Necessary Intentionality
A Socially Constructed Model for Parent-child Relations with Formerly Incarcerated African American Fathers

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Workshop Purpose

The goal is to answer the following questions:

1. Why African American fathers struggle with parenting behaviors after incarceration?
2. How can educators support African American fathers in efforts to bond with their children?
Workshop Content

- Introduction
- Section 1
  - Socially constructed parenting…what is this?
  - Activity: The educators duty
- Section 2
  - Literature: A basic contextual frame
  - Study: Incarceration, re-entry, and reunification
  - Related misconceptions debunked
  - Activity: Resounding nuts and bolts
- Section 3
  - A model for father-child relations
  - Strategies to support fathers in parent-child relations
- Closing Remarks
Introduce yourself
What's on an Educators' mind?
Meet Corey

- A 35 year-old African American married father.

- He has two minor children, 12 year-old son and 10 year-old daughter.

- He is an officer serving in the US Army.
Meet Corey

- A 35 year-old African American married father currently on parole.

- He has two minor children, 12 year-old son and 10 year-old daughter, whom he shares joint custody with his ex-wife.

- He spent 3 years and 8 months in a correctional facility as a result of conviction for kidnapping and aggravated assault.

- He is a retired officer previously serving in the US Army.

- He spends his time reading, exploring entrepreneurial opportunities, caring for his son, and setting goals for he and his family.

Social & Cultural Construction

Conditioning

Life Scripts
Social & Cultural Construction

- The generation of knowledge and understanding of the human world shaped by our seeing and experiencing the world through human interaction activity (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985; Heath, 2007).

- One’s experience of the world will produce different perceptions, meanings, and constructions of reality conforming to event, time, and place (Burr, 2015; Lock & Strong, 2010; Patton, 2015).

- The idea of reality illuminates the influence of culture on our personal selves that translate into how we see the world; the context and value of some structure of experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015; Cunliffe, 2003; Patton, 2015).
The Maslow Prototype - Hierarchy of Needs

- Transcendence
- Self-actualisation
- Aesthetic Needs
- Cognitive Needs
- Esteem Needs
- Belongingness & Love Needs
- Safety Needs
- Biological & Physiological Needs
Conventional Construction of Parenting

PROVIDER
PROTECTOR
NURTURER
MENTOR
DISCIPLINARIAN
The Most Important Question – WHY?

**Intention (n)** a determination to act in a certain way; resolve; a process or manner of healing of incised wounds; an aim or purpose.

**Incised (adj)** engraved; having a margin that is deeply and sharply notched.

**Intentionality (n)** the fact of being deliberate or purposive; the quality of mental states (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) that consists in their being directed toward some object or state of affairs; the fact of being done by design.
Motivation is a desire influenced by our thoughts and feelings that drives our actions.

Priority determines quality of parenting and the active behaviors chosen by the parent.

Both Motivation and Priority are guided by our socially constructed life scripts that are not constant across the life span or life course.
Responsibility vs. Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ A sphere of <strong>duty</strong>.</td>
<td>▪ A process of <strong>reconciling</strong> one’s activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ An assignment of <strong>obligation</strong>.</td>
<td>▪ A settling of <strong>results</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ A determination of <strong>liability</strong>.</td>
<td>▪ A <strong>measurement</strong>.</td>
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<td>▪ A sense of <strong>authority</strong>.</td>
<td>▪ A scorecard of <strong>outcomes</strong>.</td>
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“To be accountable means that we are willing to be responsible to another person for our behavior and it implies a level of submission to another’s opinions and viewpoints.”

~Wayde Goodall
The Educators’ Duty
INCARCERATION, RE-ENTRY, AND REINTEGRATION
A basic contextual frame
“The struggle you’re in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow.”

~ Author Unknown ~
The Backdrop of Circumstance

- In 2007, 52% of state detainees and 63% of federal detainees were parent to at least one minor child (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010).

- 92% of parents detained in prison are fathers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010).

- 40% of parolees return to prison for new crime or technical violation (Travis & Stacey, 2010).

- Fathers hold a desire to reunite with children upon release (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005).

- On average, formerly incarcerated fathers are less engaged with children (Woldoff & Washington, 2008).
The Backdrop of Circumstance

Challenges related to Reintegration

- **Family**
  - Incarcerated/released individuals are viewed by family as a financial and emotional burden (Naser & Visher, 2006); paternity and child support are concerns that contribute to relational barriers (Pearson & Davis, 2003; Wilkinson, Magora, Garcia, & Khurana, 2009).
  - Gatekeepers (i.e. mother of child, extended family, and community members, etc.) tend to excessively guard the formerly incarcerated fathers interaction with child following release (McBride, Brown, Bost, et al., 2005; Perry & Bright, 2012).

- **Employment**
  - Depending on the severity of offense, individuals with criminal history are less likely referred for employment (Varghese, Hardin, Bauer, & Morgan, 2010).
The Backdrop of Circumstance

- **Child Support**
  - Formerly incarcerated individuals are subject to as much as 65% garnishment of wages for child support *(Griswold & Pearson, 2005; Roberts, 2001; Solomon-Fears, 2009).*
  
  - Failure to pay child support order can result in arrest/incarceration in accordance with state law *(Brito, 2012; Evans, 2014).*

- **Housing**
  - Formerly incarcerated individuals suffer eviction or are subject to extreme financial liabilities *(Hirsch, Dietrich, Landau, Schneider, & Ackelsberg, 20022; Schneider, 2010).*
The Backdrop of Circumstance

**Education**
- Formerly incarcerated individuals are likely to have low intellectual ability which is linked to anti-social behavior (Holland, Clare, & Mukhpadhyay, 2002; Lindsay, Taylor, & Sturney, 2004).

- Education may be perceived as a strain for fathers reintegrating into community following incarceration (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006).

**Parental Rights**
- Involuntary termination of parental rights [within the state of Kansas] includes conviction of a felony, imprisonment, failure to pay child support, or failure to adjust circumstances, conduct or condition on behalf of the child (Revised Kansas Code, 2014).
The Backdrop of Circumstance

- **Health and Mental Health**
  
  - Formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely to suffer from infectious diseases, blood disorders, skin disorders, co-occurring substance use disorders, and schizophrenia (Cuddeback, Scheyett, Pettus-Davis, & Morrissey, 2010).
  
  - Upon return to community, formerly incarcerated individuals are likely to lack the means to receive the necessary treatment to maintain health (LaVigne & Cowan, 2005; Luther, Reichert, Holloway, Roth, & Aalsma, 2011; Wheeler & Patterson, 2008).
  
  - The rate of re-incarceration is much higher for formerly incarcerated men with physical health conditions (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008).
The Backdrop of Circumstance

Challenges specific to African American Fathers

- African American males have the highest imprisonment rate compared to all other groups (Carson, 2014).

- African American males experience constant psychological distress due to discrimination around criminal history and race/ethnicity following release (Turney, Lee, & Comfort, 2013).

- African Americans exist with a racialized worldview that shapes their beliefs and behaviors in relationship to self and others (Unnever, & Gabbidon, 2011).

- Consequences of criminal justice involvement includes distrust in government, negative attitudes toward law enforcement, reduced or absence of political participation, and an increased perception of discrimination (Lee, Porter, & Comfort, 2014).

- Parental role-modeling wisdom held by African American fathers is likely given by their mothers or a significant social figure with the community (Coles, 2001; Forste, Bartkowski, & Jackson, 2009).
Trauma

a mental and emotional response to a terrible event like a fall, car accident, rape, or natural disaster.

Developmental Trauma Disorder
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
Complex Trauma
African American Males’ Lived Experiences of Fathering Following Incarceration

Qualitative Phenomenological Study, 2015-2016

Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

Characteristics of study participants:

▪ Ethnicity, Gender & role restriction
  • African American fathers
  • Biological parent to at least 1 child above 3 years and less than 17 years

▪ Age restriction
  • Between the ages of 28 and 50

▪ Location restriction
  • Kansas City metropolitan area or within 25 miles outside
  • Lives outside the home of minor child

▪ Criminal Justice participation restriction
  • Formerly incarcerated
  • Released within 6-12 months
  • Mandatory community supervision
  • Conviction non-sexual in nature
Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

A Father at the Crossroad
- Personal privacy vs. Personal interest
- Criminal justice & child support vs. Personal necessities
- Us vs. Them
- Free citizen vs. Social citizen
- Object vs. Human being

Surviving on the Edge
- Fear of reincarceration
- Fear of society (social stereotypes)
- Fear of retaliation (by adversaries)
- Fear of loss (of relationship)
By the Way…I’ve Changed
- Mental and emotional changes after incarceration.
- Ability to articulate and demonstrate mental and emotional changes.

It’s Been Too Long Without You
- Fathers made effort to encourage a reciprocal exchange with children.
- Fathers attempted to influence changes in their child's attitude toward them.
- Fathers attempted acts of affection to counteract damage of absence.

It Hurt Me But Helped Us
- Incarceration was the rite of passage to responsible father.
- African American fathers have the capacity to care.
- Being hurt was about healing from hurt to build strong bonds.
I’m the Father
  ▪ The struggle experienced by fathers was not mainly because of interference by their maternal counterpart.
  ▪ Value and worth is associated with the father-child relationship.
  ▪ Clashes with maternal counterpart regularly led fathers to reluctantly choose to be indifferent.

It’s Father Time
  ▪ An attempt to reverse the effect of absence.
  ▪ Opportunity to bond based on who father is now, not who father was before incarceration.
  ▪ An attempt to invest in the child’s life.
  ▪ A fathers understanding of his own father.
  ▪ A chance to build a new legacy.
Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

No Family No Life
- Children are primary motivator while on parole.
- Children are biggest accomplishment since returning to the community.

A Work in Progress
- Increased awareness of self represents strength and the ability to apply parental wisdom.
- Success is not in a positive father-child interaction but in achieving a strong lasting bond with children despite children knowing their flaws.
Common Misconceptions
Misconceptions Debunked

- The role of “mother” is primary and outweighs the role of “father”.

- Formerly incarcerated African American men are incapable of effectively executing the father role.

- Formerly incarcerated African American men want to stay uninvolved in their children’s lives and reject the responsibility of being a father.

- Children of formerly incarcerated African American men are afraid to build relationship with their father.

- Formerly incarcerated African American fathers who aspire to realize the “traditional nuclear family pattern” will be most successful in parenting.
Resounding *Nuts and Bolts*
SUPPORTING FATHER-CHILD RELATIONS
“Optimism is essential to achievement and it is also the foundation of courage and true progress.”

~ Nicholas Murray Butler ~
Observe Other Matters of Distinction

- **Quality 1**: the genesis of the African American culture is grounded in collectivism principles, traditions, and values; however, we exist, assimilated into, and function within a culture that promotes individualism.

- **Quality 2**: African American culture was built upon deep roots of spirituality, but exist in within a culture that exists counter to that foundation.

- **Quality 3**: African American parenting behaviors are influenced by a race-related socialization.

- **Quality 4**: Formerly incarcerated African American fathers tend to have multiple maternal counterparts.

- **Quality 5**: Formerly incarcerated African American fathers operate according to an unpredictable responsibly accountable system of priority.
Father-child Relations Model

Un-learn
Learn
Re-learn
Self
Family
Stimulate
Amplify
Accelerate
Strategies to Support Fathers

- **Strategy 1**: Check your attitude at the door.
- **Strategy 2**: Be not consumed with conviction.
- **Strategy 3**: Flex your style.
- **Strategy 4**: Exercise motivational communication.
- **Strategy 5**: Promote child’s communicative ability.
- **Strategy 6**: Work intentional to stimulate and maintain co-parenting collaboration.
- **Strategy 7**: Lead from the third chair.
- **Strategy 8**: Build on what the father has to offer rather than emphasizing the perceived deficit.
- **Strategy 9**: Keep your work in proper perspective.
- **Strategy 10**: Never assume, or use conventional wisdom to define, or design the father role in the family unit to influence your work as an educator.
Final Take-Away

The goal should be…

- To **avoid** efforts toward **changing** the father to fit your preconceived notions or self-constructed parental wisdom.

- **Facilitate** an **intentional shift** toward a more healthier way of parenting aligned with the fathers’ adopted parental framework/construct.
Closing Remark

“The heart of a father is the masterpiece of nature.”
~ Antoine Francois Prevost, Manon Lescaut ~

Thank You!

I now invite your questions and comments.
References


References


END OF PRESENTATION