was demographically similar (in ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status) males—with the exception that all five were African American. The other condition for participation was that they could not have ever been incarcerated.

Interview Measure

For our interviews, we adapted the *Self-Understanding Interview* (Frimer & Walker, 2009) to be more appropriate for our purposes, settling on questions about people's past, present, and the transition in between. These questions served as the foundation for the interview process, though additional questions could be asked as a follow up to participants' particular responses.

For the ex-convict interviews, we developed 13 questions that asked about their past incarceration, their present life, and how they made the transition in between the two. For the control interviews, we developed 13 questions (as

similar to the above as possible). Since these participants had never been incarcerated, we asked them to describe another life-altering challenge from their past, their present life, and how they had made the transition between the two (Appendix A).

Procedure

The second author (Hoffmann) previously researched incarcerated participants in a faith-based prisoner reentry program in two different prisons. During that research, Hoffmann befriended several incarcerated men who have since been released from prison and have been living in the community. Therefore, he had access to reformed ex-convicts living in the southern United States. He sent word about the study to his previously incarcerated contacts and then arranged interviews with those who were willing to participate in this study. Two of the five interviewees lived a distance from the college, and so interviews with those participants were conducted over the phone. The three interviewees who lived locally were interviewed at the college library, a public library, or the second author's campus office. Only one interview was recorded and transcribed, but the remaining four were not (we did not possess the technology for taping phone interviews)—instead, the third author was instructed about interview note-taking and wrote down the participants' responses to questions as verbatim as possible, and the coding was conducted on these notes.

For the control group, we sent emails to colleagues and local organizations about our study. Men who fit the profile contacted us and, if they qualified, we interviewed them—either on campus or at their homes. They were all offered $50 for their participation, three of which accepted.

All participants were told that we were collecting "life-narratives"—the ex-convicts' transition from a criminal past, the control over their transition through a life-altering challenge. Nothing specific about our coding techniques or our hypotheses was shared.

Results

Coding

The questions from both sets of interviews were organized into three time-related groups: past, present, and transitional. We used the Values Embedded in Narrative Coding Manual (Frimer, Walker, & Dunlop, 2009; Release 1.0) to code participants' responses (typically composed of 1-5 sentences) for the presence of 10 particular values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation,

self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security (Schwartz, 1992). Each response could be coded for the presence of multiple values. Typically, each sentence within a response expressed a discrete value, but under the rare circumstance that more than one value was expressed in a sentence, it was split into as many sentence fragments as were needed to code for the values present. This led to the identification of 307 values for the ex-convicts and 199 for the control group (for coding examples, see Appendix B).

The second stage of coding determined how often responses expressed agentic versus community values—following Frimer and Walker (2009), the "agentic" values were *power* and *achievement* (135 instances) and the "community" values were *universalism* and *benevolence* (86 instances). The remaining values have to do with either *increasing* or *decreasing* psychological distance from others and so are not discussed in the analyses below.[1] When only one type of value (agentic/community) was expressed in a particular response, that value was coded as "unmitigated"; when both were expressed together within the same response, both values were coded as "integrated." This gave us three frequencies for every participant: the number of responses that expressed unmitigated agency, the number that expressed unmitigated community, and the number that expressed an integration of the two. These frequencies were then added together to give us the total number of expressions of values (unmitigated and integrated) given by the participant overall. Dividing their three frequencies by this total gave us the percentage of unmitigated agency, unmitigated community, and integrated agency/community (see below) expressed in their responses.

Finally, we calculated the *expected* frequency of integration (frequency of agentic values/total number of values × frequency of community values/total number of values) and then subtracted this from the *actual* frequency of integration in order to determine the degree to which participants were expressing higher (vs. lower) amounts of integration than what would be expected merely by chance. All of these calculations were done separately for each of the three age-related groups (past, present, transitional) in order to compare percentages across time.

Value Expression

We ran a mixed-factor analysis of variance with *time period* (past/transition/present), *value type* (agency/community/integrated) as within-participant variables, and *group* (control/ex-convicts) as a between-participant variable. This revealed a main effect for value type, $F(2,16) = 10.5$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .57$, as well as a (marginal) two-way interaction between value type and group, $F(2,16) = 2.8$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .26$. Both groups expressed more unmitigated agency overall

(control: 42%; ex-convicts: 62%) than either unmitigated community (control: 32%; ex-convicts: 21%) or integrated agency/community (control: 26%; ex-convicts: 18%), but this was more exaggerated for the ex-convicts.

Change Over Time. There was also a two-way interaction between value type and time period, $F(4,32) = 9.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .54$, and a three-way interaction between all three variables, $F(4,32) = 2.5$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .24$. This suggests both that there was a change in value expression over time and that this change differed between groups. Paired-sample t tests were then conducted to examine the three-way interaction more closely.

Within the ex-convict group, participants expressed significantly less unmitigated agency $t(4) = 25.2$, $p < .001$, $d = 10.2$, significantly more unmitigated community, $t(4) = 4.6$, $p = .01$, $d = 2.9$, and significantly more integration of the two, $t(4) = 3.7$, $p = .02$, $d = 2.8$, in their narratives about the present than in their narratives about the past.

Paired sample t tests for the control group revealed a different story. While the control participants did express (marginally) less unmitigated agency, $t(4) = 2.6$, $p = .06$, $d = 1.5$, and more unmitigated community, $t(4) = 2.2$, $p = .09$, $d = 1.4$, in their narratives about the present than in their narratives about the past, there was no change over time in their level of integration of the two, $t(4) = 1.6$, $p = .17$, $d = 0.4$.

Finally, examining the amount of change (subtracting past from present) in expressions of unmitigated agency, unmitigated community, and integration revealed that the reformed ex-convicts showed a significantly greater reduction of unmitigated agency (68% vs. 33%), $t(8) = 2.7$, $p = .027$, $d = 1.7$, and marginally greater increase in integration (31% vs. 11%), $t(8) = 2.0$, $p = .09$, $d = 1.2$, than did the control group. The difference between the two groups' increase in unmitigated community (37% vs. 22%, $d = 0.7$) was not significant, though it had a medium effect size.

Corrected Integration. For the ex-convicts, there was also a marginally significant increase in their "corrected" integration (controlling for chance) between their past and present narratives, $t(4) = 2.2$, $p = .09$, $d = 1.6$. This was not the case for the control group, $t(4) = 0.5$, $p = .64$, $d = 0.2$.

Even more important, though, for the ex-convicts, this corrected level of integration, while not significantly above what would be expected by chance in their past narratives, $t(4) = 1.0$, *ns*, became so in their present narratives, $t(5) = 3.2$, $p = .03$. For the control group, it never rose above what would be expected by chance, ts$(4) = 1.5$-2.0, ps $= .11$-$.19$.

Developmental Trajectories. We also examined the development of participants' value expression in their narratives over time (past–transition–present).
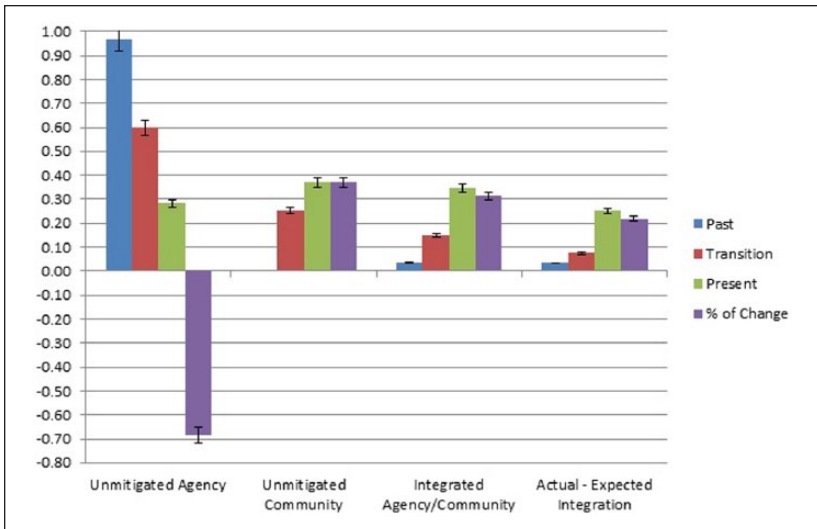
Figure 1. Change in value expression and integration over time for ex-convicts. Figure is available in full color in the online version at jhp.sagepub.com

Looking at the ex-convicts, we see a steady (and significant) developmental increase in both their expression of unmitigated community (0%–25%–37%) and integration (actual: 3%–15%–35%; extra: 3%–8%–25%), along with a steady (and significant) decrease in their expression of unmitigated agency (97%–60%–28%; see Figure 1).

Examining the development of the control groups' value expression in their narratives over time (past–transition–present), again we see a different pattern. Rather than the steady developmental pattern witnessed with the ex-convicts, we see instead a concave, curvilinear trajectory in their expression of unmitigated community (7%–60%–29%) and a reverse (convex) curvilinear trajectory in their expression of unmitigated agency (73%–13%–40%). And while their actual integration shows a steady—though nonsignificant—incline (20%–27%–31%), their level of "extra" integration shows the same concave trajectory (7%–27%–20%; see Figures 2 and 3).

These data suggest that the "transition" from past life-challenges to the present represents an important developmental milestone, one in which (for both groups) there is an elevation of community-oriented values and a drop in unmitigated agency—as well as an increase in their integration of the two. Interestingly, for the reformed ex-convicts, this shift seems to "take hold," serving as the foundation for the even greater developmental shifts (most notably in the strong reduction of unmitigated agency and increase in value
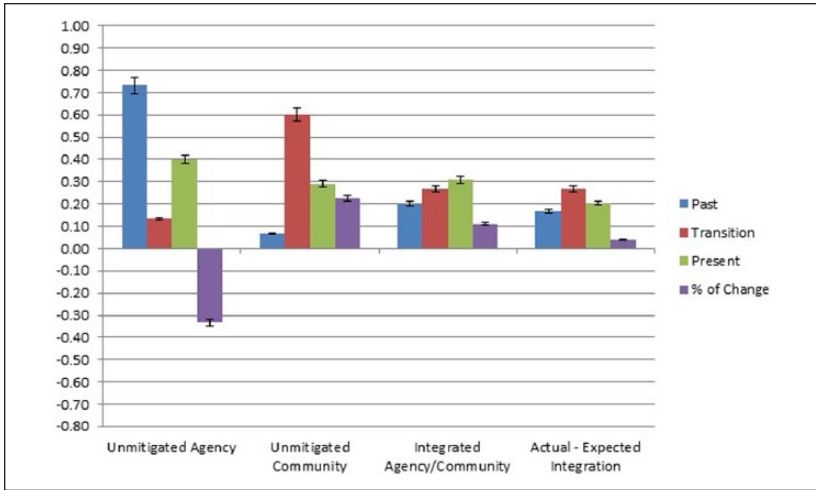
Figure 2. Change in value expression and integration over time for control. Figure is available in full color in the online version at jhp.sagepub.com
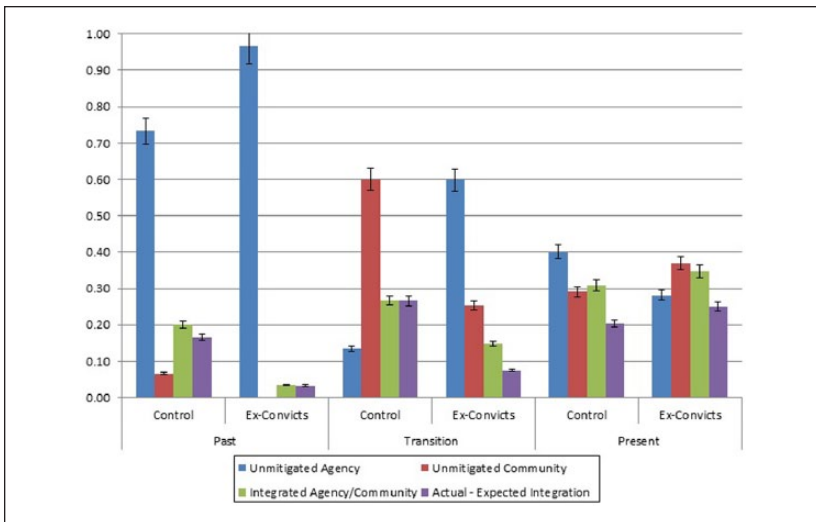

Figure 3. Comparison of ex-convicts and control group. Figure is available in full color in the online version at jhp.sagepub.com

integration) seen in their present lives. But for the control group, this shift appears to have only partially taken hold, as reflected in their developmental "backslide" into increased unmitigated agency and decreased unmitigated

community (though neither to the same degree as in their past), along with no clear integrative growth.

Discussion

The results of this study, while preliminary in nature, are nonetheless provocative. They suggest that successfully reformed convicts may (at least, under some circumstances) look quite similar to moral exemplars in terms of their value maturation, displaying a high degree of agentic and community value integration. This means that their self-interest has developed from being highly unmitigated (which is not surprising, given their willingness to engage in criminal activities, even at the expense of other people's well-being) to becoming increasingly "enlightened". They see their present (and future) advancement as intimately tied to the well-being of others—not just friends and family members, but members of their community, especially the young members who may be flirting with criminal activities themselves. And though the control participants had also successfully faced life-altering challenges (e.g., a car accident, loss of friends or family, fighting in war) in their pasts, we did not see the same level of integration of values.

In the narratives of the ex-convicts, again and again a shift is visible from a past focus on the desire for material wealth, social status/power, and excitement to a focus on helping others—a desire to spread the universal love and acceptance of God, to help others—like themselves—avoid the negativity and suffering of criminal activity and imprisonment, to be "role models" and loving family members—a desire to live decent, inspiring, admirable lives (Appendix B). Their own self-advancement—what they wanted for themselves and for their futures—had become linked to their sense of the contributions they could make to those in need. A variety of virtuous traits (e.g., honesty, loyalty, compassion) became woven into the fabric of their self-identities, just as they had come to actively reject from their identities their own and others' vices. Some even rejected old nicknames and handles from "back in the day," saying things like "I'm not that guy anymore." Especially in the transition phase, participants frequently referred to avoiding negative influences and actively seeking out "positive" people to spend time with. And this integration of values present in their responses was actively displayed in their present lives, in their involvement in the church, in community support groups, and in prison reform.

The control group, on the other hand, focused on "moving on" from life-challenges through self-development—becoming more independent, advancing careers, getting educated—and having fun. And while there was a clear emphasis on the value of family, especially in the role of parenting children,

there was less discussion of their connection to (and responsibility toward) the larger community or humanity as a whole.

In sum, these findings support the power of the "redemptive" narrative (Maruna, 2001; McAdams et al., 2000)—a narrative that is only possible when there is something from which we feel that we must be redeemed. But that recasting of our lives in terms of the bad things *we have done* (as opposed to those that have merely happened to us) can give us the tools for a better future, forging from our past experiences a place from which genuine contributions to the world around us can be made. What is sick can be healed, what is broken can be made whole—in us and in those whose lives we dedicate to helping.

Implications

While this study neither focused directly at particular intervention programs nor did it assume that the ex-convicts we interviewed had the same incarceration or remedial experiences, we nonetheless believe that this data are suggestive of approaches that could increase desistance—and more important, reintegration—for ex-convicts. Utilizing writing therapies (e.g., those employed by Pennebaker, 2004) aimed at generating redemptive (rather than contaminative) narratives could powerfully shift convicts' self-conceptions and life stories in ways that facilitate the sort of integration of agentic needs versus community concerns we discovered here.

Limitations

Given the serious constraints on this study, we were unable to obtain interviews from a demographically matched sample of moral exemplars. Nonetheless, we do have indirect evidence—by way of comparison with Frimer et al.'s (2011) study—that the reformed convicts in our study displayed both a level of integration and of "unmitigated" community more on par with their moral exemplars (both ~40%) than with their control group (~10%). Interestingly, while the reformed ex-convicts' past expression of unmitigated agency was higher than that of the moral exemplars (~90% vs. ~80%), their present expression was actually lower.

Additionally, future studies should involve the transcription of recorded interviews, rather than relying on extended interview notes, for coding—not only to avoid missing important aspects of the interviewee's narrative but also to avoid any biasing of the narrative by the interviewer. We feel that such biasing is unlikely in this case, as the person who conducted the interviews (the second author) was not trained on how to employ the Values Embedded

in Narrative Coding Manual (Frimer et al., 2009; Release 1.0) until after the interviews had been conducted.

These limitations aside, this preliminary study is the first to examine the personalities of successfully reformed convicts for agency community value integration, as well as the first to show clear signs of (one) developmental trajectory of such integration. And they provide empirical support for the adage "that which doesn't kill us makes us stronger," for even individuals whose early life choices were often dangerous and antisocial in nature can develop into morally mature individuals. And indeed, many view their prior criminal lives as a necessary part of their path to moral maturity—and, thus, are able to transform their experiences into narratives that are powerfully inspiring to the similarly disenfranchised, thereby channeling their once strongly unmitigated agency into fuel for social change.

Appendix A

Type	Question no.	Reformed ex-convict interview questions	Control group interview questions
Past	1	Could you please tell me about your past criminal activity? How many separate times have you been incarcerated? How many years in total have passed between the beginning of your first sentence and the release date of your last sentence? Since your last release, how long has it been since you have been incarcerated this time?	Could you please tell me about a challenging situation you've encountered in the past that led you to make a personal commitment to yourself or to someone else. Explain what happened and when and why you decided to make the commitment that you made.
Present	2	How would you describe yourself now?	How would you describe yourself now?
Past	3	How would you describe yourself before you made the commitment to avoid criminal activity?	How would you describe yourself before you made this personal commitment?
Trans	4	What do you contribute to your success in successfully avoiding criminal activity?	Were you successful or unsuccessful at upholding the commitment you made? If you've been successful, what do you contribute to your success?

(continued)

Appendix A (continued)

Type	Question no.	Reformed ex-convict interview questions	Control group interview questions
Present	5	If you've been unsuccessful in avoiding criminal activity in the past, why do you think you're now successful? Why is this time different—what has changed?	Think back to the person you were before you made the commitment and now after. What has changed?
Past	6	Which activities, people, or groups were important to you in the past?	Which activities, people, or groups were important to you in the past (before commitment)?
Present	7	What activities, people, or groups are important to you now—how have your priorities changed?	What activities, people, or groups are important to you now (after commitment)?
Present	8	What do you see as your most important roles and responsibilities?	What do you see as your most important roles and responsibilities?
Present	9	What do you think are the most important psychological aspects of who you are?	What do you think are the most important psychological aspects of who you are?
Trans	10	How did you get to become the person you are now?	How did you get to become the person you are now?
Present	11	Is there anything else that you feel defines you as a person?	Is there anything else that you feel defines you as a person?
Trans	12	Has this changed over time—and if so, how?	Has this changed over time—and if so, how?
Present	13	What goals do you have for the future—what do you want to do with your life?	What goals do you have for the future—what do you want to do with your life?

Appendix B

Examples of Unmitigated Agency

Question: Which activities, people, or groups were important to you in the past?

Interview1:   He says he didn't have any respect for hardly anyone but himself (POWER), and every day was a struggle to try to prove that he was top dog (POWER).

Interview 2:   Describes himself as always being one to take charge, not follow, and describes his desire to be "head man" (POWER) and how it led him to engage in criminal activity that he would have avoided otherwise. Wanted to live up to his nickname: Willie Monster (POWER)

Interview3:   He says the only activities that were important to him were doing and selling drugs and living life on the street (POWER/HEDONISM/ STIMULATION). Says he felt as if he had something to prove (POWER/ ACHIEVEMENT).

Examples of Unmitigated Community

Question: What do you see as your most important roles and responsibilities?

Interview1:   Says that he considers teaching the next generation to be his biggest responsibility and role in the community (UNIVERSALISM/BENEVOLENCE). He says it is his calling to help the children of the next generation (UNIVERSALISM/ BENEVOLENCE) to become better. Explains that he views one of his most important roles as being to show young people that they have the abilities to be successful (BENEVOLENCE).

Interview2:   My life is not about me anymore (UNIVERSALISM/ BENEVOLENCE). It was about me for all those years. And then I realized that it is about impacting other people's lives and all those years I impacted other people's lives negatively, and to this day, I regret that impact (UNIVERSALISM/ BENEVOLENCE). The way that others see me is the most important thing to me (SECURITY). I had to say to myself: You are a wretch. Others' well-being matters more than your own, and it is time to make good on your duty to protect them (UNIVERSALISM/BENEVOLENCE).

Examples of Integrated Agency/Community

Question: What do you see as your most important roles and responsibilities?

Interview 1:   He talks about his role as a deacon and also mentions the work he does with those in need through His Way

(BENEVOLENCE/ ACHIEVEMENT). He is humble about the fact that he is actually president at the present time and gets to decide how to move the organization forward (ACHIEVEMENT). Also talks about his role as a husband and how he tries every day to live up to his own standards as a good spouse (BENEVOLENCE/SELF-DIRECTION).

Interview2: He sees preaching as his most important role (BENEVOLENCE). He talks about he was a high school dropout and addicted to cocaine and heroin (HEDONISM/ STIMULATION) and how God changed everything. God showed him how to save his friends, and he puts his ability to help others at the front of his responsibilities (BENEVOLENCE/SELF-DIRECTION). He shows people that they do not have to be a slave to negativity and can instead be delivered (ACHIEVEMENT/POWER/ BENEVOLENCE). He says that God flips sin to righteousness if the person is willing to make a change in themselves (SELF-DIRECTION).

Interview 3: Most important responsibility is his family (BENEVOLENCE/ SECURITY). He says it is also his responsibility to help others that may be in the same position that he was in (UNIVERSALISM/SELF-DIRECTION). He goes to church with a state trooper who asked him to speak with a man currently incarcerated (BENEVOLENCE). He is proud that the trooper thought of him as a good role model (ACHIEVEMENT). He feels a responsibility to motivate guys like himself (BENEVOLENCE). Mentions that he helps reform reentry programs (ACHIEVEMENT/ BENEVOLENCE). Many of the leaders of these programs have good intentions but simply do not know what it's like to be incarcerated, so it is his duty and also something he wants to do to educate people on how to change their lives (UNIVERSALISM/SELF-DIRECTION).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. Like Frimer et al. (2011), we conducted analyses with both groups' desire to increase (hedonism, stimulation, self-direction) and decrease (tradition, conformity, security) psychological distance from others values and found no significant differences between their past and present narratives, as well as no change in their level of integration between the two.

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