Reimagining Sustainability:

Acknowledging and Removing Barriers to Sustainability

In Poor Marginalized Communities of Color

by

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable communities discourse, literature and initiatives have essentially excluded poor marginalized communities at a time when sustainability efforts require more stakeholders and stakeholder involvement. The families in poor marginalized communities of color in the United States are struggling to meet basic needs (food, medicine, shelter, safety). Additionally, in these communities there is a disproportionate level of forced mobility to prisons, jails and detention centers. These communities are unsustainable.

This dissertation is comprised of three articles. I present in the first article (published in Sustainability Journal) an argument for a definition of sustainability that includes recognition of the major, complex and persistent problems faced daily by poor marginalized communities of color (African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American) including those connected to mass incarceration and high recidivism. I also propose a system-of-communities conceptual framework. In my second article, I explore sustainability assessment tools and find them to be inadequate for measuring the progress toward sustainability of poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates. In order to fill this gap, I developed the Building Sustainable Communities Framework and a Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equity (Social R.I.C.E.) Transition Tool, a qualitative interview guide (a precursor to the development of a community sustainability assessment tool). In the third article, I test the utility of the Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool through a community-based participatory action study: The Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. Three types of participants were included (formerly incarcerated, family members of formerly incarcerated and community members). The Restorative Justice Circle process (based

on a traditional practice of Native Americans and other indigenous peoples) was also introduced to the groups for the purpose of having discussions and sharing personal stories in a safe, nonthreatening, confidential and equitable space. During the study, data was gathered for reflexive thematic analysis from two participant groups, in-depth interviews, focus groups and short qualitative surveys. The findings reflect the community is in dire need of a path to stability and sustainability and needs the knowledge and tools to help them make collective community decisions about present and future sustainability issues.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the families who have been impacted by the injustice and harsh cruelties of uncompassionate structural and institutional systems and people in the United States. It is my hope that systemic racism and anti-black sentiments become a distant memory and a more just world becomes a reality for all.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the indigenous people in the United States and indigenous people from around the world, Africa, Asia, India and many others whose daily lifestyles were and are based on a horizontal system of justice and equity.

This dissertation is dedicated to my ancestors from the United States and those who made the perilous journey across the ocean for their strength, fortitude, courage and wisdom.

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I want to thank the community-based organizations that welcomed me into their community and helped me to organize and bring a different perspective and new ideas into action. Thanks you to all of the courageous participants in the pilot project who took the journey with us to repair the harm of incarceration and look forward to building stable, resilient and sustainable communities.

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When I look at this long list of individuals and organizations, I more fully see the benefit and importance of having what I describe in this dissertation as a "system-of-communities." Many people have taken part in my journey and I am grateful.

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FORWARD

The culmination of the work represented in this dissertation has been a journey that actually started prior to being accepted into the Sustainability PhD program in the School of Sustainability at Arizona State University. It started while I was an undergraduate business student learning about the increasing value of private prisons stock shares, and other industries related to the criminal justice and corrections systems (e.g., insurance, telephone, real estate), sold across the world on the stock market exchange. As a graduate business student, I learned about all the companies, cities and towns that used inmate labor that was promoted as being "low turnover" and a "cost effective solution," and my heart quivered. I learned through studying businesses that most did not hire individuals with felony convictions and that hundreds of professional licenses were denied to or were revoked if an individual was convicted of a felony. My journey continued as I worked as a facilitator of Restorative Justice Peace Circles in the county juvenile detention center with boys being tried as adults and with the young inmates at the city jail. Additionally, I taught students at the university level who were majoring in criminal justice and those taking criminal and restorative justice courses with dreams of becoming judges, lawyers (prosecutors and defense attorneys), police officers, parole and probation officers.

In discovering that Arizona State University had a PhD program in sustainability, I learned that this program welcomed a variety of backgrounds and educational pursuits. During the program, I learned of the systems-based perspective of examining and addressing major sustainability issues. In retrospect, I clearly see the interlinking systems destructively at work in the lives of families in poor, marginalized communities of color. It is my hope that I have accurately and effectively through the three articles in

this dissertation brought attention to the dire need for change in the definition of wicked, complex and persistent sustainability issues and the decision-making processes related to building sustainable communities, so the basic needs and struggles of all stakeholders on this precious earth are addressed. It is also my hope that sustainability discourse, literature and practices acknowledge the impact of racial injustice and dismantle oppressive systems and acts wherever they are found, therefore increasing resilience and sustainability in communities of color in the United States and around the world.

Lastly, I recall my application to the University included an excerpt from a poem I wrote. This poem came as the answer to why I wanted to receive a doctorate degree in sustainability (Appendix A). I find it apropos to end this part of my journey with it, especially during this time of social unrest over social injustices and oppression.

"This earth belongs to us also.
Those of us who have the least and suffer the most.
We belong at the table, included in the circle.
We are a large part of the solution. We are not inconsequential, nor are we invisible.
We hold the keys to some of the doors where the answers to the problems
will be found. We recognize this as inclusiveness.
We know this as justice.
So, we invite you to the circle, to listen, to share, to repair the harm, to build new relationships, to explore how we, all of us together, can make our earth and our realities more sustainable."

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Creating a future that is sustainable for present generations is key to creating one that is sustainable for future generations. Reimagining sustainability as truly inclusive, cohesive and equitable is going to require each of us to reevaluate our place in the world. In the scheme of things, although it sometimes seems bleak, the reality is there is a path forward that will lead to the sustainability of the earth for all of us. Reimagining the future for a sustainable world means repositioning our perspectives and attitudes, and changing our behaviors. The best way forward is to collectively embrace a future that will be different, that must be different to find solutions to the present complex, persistent and wicked issues facing us today and those destined to come in the future. In the three articles included in this dissertation several reoccurring themes and major questions come through. They focus on power, privilege, injustice, historical connections to the present, decision-making, social reintegration and inclusion, pain and healing, and building the collective capacity to overcome engrained systemic injustices, so that all of us can contribute meaningfully and in a more productive and sustainable way to sustainability efforts on this earth.

Much of sustainability and social sustainability discourse and debate revolves around the concepts of "inter- and intragenerational equity" –having enough resources for the present and future generations. The argument has been made that the present generation must leave the earth's resources for people in the future to have adequate resources or provide an alternative to these resources (Spijkers 2018). I have found it an

interesting perspective as I worked through this dissertation process. I became more aware of a divergent viewpoint, as it relates to sustainability, that exists for individuals and families in poor marginalized communities. I have coined the concept "inter- and intragenerational oppression" –not having enough resources for the present and future generations and living in a state of chaos. These two juxtaposed points-of-view if not recognized by sustainability scientists and researchers in addressing major, complex, persistent sustainability problems will fall short in the pursuit of sustainable solutions to the earth's sustainability. These two points-of-view seem to run parallel, yet they intersect at the point of oppressor-oppressed realities and have created the unsustainable conditions and barriers to sustainability we see today in poor marginalized communities in the United States of America and beyond. These communities are trapped in circumstances designed by present and past generations laws, policies, procedures and practices. This is the context in which this dissertation is grounded. The research is founded on previous academic scholarship. My contribution in this dissertation adds to this body of scholarship.

This research is a paradigm shift from the mainstream three pillar sustainability narrative to one that is inclusive of poor marginalized communities in the United States. This work expands on the accepted premise of a sustainable community and offers a system-of-communities conceptual framework, one more realistic and inclusive for moving community sustainability efforts forward and includes a safety net component for communities needing help in becoming more sustainable. Additionally, this work builds on the mainstream definition of a sustainable community by adding social reintegration from incarceration to socially inclusive, cohesive and equitable (Woodcraft

2012). This is a "must have" in order for poor marginalized communities to build collective community capacity because the process of incarceration-reentry-recidivism is so prevalent. Social reintegration is required if these communities are to be included in sustainability efforts and decision-making (and they should be). Furthermore, in this research, I designed a conceptual Building Sustainable Communities Framework for poor marginalized communities. It includes social reintegration as the first phase in transitioning these communities toward sustainability. Additionally, I created a transition tool to create a baseline for assessing sustainability in poor marginalized communities. The Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (Social R.I.C.E) Transition Tool is based on the Building Sustainable Communities Framework. To test the viability of the Transition Tool, the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project was designed using a combination of focus group activities (to gather data from formerly incarcerated individuals, family member and community members) and restorative justice circles (to help build participant relationships). Information shared in circle discussions is confidential.

The overarching questions this research has sought to answer are, "Why are poor communities of color not included as stakeholders in sustainability discourse and literature especially when their communities and lives are the most negatively impacted by major, complex and persistent environmental issues? What hidden and systemic barriers are obstructing poor marginalized communities from becoming sustainable in the United States of America? What knowledge is being shared with these communities to help them become more astute stakeholders and effective advocates for sustainable practices and sustainability efforts? What sustainability assessment tools can be used in

these communities to measure sustainability progress and preparedness to address the more frequent climate change related crisis and disasters they are experiencing?

High rates of forced mobility created by the criminal justice, corrections and foster care systems have damaged families and community cohesiveness which enables communities to build adequate collective community capacity and wellbeing to become resilient and sustainable. Furthermore, the reintegration process of formerly incarcerated individuals to their home communities has been fraught with overwhelming challenges resulting in high rates of recidivism. Thus, how are these communities able to address the expected rising major environmental events with such high incarceration and recidivism rates as well as high unemployment, homelessness and a lack of basic needs and services? Why are these communities not being engaged in sustainability decision-making regarding their communities? What are the sustainability goals, plans and strategies for these vulnerable communities?

When framing sustainability problems and looking for sustainable solutions, they must include the real-world problems of poor communities of color for true sustainability to be realized. Present sustainability and sustainable communities literature and discourse do not address these critical issues. This body of work fills this knowledge gap. Accordingly, it expands the sustainability, sustainable communities and restorative justice knowledge bases. Restorative justice literature includes a few articles exploring critical race theory. This theory is discussed mainly in this dissertation as it relates to sustainability. (There is no literature, I could find, connecting the particular combination of sustainability issues discussed in this dissertation in restorative justice literature.)

The three articles included in this dissertation examine the mainstream sustainability narratives. These narratives have ignored or excluded discussion of poor marginalized communities and the interlinking systems that are obstructing their communities from becoming stable, resilient and sustainable places to live and raise their children (Woodcraft 2012). In Chapter 2, Article 1, "Barriers to Sustainability in Poor Marginalized Communities in the United States: The Criminal Justice, the Prison-Industrial Complex and Foster Care Systems," is a published article in the *Sustainability Journal* (2020). This article establishes the foundation for why the complex and persistent systems-based issues faced by poor marginalized communities should be included in the definition of wicked sustainability problems. Article 1 addresses the questions, "Sustain what for whom?" and "For whose benefit and to whose detriment?" The article points out that solutions to wicked, persistent sustainability problems cannot be fully addressed without the inclusion of all of our efforts and without more inclusivity from those on the bottom of the pyramid, more kindness and thoughtful decision-making, resolutions to major sustainability issues cannot be efficiently and adequately achieved.

The article recommends a sustainability wide lens systems-based approach to explore the detrimental links between the criminal justice system, prison-industrial complex and the foster care systems for poor marginalized communities. It examines the reasons behind the mass incarceration and high recidivism in these communities devastating families, community networks and social cohesion. It explains that laws, policies and practices (e.g., over policing poor marginalized communities) causes high arrests and conviction rates and with the challenges of economic despair and

environmental degradation the families in these communities need a comprehensive system-of-support. These families are trapped in external systems that are unforgiving and continually creating circumstances that produce distress (Clear 2009). The external systems prosper on the inability of poor marginalized individuals, families and communities to break free and this perpetuates generational problems and entanglements (Golub et al. 2013).

This article discusses what is required to create sustainable conditions for communities and why those conditions for sustainability presently do not work for all communities. The article sets forth a conceptual systems-of-communities framework that explains how all communities are connected and why those that mistakenly believe they are sustainable are not as long as there are communities in close proximity and others more distant that remain unsustainable. Furthermore, the article states for those individuals who are truly concerned about having a sustainable earth, sustainability issues need to be redefined to include the struggles of poor marginalized communities if there is to be an increase in stakeholders and their involvement in sustainability efforts.

In Chapter 3, Article 2, "Restructuring the Building Sustainable Communities Approach: Building the Foundation for the Development of a Sustainability Assessment Tool to Be Used by and with Poor Marginalized Communities of Color in the United States," emphasizes the need to acknowledge and dismantle the barriers of oppression created by structural and institutional racism. It examines further historical racial injustices and how these connect to today's systems of structural and institutional racist practices. This article strongly recommends the need for the three-pillar sustainability framework (environment, economy and society/social justice) to embed engaged and

critical race theories in its practices of sustainability research and development. To date this sustainability approach does not sufficiently address the needs of the most vulnerable populations (African American, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous) in the United States facing the harshness of environmental hazards caused be climate change. This article is a call for action. There is a dearth of sustainability assessment tools used in poor communities of color. There are none that combine the social reintegration process of formerly incarcerated individuals with the more recognized conceptual processes of social inclusion, cohesion and equity.

This article combines these four core conceptual processes in a Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (Social R.I.C. E.) Transition Tool. The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool is an interview guide developed to create a foundational baseline. Unlike a sustainability assessment tool, the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool does not measure the information collected. The Transition Tool is used to gather data from community members (formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of formerly incarcerated individuals and other community members in contact with or are concerned about people who have been incarcerated) for analysis that is relevant to the four-phases of the Building Sustainable Communities Framework (social reintegration, inclusion, cohesion and equity). The output from the data gathered will be used to assist sustainability scientists in conjunction with community members in designing a sustainability assessment tool to fit the particular characteristics (issues related to high incarceration, community reintegration from incarceration and recidivism rates) of the community and measures the progress of poor marginalized communities of color towards becoming sustainable.

The outcomes from the data can also be used by researchers, academia, policymakers and the community at-large to focus on the pertinent issues determined by the data to create action steps for moving the present residents of the community towards a more stable, safe, resilient and sustainable future. Additionally, the article discusses the devastating impact of the criminal justice and corrections systems on poor marginalized people of color and their families and communities. It investigates historical information on racial oppression from slavery to its impact through the decades culminating in the circumstances faced today by African American communities and other marginalized communities of color. It acknowledges the laws, policies and practices (e.g., residential redlining) put in place across time to establish the how and why communities of color have been affected negatively by structural and institutional racism resulting in racial segregation, discrimination, stereotypes stigmas, economic hardship and ecological degradation.

This article is a call to action for more inclusivity in sustainability discourse, literature and most importantly practice. It is a call for equity and shared decision-making especially with communities of color about communities of color. It is a call for the recognition of the negative impact of forced mobility. It is a call for the dismantling of structural and institutional racism that permeates through our society and in the sustainability decision-making process. This paper recognizes the lived realities faced daily in communities of color and proposes a way to begin the journey toward becoming more sustainable communities. It asks the question, "In what ways can communities of color become more welcoming to the throngs of individuals returning from incarceration, so that recidivism is decreased and community capacity is increased?

How can these communities become more socially inclusive, cohesive and equitable?" It recognizes that the reentry process from prison is one of the most difficult periods with individuals recidivating at unprecedented levels in the first six months after release. How can individuals and families in the reintegration phase be more supported by the community and society as a whole? Developing a community-based sustainability assessment tool that is inclusive of their struggles and experiences is an important first step to helping transition poor communities of color into stable, resilient and sustainable communities and out of survival mode. To ensure the Building Sustainable Communities four phase conceptual framework was appropriate for use with communities of color experiencing high rates of incarceration and recidivism a focus group was convened. The group was comprised of formerly incarcerated individuals, along with family and community members with personal experience with formerly incarcerated individuals.

Chapter 4, Article 3, "Building Sustainable Communities, Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesiveness and Equity and Restorative Justice Peace Circles: The Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project," is an answer to the questions in the call for action in Chapter 3. It takes a practical next step in creating the foundation for transitioning poor communities of color into stable, resilient and more sustainable communities whereby the members are able to become more productive and prosperous and contribute to building the capacity necessary for addressing future complex and persistent environmental issues. In its recognition of the lack of community cohesiveness caused by high rates of forced mobility into the criminal justice, corrections and foster care systems, the Building Sustainable Communities–Repairing the Harm of

Incarceration Pilot Project used focus groups and utilized the Restorative Justice Peace Circle process to help build participant relationships

The Building Sustainable Communities Framework and the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool were introduced to participants in two groups that met separately for five weeks. The meetings included time spent in developing relationships in the Restorative Justice Circles weekly and separately in focus group discussions of the Building Sustainable Communities Framework and the four core processes represented in both the framework and transition tool. Activities related to the framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool were completed. The Restorative Justice Peace Circle process in this Building Sustainable Communities–Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project was an important and strategic decision for helping to repair family and community relationships, and also for its ability to establish an equitable community-based participatory action research partnership. (There are several restorative justice practices, but they go beyond the scope of this project.) The Restorative Justices Circles are safe spaces and conversations and personal stories shared in the Circles are confidential. During the pilot project, the author was also the Circle facilitator.

Through the Restorative Justice Circles and the focus group exercises the participants and facilitator/researcher bonded and learned a great deal about pressing community and personal issues related to the complete reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals (returning citizens) into their families, home community and society. Additional topics that were discussed in focus groups and interviews were on the impact of race, the disproportionate number of people of color incarcerated, the race of probation and parole officers (most often white), and others related to the criminal

justice system and outside of the system (e.g., researchers, restorative justice practitioners, schools). Also, the subject of race on restorative justice practices, practitioners and sustainable communities is addressed in this article.

The data from the qualitative interviews (based on the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool), focus groups and qualitative short surveys were gathered and analyzed through the Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach. This approach is a flexible, iterative, explorative, reflexive/organic method with a social justice orientation (Braun and Clark 2017). One of the main findings from the analysis was related to the issue of trust, (a major component in developing community cohesiveness, capacity and equity) is relatively low with individuals returning from incarceration and with family and community members whom have experienced the process of reintegration and high recidivism personally.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of this dissertation and discusses the culmination of my research and journey (Table 10) to better understand the dynamics and issues of this world, the major sustainability problems of the past, present and future, and the search for their solutions.

CHAPTER 2

ARTICLE 1

Barriers to Sustainability in Poor Marginalized Communities in the United States: The Criminal Justice, the Prison-Industrial Complex and Foster Care Systems

Abstract

In the United States of America, 2.2 million people are incarcerated in public and private facilities and over 700,000 are released yearly back to their home communities. Almost half are rearrested within a year. These problems have been excluded from mainstream sustainability narratives, despite their serious implications for sustainability. This paper addresses how the criminal justice, prison-industrial complex and foster care systems negatively impact these communities and families. To comprehend the system links, a sustainability lens is used to examine and address interlinking system impacts obstructing achievement of sustainability and the necessary community characteristics for building sustainable communities. Communities characterized by environmental degradation, economic despair and social dysfunction are trapped in unsustainability. Therefore, a system-of-communities framework is proposed which examines the circumstances that bring about prison cycling which devastates family and community cohesion and social networking, also negatively affecting the ability of other communities to become truly sustainable. We contend that a fully integrated social, economic and environmental approach to a major, complex, persistent problem as it relates to poor, marginalized communities faced with mass incarceration and recidivism can begin creating sustainable conditions. Further, we

articulate ways sustainability narratives could be changed to engage with core challenges impeding these communities.

Keywords: social sustainability; sustainability; social justice; sustainable communities; social cohesion; environmental justice; prison cycling; prison-industrial complex; mass incarceration; recidivism; foster care

1. Introduction

Incarceration is a common occurrence in the United States of America with 2.2 million people incarcerated in public and private facilities (Aday & Farney, 2014; Executive Office of The President of the United States, 2016; Kaeble & Cowhig, 2018) which has resulted in 2.7 million children having a parent in prison (Western & Pettit, 2010; Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet, 2014). Over 700,000 people are released yearly back to their home communities unprepared for the reality of life as a formerly incarcerated individual often labeled a felon (Woodcraft, 2012). Consequently, communities across the country are negatively affected socially, economically and environmentally with their ability to participate in sustainability efforts greatly diminished and a second generation at risk of a similar fate. Amidst the urgent need for sustainability participation, this circumstance deserves the attention of sustainability scholars, policymakers and U.S. citizens.

Incarceration in prisons, jails and detention centers creates barriers to several aspects of life, such as economic stability and environmental vitality, not only for those who were formerly incarcerated, but also for their families and communities. Therefore, the health and wellbeing of children, families, communities and society is at risk by the mass incarceration and high recidivism of family and community members (Aday &

Farney, 2014; Harding et al., 2013). Additionally, incarceration decreases an individual's human and social capital, therefore increasing inequality by decreasing economic viability and community resilience (Harding et al., 2013; Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Incarceration of poor, marginalized individuals increases social inequality and has a negative intergenerational effect on families and communities that is underestimated (Western & Pettit, 2010). Moreover, inequality is a driver of environmental degradation which adds to the problem of climate change (Jorgenson et al., 2019; Agyeman et al., 2016; Murphy, 2012; Vallance et al., 2011). In essence, the ability to address climate change, ecological devastation and sustainability issues in poor, marginalized communities are tremendously hampered by mass incarceration. Hence, mass incarceration and prison cycling are an enormous barrier to sustainability now and in the future.

Understanding major external systems 'barriers to sustainability for the low- and no-income-level, marginalized communities helps to better understand the importance of integrating social sustainability with economic and environmental sustainability. This, consequently, is also a more straightforward and effective way to achieve intra- and intergenerational equity and sustainable communities. Sustainable communities in sustainability literature have been described as socially cohesive, inclusive, equitable, economically stable and vibrant and environmentally healthy (Woodcraft, 2012). The non-physical aspects are defined loosely. For example, socially cohesive is often described as social networks; socially inclusive is defined as acceptance in groups and community activities; and equitable means democracy, diversity, participation in community decision-making and access to resources (Woodcraft, 2012; Bacon, Dixon,

Woodcraft, 2014). Economically stable and vibrant refers to businesses, banks, restaurants, grocery stores, entertainment and employment in the community, and adequate public services.

There is a gap in sustainable communities literature when it comes to poor, marginalized communities (Woodcraft, 2012). Much of the literature related to circumstances in these communities is categorized as environmental (in) justice or criminal justice or social issues. We argue that these concepts and life experiences cannot be excluded from the purview of social sustainability and the sustainability challenge. When it comes to vulnerable communities, these issues intertwine with basic daily needs (e.g., housing, food, healthcare) and are considered their most urgent real-world problems. These differ from the "real world problems" defined by sustainability science which are mainly environmentally focused. Yet, they impact the residents 'ability to foster sustainable community environments and lifestyles. The process of prison cycling causes disorganization and dysfunction in families and poor marginalized communities (Clear et al., 2003; Clear, 2009). They are forced to heavily interlink with external systems (U.S. justice system, prison-industrial complex and the foster care systems) that tear the fabric of their communities and families, decreasing social cohesion, social inclusion and equity. Nevertheless, these are imperative concepts to sustainability and sustainable communities. Decision-making and sustainable transformation of these communities, therefore, requires a different model and a shift in the paradigm from the present sustainable community building frameworks that do not take into consideration the lack of basic needs or the daily experiences of poor marginalized populations (Murphy, 2012).

Many researchers and scholars conclude the concept of social sustainability is inclusive, equitable and just. Their interpretation of “meets the needs of the present and future generations” in the Brundtland report (1987), denotes intra- and intergenerational equity. Furthermore, the United Nations ’Sustainable Development Goals embrace the concepts of equity and justice, yet, there are some researchers and policymakers who still are not convinced that the social sustainability concept can be incorporated into sustainability without historical and present day wrongs being righted in some way to correct past and present day injustices and inequality (Golub et al., 2013). Accordingly, if the goals of sustainability for inter- and intragenerational equity have not been attained at all, then this, too, is problematic because a large number of people will be ignored or excluded from participating in sustainability efforts and the benefits of these efforts (Robinson, 2004). Therefore, the earth’s sustainability for humanity cannot be achieved until social sustainability, social inclusion, cohesion and equity become a reality. Additionally, the synonymous use of social development for social sustainability has diverted the discussion of defining social sustainability toward planning. Social development has been taken to mean planning housing developments (Woodcraft, 2012). This, therefore, has made the discussion of “meeting the needs of present and future generations” a more difficult and complicated topic and a major challenge to overcome.

In this paper, first, we review the debate over integration of social sustainability with economic and environmental sustainability. We also examine the theoretical literature for environmental and sustainability issues from the environmentalist through

"just sustainability" perspectives and find there are gaps in the literature that relate to poor, marginalized communities with high levels of prison cycling. Second, we discuss the dichotomy between the goals and principles of living sustainably and how creating sustainable communities helps us all. Third, we examine why the present sustainable community paradigms only work for some communities and not for disadvantaged, unsustainable communities with high rates of prison cycling. Fourth, we examine from a long-term, wide lens, sustainability systems-based perspective, interlinking systems, obstructions and unveiled connections that are not obvious through siloed and short-term perspectives. Fifth, we propose the use of an innovative system-of-communities conceptual framework to examine the external impacts on an individual community. Lastly, we use a sustainability wide lens systems-based approach to examine poor marginalized communities with high incarceration, reentry and recidivism rates and find that these communities 'ability to build the capacity necessary to become sustainable is tremendously hindered by the major interlinking systems of the U.S. criminal justice, foster care and the prison-industrial complex systems. Through a sustainability lens perspective and as part of a system-of-communities framework, stakeholders, concealed links and obstructions to improving quality of life and decreasing environmental problems in these communities are evident.

This paper presents sustainability academics, researchers, policymakers and communities with an alternative way to think about interlinking systems and their hidden barriers, a new way to think about achieving sustainability and sustainable communities. It is an exploratory conceptual study which integrates literature and discussion to map the descriptive landscape. It offers a new way of thinking about

transitioning unsustainable communities into sustainable ones, a way to examine impediments to social sustainability and it offers a way to engage new stakeholders in the race toward sustainability.

2. Current Social Sustainability Debate

The integration of social sustainability with environmental and economic sustainability has been unsuccessful. Hence, many researchers and policymakers have come to the conclusion that sustainability and social sustainability, inclusive of social justice and equity, are incompatible concepts (Campbell, 2013; Klinsky & Golub, 2013; Dobson, 2003). However, according to the Brundtland Report, the interlinking of society to the concept of sustainability comes through the ideas of intra- and intergenerational equity and the linking of society to nature is imperative. To date, there is no universal definition of social sustainability (Woodcraft, 2012; Vallance et al., 2011). Quality of life and strength of community including individual and collective wellbeing have been used to define social sustainability (Dixon, Woodcraft, 2013; Dempsey, Bramley, Power, et al., 2009). Notably, the European Union instead of using social sustainability, uses the concept of social cohesion when referring to the third pillar (Murphy, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009). Researchers have determined that increasing the level of sustainability required for present and future generations cannot be achieved without a much higher level of social participation (Vallance et al., 2011).

Despite the message of urgency regarding the earth's sustainability, the intensity for behavioral change has not reached a tipping point across the nations (Vallance, Perkins, Dixon, 2011). Policy-makers and planners, therefore, have moved forward without a definition, some using actions toward social cohesion in lieu of a definition

(Murphy, 2012; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). The major concern for many people, especially those who are poor and marginalized, comes from the answer to the question "Sustain what and for whom?" If the answer is "for all," or even "the greatest good for the greatest number", then strategies for reaching sustainability and developing sustainable communities will not look like the ones we have presently (Summers & Smith, 2014). Future frameworks put forth will differ by including concepts and strategies for helping poor, marginalized communities, so they can become more involved in the sustainability process. "Historically, powerful interest groups have used their status to become and remain the beneficiaries of such choices. In many cases this does not produce sustainable outcomes" (Wiek et al., 2015). Right now, the USA laws, policies, regulations and procedures in essence are to keep these populations uneducated, unhealthy, unemployed or incarcerated. It is important to consider a different answer to the questions regarding, "Sustain what and for whom?" If the answer is "maintain the status quo and sustain resources for the privileged and their descendants," then we should continue on the path we are on, thereby continuing to allow those that have the least to suffer the most from environmental hazards, climate change and economic hardship (Robinson, 2004; Pulido, 2000). "Selecting what to sustain, for whom, for how long and at what cost necessitates choice, creating winners and losers" (Wiek et al., 2015). Without a redistribution of decision-making power and equity, in time, the quality of life and life expectancy rate will continue to decrease in poor marginalized communities (Vallance et al., 2011; Robinson, 2004; Long, 2016). There has been sharp debate about whether increased technology and the creation and accumulation of wealth will override

environmental degradation. Notably, the lack of policy changes and inaction toward inclusiveness, equity and justice for vulnerable communities speaks volumes concerning the lack of integration of social sustainability into the sustainability framework (Long, 2016). Social-ecological challenges of climate change and energy efficiency in poor marginalized communities cannot be adequately addressed when more urgent physical needs—food, heat, medicine and safety—must be met (Vallance, et al., 2011). In the United States, these needs are categorized as public health and safety issues and not viewed as part of sustainability problems. Therefore, they are intentionally not addressed or are overlooked when sustainability solutions are being sought.

3. Theoretical Context

Present knowledge, the creation of new knowledge and insights, along with the sharing of knowledge and sustainability efforts benefits society and nature. The following concepts are a foundational basis for this work. They overlap in several areas; however, they have gaps that do not address the major issues of massive incarceration, high community reentry and recidivism in poor marginalized communities and their impact on the ability for these communities to become sustainable. While the concept of sustainability evolved from conservationist and environmentalists concerns about conservation and preservation of wildlife, waterways, forests and other natural resources (Robinson, 2004), when it was introduced, sustainability was considered a conceptual framework to inform policy and development (Dempsey et al., 2009). Moreover, historically, conservationist and environmentalist did not usually consider neighborhood/community topographies as part of environmental issues (Pearson et al., 2018). Environmental justice literature, on the other hand, considers neighborhood

environmental problems as part of the environmental landscape.

Environmental justice, an interlinking environmental concept, considers "where we live, work, play and eat" as part of the environment. Its main focus is on air, land and water problems within neighborhoods of color because that is where the majority of landfills, toxic sites, industrial and manufacturing sites were placed by U.S. federal, state and local governments. These can be considered today "place-based sustainability" problems (Miller et al., 2014). The toxic nature of these locations has caused major health problems for residents (e.g., asthma, cancer, mental health and other problems). The concept of environmental justice was developed in the United States in 1982 in response to a hazardous waste landfill in Warren County, NC and where other toxic waste sites were placed in communities of color (Agyeman et al., 2016; Bullard et al., 2007). The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice Toxic Waste and Racial Justice Report (1987) found that African American neighborhoods disproportionately suffered the burdens of health problems and poor quality of life issues related to these substances (Commission for Racial Justice 1987) (Dempsey et al., 2009; Pulido, 2000).

The Three Pillars of Sustainability (environment, society, economy) approach describing the foundational principles for sustainability, concurrently, developed. Presently, of the three pillars, the concepts of the environment and economy are more well-defined and much less contested than the societal pillar (Murphy, 2012; Dobson, 2003). Consequently, social sustainability is interpreted by policymakers, researchers, activist, businesses, governments and NGOs from their own perspectives (Robinson, 2004). Additionally, there is a fundamental significance for social sustainability and

justice to be included in the building of sustainable communities. The understanding of social sustainability has turned into equity which includes fair opportunities and distribution of goods; intra- and intergenerational equity; participation in decision-making processes; public awareness of sustainability issues and encouraging alternative sustainable consumption patterns; and social cohesion which is linked to happiness/wellbeing, interpersonal trust and reduced crime (Murphy, 2012; Dobson, 2003). Intergenerational equity similarly is a core concept of sustainability concerned with preserving and conserving natural resources for future generations. Yet, it is the concept more often ignored or highly debated (Golub 2013).

Just sustainability is a complementary concept to environmental justice that focuses on present environmental justice issues which ultimately have an impact on future generations (Agyeman et al., 2016; Agyeman, 2005). The theoretical underpinnings of environmental justice and just sustainability share a focus on environmental issues in poor communities and daily life experiences of residents (e.g., toxic sites, health concerns and food deserts). Agyeman goes further including "justice" and "equity" in his definition of sustainability (2003) and links "human equality to environmental quality" (Agyeman, 2008; Agyeman & Evans, 2004). He also identifies an "equity deficit in sustainability" discourse that leaves intergenerational justice at risk (Agyeman et al., 2016; Agyeman, 2005), but like the other concepts, it does not address the problem at hand.

Worldwide, there are several approaches, goals, practices, indicators and assessments for sustainability (e.g., Sustainability Development Goals, Local Agenda 21, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, STAR Communities). More

recently, Circles of Sustainability (Circles of Social Life framework), a less mainstream approach to sustainability challenges the Triple Bottom Line approach (Three Pillars) (James, 2015). There is some overlap in the approaches, but the Circles of Sustainability is modular and has four domains, the economy, ecology, politics and culture that define the "social whole" and uses these Circles of Social Life as a city, town, region and village assessment tool, as well as the Circles of Social Life questionnaire, another assessment tool to measure community sustainability (James, 2015). Although the assessments are focused on the four domains, what is not included is how the differing domains and systems connect, interact and impact each other and the communities and residents. For example, the law and justice segment in the politics domain does not address the impact and connections between law enforcement, courts, prisons, businesses and government agencies associated with the courts and prisons on poor, marginalized communities and families. In the United States, these systems have a destructive impact on poor, marginalized communities 'economy, ecology, politics and culture. Circles of Sustainability offers a significant process for city, urban settlement and regional projects related to assessing and planning transportation (Johannesburg, South Africa), water supply (Milwaukee, WI) and relocation of individuals from dense urban and squatter settlements (i.e., slums). Although a less mainstream approach to sustainability at this juncture, it is a useful method and assessment tool (James et al., 2018).

All of the aforementioned concepts, theories and practices are beneficial to achieving the earth's sustainability. In the case of the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also helped shape the narrative related to sustainability and sustainable communities. Until 2017, the EPA was able to provide communities,

businesses and local governments with sustainability regulations, protections and guidance more than they can do presently. The EPA, in 2013, released a report targeted at minority, low-income and tribal communities, *Creating Equitable, Healthy and Sustainable Communities*. There is no mention of the impact of forced mobility, incarceration or reentry. This is not to say that the EPA as well as other organizations and institutions large and small, have not made positive efforts toward addressing, transforming and changing behaviors to increase environmental sustainability on national, regional and local levels, but not enough has been accomplished especially in marginalized communities because of the narrow focus of what is defined, comprehended and acted upon as a sustainability issue.

Although the literature on sustainable communities offers the ideal sustainable community vision (Woodcraft, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009; Agyeman et al., 2013), it does not address the vision or "how to" of transforming the existing poor communities in the United States into socially cohesive, inclusive, equitable sustainable communities (Wiek et al., 2015). We found no sustainability literature that takes a systems-based approach to looking for solutions to urgent problems in poor, marginalized communities related to incarceration, community re-entry and reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals and the transformation to sustainable communities. These issues must be addressed as a precursor to adequately seeking solutions to sustainability problems and should be redefined as part of the sustainability solution. Hence, focusing on many of the gaps in the interlinkages of these concepts to understand the transitioning of these poor, marginalized communities into sustainable communities is groundbreaking.

Consequently, this body of work expands the sustainability and sustainable communities 'knowledge base.

3.1. Sustainability Discourse Has Focused on the Environmental and Economic Systems

There is a benefit to those who keep the discourse focused on the environment and the economy, although it does not allow for more expedient resolutions to some of the wicked global sustainability issues confronting the world. A privileged stance of reaching sustainability and sustainable communities is proposed in much of the literature (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). There is a dearth of literature regarding achieving social sustainability in countries with extremely large populations of poor individuals and even less about the United States. In the United States, the poor, marginalized and historically disadvantaged in the country, African American, Latino and Indigenous communities, fill this position. These communities are characterized by economic despair, environmental degradation and social dysfunction (Clear, 2009; Summers & Smith, 2014; Wacquant, 2001). They have high levels of contact with law enforcement and the United States justice system through the courts, incarceration and recidivism (Executive Office of The President of the United States, 2016; Clear, 2009).

The U.S. justice system disproportionately affects communities of color and researchers have found that harsher and longer prison sentences have been given to individuals of color, especially African American males, for the same crimes committed by other races (Clear, 2009; Wacquant, 2001; The Justice Lab, 2018; Alexander, 2010; Bazelon, 2019). In communities of color, because of over policing, longer sentences, mandatory sentences and truth-in-sentencing laws, vulnerable families are under financial duress and many times children are placed in the foster care system and

parental rights are severed adding to the dysfunction (Bazelon, 2019; La Vigne et al., 2003). These circumstances bring about prison cycling exacerbate and wear away community cohesion, social inclusion and social networking (Clear, 2009; Rose et al., 2001; Clear et al., 2014).

3.2. Sustainability and the Social Justice Systems

Social justice requires a change in the process of individual human decision-making regarding diversity and inclusion and a shift in societal judgment to bring about equity and fairness, the equal rights to opportunities and access (Summers & Smith, 2014). Correspondingly, social equity "within an urban context is related to social and environmental exclusion" (Dempsey et al., 2009). Many of those who are considered privileged perceive others also having privilege as a threat to their lifestyles and their ability to control situations and meet their personal objectives (Campbell, 2013; Pulido, 2000). The future depends on a more diverse group of actors and communities pulling together to forge a new, intra- and intergenerational, sustainable existence (Golub et al., 2013; Campbell, 2013). Furthermore, the question of who should be involved in sustainability efforts seemingly has an obvious answer, although most of the poor marginalized population are left out of decision-making, as well as sustainability efforts (Robinson, 2004; Summers & Smith, 2014; Long, 2016). Moreover, the lack of effort to reach low income communities has gone relatively unnoticed. Accordingly, this population lives with the consequences of inaction on unaddressed sustainability issues and irresponsible, burdensome environmental policy decisions in their communities daily (Summers & Smith, 2014). Hence, the challenge to include more individuals to live sustainability and consider sustainability problems as urgent has proven to be an

arduous task. To our knowledge, there has been no discourse or literature that establishes those on the "bottom of the pyramid" are disposable (Prahalad & Hart, 2004). Therefore, postponing or ignoring the urgent need of sustainable behavior by all will further thrust communities and nations into increasingly perilous situations with a possible outcome of war over natural resources such as water (Franco et al., 2013).

4. Sustainability Systems-Based Approach and Wicked, Persistent Problems

A sustainability systems-based approach to social issues is required today to address wicked, persistent problems and the ability to look beyond short-term events thinking (e.g., major floods, hurricanes, tidal waves, etc.) and being reactionary. This must shift into being "truly proactive" and aware of the slow, gradual processes because it is now essential to do more than predict and react to an event (Senge, 1990). The ability to change our thinking and becoming more socially just requires that we pull back the veils that hide the interconnections and underlying problems and work to solve them. Jay Forrester in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), a renowned business book on systems-based thinking, states that "the causes of many pressing issues, from urban decay to global ecological decay, lay in the well-intentioned policies designed to alleviate them. These problems were "actually systems" policymakers focused on obvious symptoms not underlying causes" (Senge, 1990). Traditional ways of thinking must be questioned to allow for paradigm shifts to occur that better serve the complex and persistent problems of today.

Complex problems faced by communities should not be addressed as isolated individual communities because underlying problems are often missed in solving

complex issues (Figure 1). Individuals must understand how by their actions or inaction they are contributing to and creating the conditions that result in instability. "The nature of structure in human systems is subtle because we are part of the structure. This means that we often have the power to alter structures within which we are operating. However, more often than not, we do not perceive that power. In fact, we usually don't see the structures at play much at all" (Senge, 1990). Hence, a paradigm shift that allows us to see the structures and interlinking systems more accurately would be beneficial and usher in innovative ideas, new insight, a new wave of individual responsibility and collective learning to address pressing sustainability issues.

Figure 1. Unsustainable Economic and Community System for the Distribution of Resources and Labor.

Accordingly, it is time to reconsider the impact of the U.S. systems, laws, policies, restrictions and regulations and look through a sustainability systems lens, as has been done with environmental and economic problems, to see what obstacles are prohibiting those in the most danger of hazardous occurrences. This is a crucial step in the sustainability process. Similarly, to the problems in the carbon cycle in which shellfish on the east coast of the United States were affected by wild fires on the west coast, a

wide, systems-based sustainability lens was used to look at connecting systems to discover the answers to why the shell fish were dying.

Going forward, there is a need to look at poor, marginalized communities in danger of the most catastrophic environmental hazards to see what external systems are obstructing their ability to become sustainable communities. Previously, these communities have been viewed from siloed perspectives (Pearson et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2018). However, with a sustainability lens interlinking systems can be examined for impacts and blockages. The most devastating systems linked to these communities and families (e.g., justice system, prison-industrial complex, foster care system) wear away at the fabric of social cohesion which is necessary to be resilient and allow for robust participation in sustainable behaviors. Thus, paths need to be created for new participants in the fight for sustainability including the multitudes suffering the burden of past, unprincipled decisions made by a relative few to improve the quality of life for a predetermined segment of society (Figure 1).

What occurs in one community affects others in several ways, some ways not obvious from a siloed viewpoint. Although from a systems-based approach, circumstances look very different. Hence, the difference is looking through a narrow lens at a community and seeing the results of impacts from external forces. Juxtapose this to looking through a sustainability wide lens and seeing dynamic interlinking systems. This is not new to traditional western science, indigenous knowledge, nor to sustainability science; nevertheless, it is a paradigm shift when it comes to social sustainability. Examination of connecting systems that have major negative impacts on a community gives a broader look at a problem and the discovery that there are obstructions to

sustainability, a precursor to reaching and maintaining an acceptable level of sustainable living. Knowing a problem is larger than expected is important in finding the most efficient and effective approach(s) to the solution.

Sustainable Cities and Communities Facing Real Problems

Much of sustainability discourse revolves around urban areas, city waste, energy, recycling, greening, walking and bike paths. By 2030, most people are estimated to live in cities (Dempsey et al., 2009). Within cities, there are communities with differing cultural and income levels, so there is a focus on developing future communities that are sustainable and able to absorb the influx of new residents while staying within the limits of the environment. There are varying definitions of a sustainable community. Dempsey et al. (2011) state the approach to future sustainable communities as being equitable and inclusive places where people in the present and in the future want to live and work because they are safe, have good services and offer a high quality life. These communities are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The authors acknowledge that in the future most people will be living in cities, so this definition is in an urban planning context. This idea of sustainable communities and cities being "where people want to live" is a recurring theme in the literature (Woodcraft, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009). This definition and idea affect policy, decision-making, access to resources and planning of communities and cities—the built environment.

Burrowing deeper into the definition of sustainable communities and actually seeing what items or social dimensions are included in that vision of a safe community with good services and high quality of life, some factors mentioned are walkable and cyclable neighborhoods, clean with decent and affordable housing, access to employment

and public transportation, local services and green spaces, residential stability, community involvement, cohesion and order, education and job training, participation and local democracy, health and wellbeing, a sense of community and belonging and positive social inclusion and social capital (Murphy, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009). This socially sustainable community, "combines design of the physical environment with a focus on how the people who live in and use a space relate to each other and function as a community" (Woodcraft, 2012). This vision presents a thought-provoking interpretation of social equity for planning purposes and it offers metrics for a sustainable community. The question is, "Can this be achieved for all?"

Some researchers assert based on their findings that there is "a need to include everyday injustice in both the academic and applied field of environmental justice" to adequately incorporate environmental justice concerns into sustainability initiatives (Hornik et al., 2016). This means that on a local community level, not just citywide, "everyday experience of the built environment" is extremely important to reaching sustainability (Dempsey et al., 2009).

Sustainable cities use indicators that are governed by city policy and ordinances. Thereby, they are not inclusive of all the requirements essential for developing and maintaining sustainable communities. The city policies broadly address sustainability issues and more narrowly focus on government properties and facilities (Johnston, Nicholas, Parzen, 2013). Some scholars have argued that it is important to move away from definitions and principles to having working definitions and indicators of sustainability (Agyeman, 2008). The discussion of sustainable communities has focused

most often on the built environments, "places where people want to live" (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). Businesses have developed a triple bottom-line assessment to consider ecological, social and economic effects (Gibson, 2006). In the pursuit of sustainability, bottom-up sustainability assessments have emerged expressing public concerns which prioritize "livelihoods, safety and health, vibrant and attractive communities, new opportunities and influence on decisions. None of these is a purely social, economic or ecological matter" (Gibson, 2006). This ideal version of sustainability is from a privileged position (Campbell, 2013; Dempsey et al., 2009; Long, 2016).

5. Transforming Communities, Inclusiveness and Participation

Transforming communities into this conceptual vision in the United States and elsewhere is a difficult challenge without engaging a much larger portion of the population into being and living sustainably (Robinson, 2004). Engaging poor, marginalized unsustainable communities will require that their present and immediate circumstances be acknowledged and addressed in a constructive and meaningful manner which would increase their intra-and intergenerational equity (Summers & Smith, 2014; Long, 2016). Increasing participation in sustainability efforts "can enhance social inclusion, increases public engagement, social cohesion and social sustainability" (Murphy, 2012). In the past and presently, well-meaning communities seeking to be sustainable have shipped to waste sites and landfills in low-income and poor communities in the global north and south and this harmful action has resulted in environmental injustice and health issues in other communities and countries (Pulido, 2000; Long, 2016).

Moving forward, now that we understand systems and that everything is connected, we know sustainable communities presently offer a false sense of safety and protection from environmental hazards. Therefore, future research, planning and policies will need to take into account neighboring and distant vulnerable communities ' status and ability to become environmentally and economically healthy, resilient and sustainable. The new reality is that major environmental events happening hundreds of miles away or a much shorter distance of two blocks away can negatively affect even a newly developed sustainable community. Accordingly, and unfortunately, the amount of recycling, reducing, reusing and refusing, at this point in time, will not protect these communities identified as "sustainable communities" from environmental hazards that start in distant or near unsustainable communities.

Community, Social Mobility and Sustainability

A community is a system that is part of a larger interlinking system of communities and related systems that should serve the need of a community and its residents. It is difficult in certain circumstances to move from one community to another. An individual's ability to gain social mobility depends a great deal on the person's zip code, the community where she/he was born and raised (Sanchez et al., 2015). Not all communities are alike: Individuals born in poor communities are often trapped in circumstances and systems beyond their control (Clear, 2009; Clear et al., 2014). Poor marginalized communities often lack access to adequate public services (e.g., sanitation, clean water), transportation, affordable housing, fresh foods, quality education, healthcare, employment opportunities and adequate green spaces. Within

their physical living environments, what is visible are signs of infrastructure degradation, vacant lots, lack of greenery, boarded-up buildings, fast food restaurants, corner and liquor stores and businesses not owned by residents of the community (Clear, 2009; Agyeman & Evans, 2004).

What is apparent is that important aspects of sustainable communities such as social inclusiveness (consistent community participation), social cohesiveness (participation in traditional/established networks) and social equity (participation in democratic processes) (Woodcraft, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009) are missing in these poor and marginalized communities into which formerly incarcerated individuals are making their re-entries and attempting to embed themselves again. Additionally, the present indexes on health, happiness and wellbeing do not offer the needed information, viewpoint or direction for helping unsustainable communities to become sustainable. Our research builds upon current sustainable community literature on development of tools and indicators of sustainability (Dempsey et al., 2009) rather than on more precise definitions for sustainable development and sustainable communities. These indicators (e.g., health, housing, safety, etc.) are being used to measure, inform and change sustainability goals into specific actions that need to be taken (Woodcraft, 2012; Bacon et al., 2014). Sustainable communities 'literature also includes characteristics listed in Table 1. In vulnerable communities with high rates of forced mobility, many of these characteristics are inaccessible, unattainable or not a high priority. They are also not considered significant to institutional decision makers (policymakers, judges, prosecutors, wardens, parole boards, business executives and others) for the purpose of determining incarceration, community reentry or recidivism decisions. Thus, the ability

to study their considerations of the sustainable communities' characteristics listed (Table 1) in their decisions is not possible.

Table 1. Sustainable Communities Characteristics.

Quality of Life: Friendly and welcoming Culturally inclusive and diverse Clean, safe, environmentally healthy Neighborhood and professional networks Affordable housing, excellent schools, green spaces Health and dental care in the neighborhood
Sustainable Practices: Efficiently using energy, water and other natural resources Minimize waste, compost, recycle, reduce, repurpose and reuse
Economics: Flourishing businesses and retail shops Restaurants and grocery stores (with fresh foods)
Mobility: Adequate transportation Walking and bike paths
Community Improvement: Community investment (e.g., grants, loans) Development with community involvement and decision-making Community innovations and upgrades without displacement and gentrification

The U.S. public school system is another system that impacts poor, marginalized communities in a major way. The policies of zero tolerance, strictly enforced codes of conduct, police involvement and juvenile detention have caused a school-to-prison pipeline which disproportionately affects the lives of disadvantaged children (Mallett, 2017; Skiba et al., 2011) and their families. It has been found that the introduction of the

criminal justice system at an early age is detrimental to children's future livelihoods by increasing their risk of poor academic outcomes and a greater chance of later interactions with the U.S. criminal justice system (Mallett, 2017; Skiba et al., 2011). Although the school system is an important characteristic in Sustainable Communities (Table 1), this article does not delve deeply into this system, but it is worth noting, because it contributes to the flow of poor, marginalized individuals into the U.S. criminal justice system.

6. A System-of-Communities Framework

As individual communities participate in sustainable activities, it is important to recognize that a concerted effort from systems-of-communities is needed to make a huge difference in realizing sustainability. This participation can only happen if the individual communities have the capacity to become sustainable. If they do not, then building the capacity is the first step toward sustainability. Because social cohesion, inclusion and equity play a large part in building community capacity, it is important to find out what the circumstances are that are prohibiting these from happening. Community health and networking ability are the building blocks for a strong community economy and environment.

A breakdown in a community's health, economic opportunities and resiliency limits the capacity of residents living in the community (Wiek et al., 2015) and also pulls the system-of-communities in a downward trajectory and limits the system-of-community's ability to reach a sustainable level. Most examinations of a community are seen as snapshot version of the community. They do not consider the dynamic qualities taking place in and through the community. An examination using a wide lens

sustainability perspective, therefore, is needed to observe external interlinkages of systems and their impacts on the system-of-communities (Figure 2).

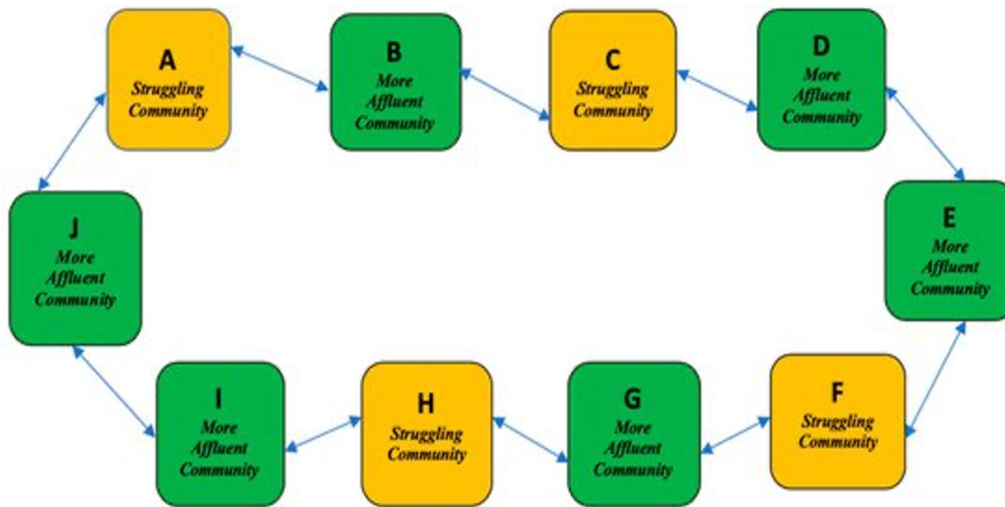

Figure 2. System-of-Communities Model.

The system-of-community framework can provide the leverage needed to increase overall participation, better understanding and a higher degree of effort in reaching sustainability levels. Sustainable communities need to be addressed as a part of an interlinking community system. They are not a separate or siloed community that can survive alone in a connected world. Environmental decision-making must be opened to more public participation especially from those who are disproportionately affected by environmental challenges in their communities (Pearson et al., 2018). Unsustainable communities weaken the whole system because the communities in the system are interdependent. Therefore, this system-of-communities model is a more holistic way of

seeing and understanding the connections. The system-of-communities is more intricate and complex than many understand. Each community is interlinked with and effected by the other communities. A system-of-communities structure is one in which communities within a relatively close proximity, often sharing cross streets or borders, network, collaborate (not excluding any stakeholder in decision making) and act to achieve a greater degree of sustainability across a larger area. As a system, one community cannot achieve real sustainability without the others also being sustainable (Figure 3).

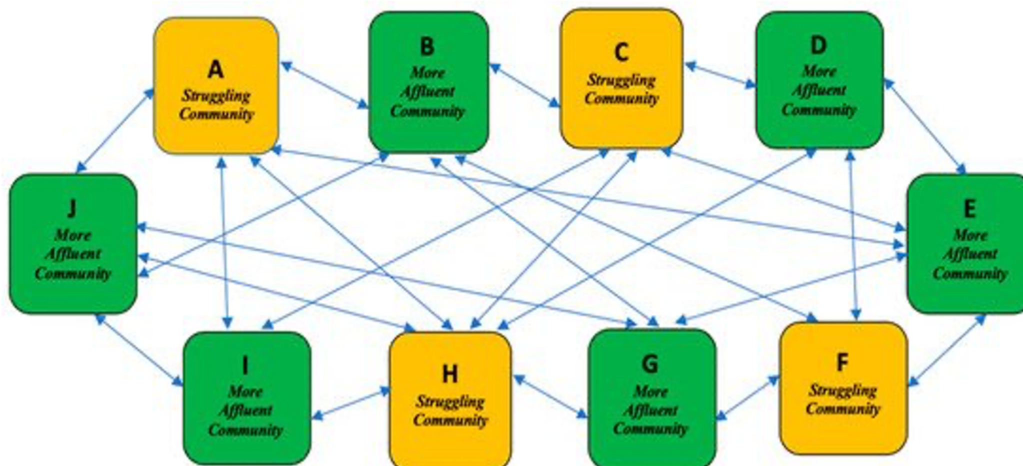

Figure 3. System-of-Communities Model.

With this being the case, when a sustainability lens is used to look at poor, marginalized communities of color with high incarceration and recidivism rates, the impact of the United States justice system, the foster care and prison-industrial complex systems can be observed (Figure 4). Also, what is observed through a sustainability lens

is the way in which these systems interlink with other communities creating an intricate web that traps poor marginalized communities and the individuals that live there, so the ability to build capacity and to become sustainable is restricted.

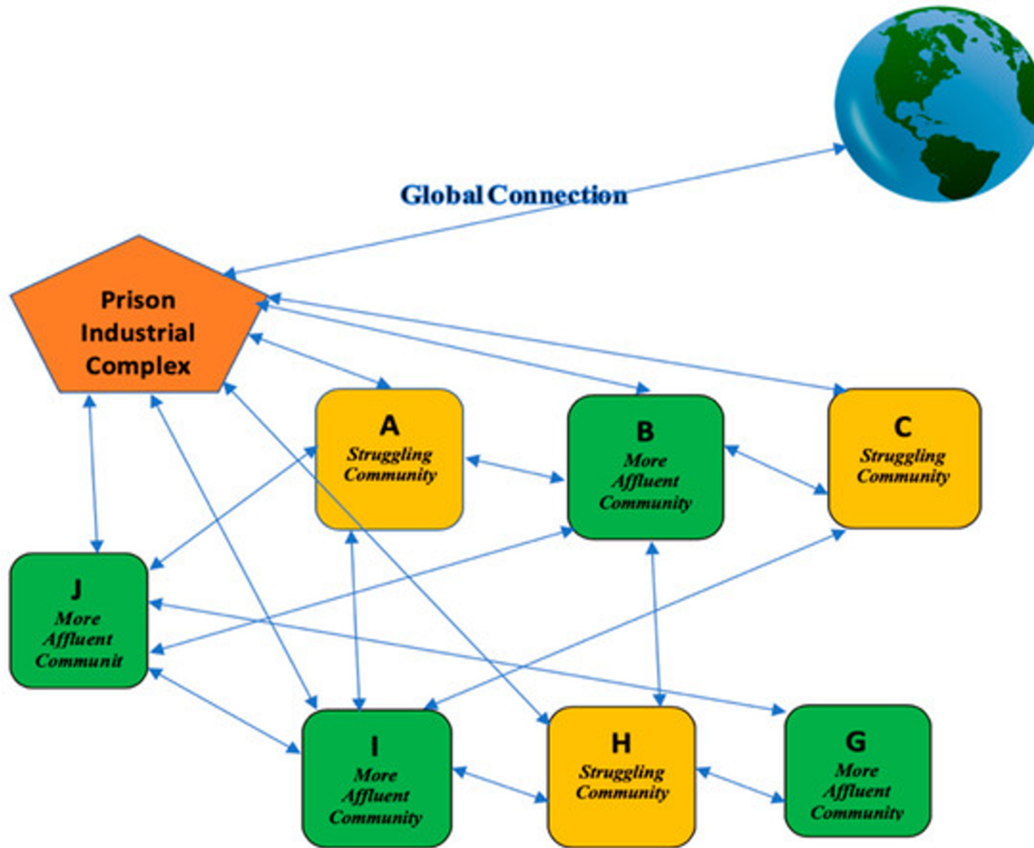

Figure 4. Prison-Industrial Complex's Effect on System-of-Communities.

7. U.S. Criminal Justice, Prison-Industrial Complex and Foster Care Systems

The United States is home to the world's largest prison population, although it has less than 5% (2019) (actual 4.3%) percent of the world's population. Mass incarceration in the United States has had a devastating effect on marginalized, communities of color [Clear, 2003; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). Although African

Americans are only 12% of the total population and Hispanics/Latinos are 16%, as of 2016, they are overrepresented in prison, 33% and 23% respectively, according to the Pews Research Center (2018). Due to the war on drugs, mandatory sentencing, truth-in-sentencing and three-strikes laws, the corrections population has, over the last 40 years, risen to more than 6 million people, a 500 percent increase with 2.2 million (2010) incarcerated (Cummings, 2012, Sentencing Project, 2018]. Four out of five arrests were for drug possession. Trillions have been spent on the war on drugs, yet drug use has not decreased. While white Americans have been found to use most kinds of drugs more than African Americans, they are arrested, convicted and incarcerated less (Clear, 2003; Alexander, 2010; Bazelon, 2019).

Indigenous peoples, according to the United States Census (2017), are 2.09% of the total population. Tribes have 334 federal- and state-recognized reservations in the United States (Perry & de Beus, 2017; Tighe, 2017; Wodahl & Freng, 2017). Tribal members living on reservations have tribal courts and for more serious crimes are charged and convicted in federal courts. They serve sentences that are often longer than sentences served in state prisons. Native Americans and Alaska Natives together are 2.0% of the federal offenders population, according to the 2013 United States Sentencing Commission (Perry & de Beus, 2017). In 2014, a Center for Disease Control report concluded that data from 1999–2015 showed that although the relative number of the indigenous population is small, they have been killed by law enforcement at a higher percentage rate than other people of color (International Human Rights Clinic, 2017). Although indigenous communities (tribal lands) are not the main focus of this paper, this exemplifies the need for more research in this area.

The over policing in communities of color and the targeted profiling traffic stops of people of color across the United States has resulted in the disproportionate arresting, imprisoning, and therefore, the labeling of a huge numbers of individuals “felons” in these communities. Thousands of ex-offenders are returning home weekly. Most were convicted of non-violent crimes. There are city blocks known as “million dollar blocks” because there are so many people incarcerated, on probation or parole (Harding et al., 2013). Consequently, poor marginalized communities are quite familiar with having neighbors, relatives and friends incarcerated. In some communities, they are so familiar with the process that it has become known as a “rite of passage” (Clear, 2009). They know intimately the daily struggles that arise from consequences of this circumstance (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Criminal Justice System Connections and Influencers.

Incarceration is a traumatic experience not only for those individuals sentenced to prison, but also for their families, communities and society (Clear, 2009; Bazelon, 2019). As of 2014, 2.7 million children were estimated to have a parent incarcerated (Western & Pettit, 2010; Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet, 2014). Over 60% of prisoners are held in prison towns over 100 miles from their homes are usually located hours away from airports and easy access (Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet, 2014). Fifteen to twenty percent of children in the child welfare system have incarcerated parents (Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet, 2014). The rate of women incarcerated is increasing; therefore, the rate of children held in this system is also rising. Young African American males, one in nine, aged 20–34 are especially vulnerable to imprisonment [Clear, 2009). "One third of black men have felony convictions" according to Sarah Shannon's estimate in the study "Growth in the U.S. Ex-felon and Ex-Prisoner Population, 1948 to 2010" (Shannon et al., 2016). The U.S. Sentencing Commission 2017 study found that "African American men serve prison sentences that are on average 20% longer than those served by white men for similar crimes" (Alexander, 2010; Bazelon, 2019; Williams, 2007).

The experience of incarceration is life changing for most inmates, emotionally disruptive and can be physically upsetting (Aday & Farney, 2014). This is a time when life skills, close relationships and building new families are developed. In prison, these interrelationships and skills remain underdeveloped which means when prisoners are released, it is problematic for them, their families and communities. Furthermore, this situation makes it difficult for networking to take place which is needed for developing

and increasing a community's social capital (Clear, 2009; Williams, 2007). The ability to build human capital is limited by incarceration and in looking for and finding a mate this capital is important to the emotional and financial stability of future unions and families (Clear, 2009). Most individuals (95%) return to their communities after being released from prison (DeVeaux, 2013; The National Academy, 2014.). They have difficulty reintegrating back into their communities and society especially if they have been incarcerated for several years. The trauma of incarceration is immense for individuals. "The experience of being locked in a cage has a psychological effect upon everyone made to endure it. No one leaves unscarred" (DeVeaux, 2013).

> "I received my prison number and the process of institutionalization began. Getting my number was a memorable event. The number was how I would be identified from that day forward. It was my number that was shouted over PA systems when I was being summoned. If mail was sent to me but did not include my number, it was returned. I no longer existed. I no longer had a name worth remembering. I had become Inmate 79A2747. This numbering was part of the process to strip me of my humanity, my dignity and my self-respect. And it was hard getting used to being identified that way" (DeVeaux, 2013).

These quotes give a sense of the state of mind inmates experience, feelings of invisibility, frustration and hopelessness, but they are not the only victims of incarceration. The trauma of incarceration destabilizes and can break family relationships, community trust and networks (Harding et al., 2013; Clear, 2009; Rose, et al., 2001; Uggen et al., 2016; Williams, 2007; Arditti, 2013). The breakdown in relationships damages and destroys networks and safety nets that are most valuable in

times when families and communities are in distress. The system-of-communities framework could be developed so it is in part a backup support system used to brace, even temporarily, those in need. Family, friends and community members often experience a social grief similar to experiencing a death when a family member is incarcerated (Arditti, 2013; Travis et al., 2005). Family members feel stigmatized and "are often treated as 'guilty by association.'" The financial burden and economic hardship is great on poor families and many married couples divorce (Clear, 2009; Rose et al., 2001; Arditti, 2013). Additionally, physical and mental healthcare in prisons is limited with inmates having to pay co-pays to see a doctor and in some cases, receive a prescription. Some inmates, especially older adults, do not have the money to pay, so they bring untreated medical issues, illnesses and diseases back to their communities (Williams, 2007; DeVeaux, 2013). Emotional traumas and mental health issues like depression are often not diagnosed or addressed. Women's healthcare experiences are more challenging than that of males and the prison medical system was set up for males and in many ways has not changed to accommodate women's health issues (Aday & Farney, 2014). Medical costs and other fees, for example toiletries or legal fees, are frequently charges that are not paid before an inmate leaves prison. If not paid, these fees may be why the formerly incarcerated individual is re-incarcerated. If they cannot find employment and pay the fees, they may be rearrested and sent back to jail (Bazelon, 2019).

Prisons, the majority of time, are intentionally situated outside of urban areas in rural towns. Many prisoners often serve their sentences in other states (e.g., Hawaiian inmates may serve their time in Arizona). Thus, their children, spouses/partners, other

relatives and friends cannot visit them. The financial expense, time and stress of visiting is prohibitive which damages family relationships and community cohesiveness (Executive Office of The President of the United States, 2016). When they are able to visit, the corrections system and process is unwelcoming and an unfriendly situation for children (Arditti, 2003). Some prisons require strip searches of visitors. Due to the change in family dynamics, the parent left with the children may have to take on other jobs while the person is incarcerated, leaving the children unattended or unsupervised (Clear, 2009). Single mothers incarcerated often have their parental rights removed and the children are placed in the foster care system (Travis, 2003; Arditti, 2012). Most children removed are 7 years old or older. Families with fathers that are incarcerated often end up homeless because the father is the main wage-earner (Executive Office of The President of the United States, 2016). Hence, the U.S. justice and the prison-industrial complex systems are systems that have a tremendous negative impact on poor, marginalized families and communities. Although the U.S. justice and the prison-industrial complex systems are lucrative for those corporations, cities, towns and individuals whom benefit directly or indirectly, poor, marginalized communities are often powerless, without political and financial clout, to successfully challenge these huge systems. A system-of-communities framework offers a more diverse, inclusive, influential and supportive structure to challenge the status quo, injustices and hardships created by the present criminal justice, prison-industrial complex and foster care systems.

7.1. Children with Incarcerated Parents

Children with an incarcerated parent(s) experience several emotions because of their loss and "disenfranchised grief," grief that cannot be shared or acknowledged publicly (Arditti, 2012; Christian, 2009). These children are traumatized by being separated from an incarcerated parent, visiting a correctional facility, release and reintegration (Travis, 2005). They often feel anxiety, fear, guilt, sadness, anger, loneliness and some exhibit withdrawal or disruptive behavior (Clear, 2009; Christian, 2009). The fact that their parent(s) is in prison increases the risk of the child being imprisoned later in life by twenty-five percent (Osgood et al., 2005). Furthermore, during primary through high school, no-tolerance disciplinary policies and regulations, enforced in marginalized communities, has created the school-to-prison pipeline. In instances where children previously were sent to the principal's office or to detention for bad behavior, they now are taken by the police to jail creating an early introduction to the criminal justice system. Researchers have found that contact with the criminal justice system at an young age increases a child's likelihood of later being incarcerated (Western & Pettit, 2010; Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet, 2014). Almost "half of the total population of U.S. children have at least one parent who has a criminal record" (Alexander, 2010). Consequently, the wellbeing of these children and the future wellbeing of society are inextricably bound (Christian, 2009).

7.2. Foster Care System

Children are legally separated from their parents because of parental incarceration depending on the state where they live and their age in as little 15 of 22

months (Travis, 2002; Arditti, 2012). With those convicted of crimes and receiving longer sentences due to tough on crime laws and the rise of women prisoners, more children are entering the foster care system. Foster parents receive at least three times the financial resources to take children into their homes than relatives of the children. Grandmothers most often are the relatives that take in and become the caregivers to the children when the mothers of the children are incarcerated. This is difficult for those on limited budgets and older in age. Caregivers are not obligated to take the children for visits with their incarcerated parents. Many children in the foster care system are moved from a home placement several times until they age out of the system, most at the age of 18 years (Osgood et al., 2005). Many are less likely to have completed high school and more likely than their peers to become homeless, pregnant and/or unemployed often resorting to criminal behavior to survive and ending up in the United States criminal justice system. These young adults are not prepared to live independently (Osgood et al., 2005).

8. Prison-Industrial Complex Systems

8.1. Prison Towns

It is also important to understand the connection between the marginalized home communities of inmates, rural prison towns and big business during this period of mass incarceration. Over the last 30 years, during the prison construction boom, most prisons were built in rural areas (Ebenstein, 2019). Every 10 years, there is a U. S. Census bureau count, where every person in the United States is counted and, because of mass incarceration, there has been a shift in political power for communities due to prison gerrymandering (Ebenstein, 2019). This means that although prisoners cannot vote, they

are counted in the districts where they sleep. The rural prison towns, predominantly white, increase their voting power and congressional representation, while the home communities of the 2.2 million prisoners, suffer the loss of government representation and federal funding for infrastructure, healthcare, job-training and education as a consequence of prison gerrymandering (Ebenstein, 2019).

Upon release, formerly incarcerated individuals who have paid their debt to society, live with the ongoing consequences related to their convictions and incarceration (Jonson & Cullen, 2015). Removal of parental rights are often a byproduct of incarceration. Some of these individuals have their pensions and property rights dissolved. There are 6.1 million people unable to vote in America due to felony convictions (Alexander, 2010; Travis, 2005). Marginalized communities with a large number of individuals that have had their right to vote revoked do not have the power to make changes or stop actions from happening within their own communities. The removal of voting and jury rights prohibits their representation in decision-making at the local, city, state or federal level which adds to social inequity.

The stigma of the felony label has lifelong consequences (Shannon et al., 2016; Jonson & Cullen, 2015). When formerly incarcerated citizens arrive home with a felony record, not only has their right to vote been permanently taken away (12 states), they are faced with legally mandated restrictions on housing, employment, healthcare and public benefits and services like food assistance and federal aid for education (Bazelon, 2019). The risk is high that a person labeled a "felon" will not be able to get a job, find housing or be able to purchase healthy food on a regular basis. Without a decent job, they have difficulty paying for necessities like clothing and basic toiletries. Accordingly, because of

the stigma of a felony record, a sketchy work record, low education and possibly a drug or mental health problem, it is extremely challenging for the formally incarcerated, therefore many are jobless, homeless, living on the street and hungry (Executive Office of The President of the United States, 2016; Shannon et al., 2016].

Reentry and social reintegration of this vulnerable population into already struggling families and overwhelmed poor marginalized communities is an extremely challenging and harrowing experience. Recidivism for the first year after release is 43%, the second year 59.5%, 67.8% the third year and over the next two years another 10% (Shannon et al., 2016; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Prison cycling takes a tremendous toll on poor marginalized communities (Clear, 2014; Williams, 2007). Consequently, marginalized communities effected by mass incarceration are fragile and unsustainable. Therefore, they do not have the capacity to become sustainable. Moreover, public health is put at risk when prisoners are released and return to their home communities with illnesses and diseases that spread to family and community members. Many of the prisoners have spent time in solitary confinement which researchers have discovered to have detrimental psychological effects (Williams, 2007; DeVeaux, 2013).

8.2. System Links to Poor and Marginalized Communities

A system-of-communities could be designed to be a second line of defense, to act as a safety net, for a vulnerable community against incarceration, reentry and reintegration hardships. This way, the actions and progress toward a community's sustainability are not jeopardized or stifled and stability within the larger system-of-communities remains intact. In the United States, for poor marginalized communities to become sustainable, there needs to be less focus on short-term profits and more focus on

longer-term investments that are collaborative efforts, providing opportunities and empowerment across communities. The system-of-communities is not a top-down government approach nor a grassroots bottom-up individual community approach to sustainability. It is a middle-ground alliance, a system-of-communities approach that stands in the gap between top-down and bottom-up. Its foundation is based on the understanding of the interconnectedness between communities, building relationships and new networks, inclusive and collaborative decision-making, the power of collective responsibility (action) and the concern for the earth's limitations.

The present systems in place in the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals, their families and communities weigh down hard on their ability to overcome their life's challenges, stresses and realities (The Justice Lab, 2018; The National Academy, 2014; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; McGarry et al., 2013). These systems are not concerned with the ability of vulnerable populations to become sustainable communities. Most released prisoners succumb to the crushing reality of their circumstances. That is why the reentry process is pivotal to their successful transition to home and community. For this population to become sustainable, it will first take a thorough systems-based examination of the links attached to poor, marginalized communities. The following questions need to be asked at each intersection: Are the systems in line with sustainability principles? In what ways are these links detrimental to or encouraging sustainability and sustainable communities?

Currently, for example, because of overcrowding in the prisons there is a move to reduce incarcerated individuals by utilizing electronic monitoring devices for those serving probation, parole or supervised release. This device is worn on the leg of those

released under these circumstances. This electronic prison impinges on the whole family (The Justice Lab, 2018; McGarry et al., 2013; Kilgore, Sanders & Hayes, 2017; Harding et al., 2017). It contributes to the social exclusion and isolation of community members. It submits families to unannounced visits and searches by corrections officers. The devices regulate where and when an individual can go to a location and what locations or areas are forbidden (Harding et al., 2017). This situation creates financial (fines and fees) and logistical problems (e.g., finding employment) and increases family stress. Technical violations related to these devices and monitoring issues often ends in the individual being rearrested and incarcerated (McGarry et al., 2013; Kilgore et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2017).

Through electronic monitoring, community surveillance and corrections, the U.S. justice system has increased social control in poor, marginalized communities resulting in the system itself being a large contributor to the problems of prison cycling and mass incarceration (Wacquant, 2001; Kilgore et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2017). These communities have been made to take on some of the attributes of prisons (Wacquant, 2001; The Justice Lab, 2018). The disruption caused by the constant surveillance and supervision has become alarming and the wellbeing of families and poor, marginalized communities has been put more at risk (The Justice Lab, 2018; McGarry et al., 2013; Kilgore et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2017). Here the question must be asked: Is the use of electronic monitoring, community surveillance and corrections in poor, marginalized communities detrimental to building sustainable communities? This would be an issue better addressed through a systems-based lens by a system-of-communities than an individual community.

The laws, policies, regulations and restrictions for the U.S. criminal justice system and the principles of business are not in sync with and in some respects conflict with, building sustainable communities. The U.S. justice system disproportionately affects historically disadvantaged populations and the impact of forced mobility in particular from these poor home communities and families is a tremendous burden and jeopardizes their ability to become sustainable (Clear, 2014). Mass incarceration was deemed a policy failure in the National Research Council report (The National Academy, 2014) and once a person, an adult or juvenile, is caught in the U.S. criminal justice system, it is very difficult to get out (Figure 5). It is understandable from a systems-based approach.

From the very beginning, the system works against poor people of color in many ways (Figure 6) (Bazelon, 2019; Kilgore et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2017). More officers are assigned to patrol these communities using questionable tactics (e.g., stop and frisk), therefore, more arrests are made in these neighborhoods. When taken into court, the bail system works against poor people who do not have money to pay cash bails assigned by a judge (Bennett et al., 2018; Billings, 2016; Brunt & Bowman, 2019). The bail is set and most often poor people do not have the money to pay it, so these "not guilty" individuals are placed in prison until their court dates which could be weeks and even months away (Bazelon, 2019; Brunt & Bowman, 2019; McArthur & Peters, 2019). In the meantime, they lose their jobs, cannot pay their bills or take care of their families. If they are able to pay bail, there is a 10% non-refundable fee required by the bail companies (Bazelon, 2019). The criminal justice bail system, a part of the prison-industrial complex, makes millions of dollars from bail money paid by poor individuals from poor communities.

The prison-industrial complex is comprised of over 3100 businesses and financial market investors making a profit of over $1.8 billion (not including private prisons) from high incarceration and recidivism (Cummings, 2012; McArthur & Peters, 2018; Thompson, 2015, Unger, 2017; Chang, 2002).

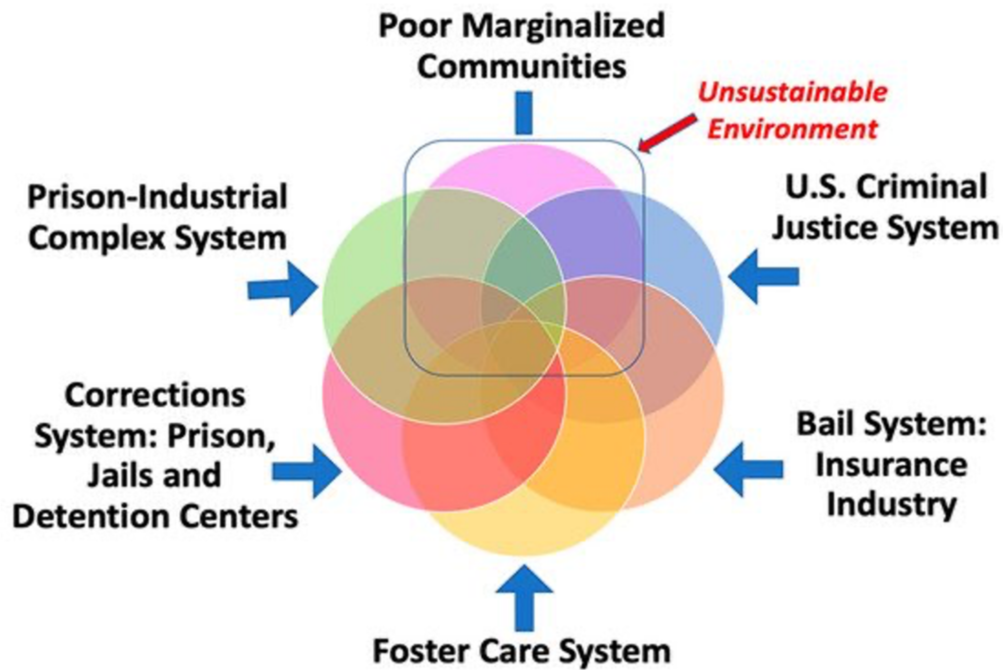

Figure 6. Systems 'Catastrophic Impact on Poor Marginalized Communities.

8.3. Cash Bail System

The for-profit bail bonds system is a $2 billion industry (Unger, 2017). The U.S. justice system works with the bail bonds industry in the following way. Individuals in the U.S. court system are considered innocent until proven guilty. They are allowed to pay a cash bail. or they are remanded to jail until their court date. Those unable to afford 10% of the bail set by the court must wait in jail for a court date (Brunt & Bowman, 2019). Unfortunately, innocent poor people can be forced to stay in jail waiting for weeks to

months (Figure 6) (Billings, 2016; Chang, 2002; Allen et al., 2016). Individuals charged with an offense who cannot retain a private lawyer are assigned a public defender to handle their case (Bazelon, 2019). If the person is found guilty, they must pay a fee for having a public defender. If the offenders are not given prison time, but are fined, they can arrange installment payments to pay off the debt (Bazelon, 2019). If they miss or are late on a payment, a warrant is put out for their arrest. A team of police officers are sent to their residence to re-arrest them. Sometimes, their driver's licenses are suspended, so they are unable to get to work. This hampers those individuals who have to work 2–3 part-time jobs to try and make ends meet. Most poor people charged with a crime take a plea bargain presented by the public prosecutor (Bazelon, 2019). Over 90% of cases do not go to trial. The prosecutor has a great deal of power in the court system because the prosecutor determines who will be charged and for what crime (e.g., a misdemeanor or felony) (Bazelon, 2019). Most often, poor people who have been convicted of a crime had been assigned a public defender with an overloaded work schedule or a pro bono lawyer who had not defended a case like theirs previously. Forty-three states charge inmates a fee to have a public defender.

If convicted of a crime and given probation and/or community service, poor individuals have to make choices that those with money available to pay fees and fines do not have to make (Reiman & Leighton, 2016). Being on probation and parole are considered under community supervision. As of 2014, 4.7 million people are under supervision and 82% of those are on probation (Kaeble et al., 2014). Probation, an alternative to incarceration, requires monthly fees and court costs. If a person misses a court date or paying monthly fees, they are arrested and incarcerated. Poor individuals,

therefore, often have to decide whether to pay the fees, rent, a utility bill or buy food for the family. They have to decide whether to do community service or lose their jobs. Many poor people have part-time jobs. Hence, losing their job(s) means taking care of their family is put at risk.

If convicted of a crime and sent to a prison, most prisoners are required to work sometimes without pay which is a law in some states (Halladay, 2019). Laws have changed over time to adjust to political changes and public attitudes of the period. For example, in the U.S., when the Emancipation Proclamation which ended slavery, was signed by President Lincoln, new laws, policies and regulations regarding freed slaves were put in place to keep the previous labor force and economy stable (Chang, 2002; Halladay, 2019; Anderson, 2016). Therefore, although slaves had been freed, new laws were enforced in which the newly freed slaves were now arrested and sentenced to prison for loitering or not having a job. They often were sent back to their previous slave owners to work on the plantations they left to find a better life (Chang, 2002; Anderson, 2016). Today, the law requiring prisoners work remains intact, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Halladay, 2019). Most prisoners must do work within prison grounds (e.g., maintenance, laundry, gardening) and can be leased to other entities for a variety of jobs. Different states have different rules. Hence, some do not pay workers and others pay them as little as $0.23 to $1.15 an hour (Allen et al., 2016; Halladay, 2019). Deductions for child support, victim restitution and general fees (e.g., healthcare deductible, room and board, telephone calls, legal, etc.), are made by the corrections system (Allen et al., 2016; Reiman & Leighton, 2016; Halladay, 2019).

8.4. Prison-Industrial Complex

Today, the prison-industrial complex is a billion-dollar industry. It is a mixture of government and government businesses including the federal prison industries (FPI) and private businesses that make a profit on the incarceration and use cheap vulnerable prisoner labor to make a corporate profit. Corporations are in business to make a profit. Therefore, the principles of business relate most to employees, products, customers and investors. Keeping that in mind, prisoners with long sentences offer a low turnover rate. Training costs for inmates are also low due to having to serve longer sentences (Chang, 2002). Businesses ask two questions: What products and services will be produced? For whom and how will the company make a profit? Prisoners are paid little for their labor, therefore companies gain a competitive advantage. The products produced are for local, national and global companies to sell to consumers and other businesses (Figure 4).

The prison system has a federal government corporation, federal prison industry (FPI), also known as UNICOR, which began originally "to provide education and work experience" (Kane & Simpson, 2016; Sawyer & O'Connor, 2019). It was setup to be self-sustaining and it has grown to offer manufacturing and services across state lines. It is marketed presently as "Factories with a Fence," with an "Escape Proof Guarantee" on products and services and low personnel turnover rates (Chang, 2002; Kane & Simpson, 2016; Sawyer & O'Connor, 2019; Federal Prison Industries, 2018; UNICOR., 2019; UNICOR Services Business Group, 2019) all this while keeping society safer. The marketing pitch to businesses that manufacture overseas is to keep jobs in U.S.A.

Surprisingly, one never sees labels that say, “made in U.S.A. prison.” More than 100 items are produced by prisoners.

Prisoners produce furniture, lingerie, packaging, uniforms, mattresses, software, eye glasses, body armor, helmets, road signs, car parts, lamps, dentures, blue jeans, military electronics, processed meat solar panels, to name a few. They also do recycling work (Cummings, 2012; Chang, 2002; Kane & Simpson, 2016). There is agribusiness: Three farms where inmates work with dairy cows and beef cows. They make products for government entities and products for large brand-name stores like Ikea, Starbucks, Microsoft, Victoria Secret, McDonalds, Walmart, Boeing and more (Cummings, 2012). Prisons rent out prisoners to towns, cities and businesses to do construction and farm work, etc. There are call centers where inmates make outgoing sales calls for corporations. Prisoners are paid on average $0.40/hour. Some prisoners have been trained as firemen. They risk their lives for $2.00 a day alongside firefighters who are being paid $74,000. Firefighting prisoners who have served their sentences cannot be firemen outside the prison system because they have criminal records. These examples merely illustrate the institutionalized nature of the prison-industrial complex system. UNICOR emphasizes that these jobs keep jobs in America and give work experience and skills to inmates and lowers recidivism, but in the majority of cases, these jobs do not translate into work outside of prison (Chang, 2002). Many employers do not want to hire felons.

The private prison industry, with stocks and bonds traded on the global market, also have the privilege of leasing inmates to produce consumer goods (Cummings, 2012; Chang, 2002). The state-run prison system, like the private prisons, compete for

contracts against other businesses (The Justice Lab, 2018). The products made by prisoners in the 103 prison factories are used around the world by individuals in neighborhoods, homes and businesses (Chang, 2002). In private prisons, researchers have discovered that inmates serve longer sentences, relative to serving time in a state-run prison. The bottom line is that incarceration is not designed only to make society safer (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). When race, income and businesses are major components of incarceration and recidivism, there are other motivations at play that negate the principles of sustainability, sustainable communities and a sustainable world (Figure 6). Integrative assessments and indicators are needed to provide a baseline and measurements of progress toward sustainability for unsustainable, poor, marginalized communities faced with complex, persistent problems, underlying issues and barriers (e.g., prison cycling), that do not allow for them to build the capacity needed to become socially cohesive, stable and sustainable communities (Table 1).

9. Discussion and Conclusion

A clear understanding of complex problems relating to communities is necessary for developing effective and comprehensive sustainable solutions. As we look through a sustainability wide lens and from the system-of-communities perspective, we find the following circumstances: (1) There are unexpected connections between communities; (2) complex problems blocking sustainable practices must be addressed in order for marginalized communities to build capacity, social cohesion, social inclusion and social equity; (3) the economic sector and its practices, as they relate to prisons and prison populations, are deceptive and cloaked in secrecy, having a detrimental impact on poor marginalized communities; (4) government laws, policies, regulations, practices and

enforcement have a disproportionate and negative impact on the ability of poor marginalized communities to be sustainable; and (5) a higher level of trust must be built to increase the stability within a system-of-communities, so the system can rise up to levels appropriate for sustainable living for all involved. Although sustainability and sustainable activities cannot provide protection for an individual community, they are necessary activities for reaching a more sustainable future. Sustainability as a system-of communities activity offers a more powerful opportunity for political influence and a more accurate example of a "sustainable community."

A great deal of effort and money has been put forth to understand the urgency of complex environmental problems and move people to act in a more responsible way. Individuals in poor communities must have the ability to build capacity for sustainable activities and not have it impaired by systems with counterproductive motives that block or hinder efforts of communities to engage in sustainable activities. Sustainability and sustainable communities discourse needs to be inclusive of poor, marginalized communities and the sustainability problems they face. The present environmental and sustainability concepts do not examine social sustainability in a way that views individual communities as part of a system-of-communities. Additionally, they do not address the wicked and persistent "real world problem," of prison cycling that is so detrimental to families and communities. They do not effectively connect the environment and economy to social sustainability.

The system-of-communities conceptual framework connects these three components through examining communities through a sustainability wide lens perspective and unveiling interlinking systems. The system-of-communities must be

acknowledged for its power and scope of influence. Additionally, the system-of-communities framework can help establish the leverage needed to increase overall participation in sustainability efforts by increasing social inclusion and social cohesion. Also, by increasing the understanding of sustainability issues to more individuals and poor marginalized communities, a more robust effort can be made to reach sustainability levels. A shift in thinking is required, as well as understanding the part individuals and communities play in creating instability (Senge, 1990).

A system-of-communities can have major impacts on external interlinking systems causing changes that are substantial in creating more equitable, stable and sustainable communities. A system-of-communities would be more effective at addressing and working on solutions to complicated issues (e.g., whether electronic monitoring, community surveillance and corrections in poor, marginalized communities is detrimental to building sustainable communities) faced by poor, marginalized communities within their system. Future wide lens systems-based research needs to continue to be completed on the external (and embedded) systems and technology that affects the stability and sustainability efforts of poor marginalized communities.

It is naive and ill-advised for sustainability scientists, policymakers and others to ignore or neglect to recognize the interconnection and negative impact of the U.S. justice system, corrections system, foster care and prison-industrial complex systems on the system-of-communities and environment. These systems have exploited poor marginalized communities and, in turn, have created a web that creates barriers to sustainability and resulted in environmental degradation. Transformation to sustainable systems-of-communities will take time, but unveiling obstructions to sustainability in the

interlinking systems is the first step. Damage to community social cohesion, social inclusion and social equity in poor, marginalized communities of color must be further examined so that ways to build capacity for sustainability, repair the harm and create flourishing environments and economic stability can come to fruition.

The U.S. justice system and corrections systems are effectively doing what they have been designed to do. They are effectively hindering the ability of poor, marginalized communities from becoming stable, developing fruitful economies and, therefore, hindering their ability to protect their environment. There are those who believe future technologies will save the world and that inclusion of poor communities is unnecessary to sustainability efforts. This may be true. However, if it is not, it would be negligent under such a pressing matter for all avenues of progress not to be explored and immediate actions, as a precaution taken. Immediate actions or change in actions has been the rallying call for sustainability to be achieved and climate change to be slowed.

History tells us that transformation will require strategic interventions and behavioral change. Levels of participation in eco-friendly behavior are low because people are resisting change and there is a need for "everyday individual and collective experiences (to) be shared in conversations, through stories and two-way dialogue" to increase awareness and participation in a future that is more equitable and sustainable (Vallance et al., 2011). Our research indicates a system-of-communities framework would promote this type of communication and collective learning, and increase the systems scope of influence. In determining a pathway forward toward becoming socially inclusive and cohesive, economically stable and environmentally sustainable, it would help to navigate system barriers.

As an exploratory conceptual study, the limitation is that explicit results cannot be given. Its contribution, nevertheless, acts to move social sustainability and sustainability discourse forward. It opens a new way to include poor, marginalized communities in collaborative conversations, in the decision-making process and in final decisions made regarding the earth's sustainability and creating sustainable communities. It is an inappropriate and incorrect assumption to make that poor, marginalized individuals, families and communities do not care about the environment or living sustainably. They, too, want to live and work and raise their children in safe, clean, environmentally friendly, economically stable, sustainable communities with excellent schools. Their starting point and the massive daily challenges they face are barriers to achieving this goal. Therefore, these are barriers to true sustainability. The systems-of-communities framework can help bring about needed change, social equity and this helps keep vulnerable communities engaged in sustainable activities. Everyone needs to be a part of the sustainability effort.

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CHAPTER 3

ARTICLE 2

Restructuring the Building Sustainable Communities Approach: Building the Foundation for the Development of a Sustainable Assessment Tool to Be Used by and with Poor Marginalized Communities of Color in the United States

Abstract

Poor marginalized communities in the United States are unsustainable. Their transition to sustainable will be due to a change in several factors: societal, national and community actions. To begin the process toward building sustainability, increasing economic opportunities and upward mobility in these communities, racial oppression and systemic barriers must be dismantled. Additionally, communities must begin the process of healing to become socially inclusive, cohesive and equitable. There is a gap in sustainability assessment tools that address the particular issues engulfing the lives and daily experiences of the members of poor marginalized communities.

Present sustainability assessment tools in use in these communities are inadequate in measuring the social reintegration, inclusion, cohesiveness and equity at the community level and do not account for external negative impacts on the families in these communities and the community at-large. They also do not account for the high rate of forced mobility in poor marginalized communities due to mass incarceration and recidivism that destroys families and the community cohesion necessary for collective and sustainable action. Additionally, mass incarceration, recidivism, poor education and job skills diminish individual and community social capital.

This paper examines the historical context of poor marginalized communities of color and the present challenges faced by members of these communities. Second, it evaluates sustainability assessments, indicators and indexes as well as other assessment tools. Third, it presents a new conceptual Building Sustainable Communities framework for transitioning poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates in the direction of stability and sustainability. Fourth, this paper provides a four-phase transition tool, Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equity (Social R.I.C. E.- a precursor to an assessment tool), that can be used to create the foundation for the future development of a sustainability systems-based assessment tool that will more accurately measure the progress toward sustainability for these vulnerable communities.

Introduction

"Despite undeniable progress for many, no African Americans are insulated from the incidents of racial discrimination. Our careers, even our lives, are threatened because of our color. Even the most successful of us are haunted by the plight of our less fortunate brethren who struggle for existence in what some social scientists call the "underclass." Burdened with life-long poverty and soul devastating despair, they live beyond the pale of the American Dream."

-Derrick Bell-

Faces at the Bottom of the Well (1992)

The American dream is unattainable by most who live in poor, marginalized communities (Bell 1992). This dream is based on radical individualism. It is often misleadingly characterized as being achievable through personal hard work and

ingenuity. One of the keys to individual success is networking, but for people who live in poor communities they usually do not know people or have associations with those with social capital to leverage (Popescu, 2018; Loury, 2005; Scrivens, 2013; Beck, 2001; Rusk, 2001; Carraso & Bilal 2016). For this reason, people of color have often been excluded or diverted from networked pathways which frequently lead to successful and prosperous livelihoods (Popescu et al., 2018, Acs, 2018; Amin, 2005; Williams & Collins, 2001; United Nations 2016). Additionally, they suffer racial disparities in healthcare, economic and educational attainment and bear the brunt of burdens when it comes to environmental hazards and ecological (in)justice (Zonta, 2019; Popescui, 2018; Allman, 2013; Ikeme, 2003; Williams & Collins 2001; United Nations 2016). These burdens are symptoms of deep-rooted systemic problems (Schell et al., 2020; Sherrieb, 2013). The complexity of the problems overshadows the root cause(s). The symptoms (poverty, crime, poor education and poor health) are usually addressed separately as if they are the root cause of the problem(s), but they are not (Zonta, 2019; Popescui, 2018; Loury, 2005; Freundeberg, 2001). The root cause of the problem(s) would require a change in societal and institutional structure (Olutolatt & Bello 2016; Cotel, 2017; Freudenberg, 2001;, Carraso & Bilal, 2016). Hence, a different methodology for designing sustainability assessments is required for the inclusion of poor marginalized communities in the United States (Lowry, 2007).

Theoretically, a sustainability approach combined with an engaged and critical race approach is necessary to acknowledge and rectify detrimental issues related to communities of color in the United States of America (e.g., high incarceration and recidivism rates) and to also address critical sustainability issues (Figure 1). The

Building Sustainable Communities Framework presented in this paper recognizes racial and social injustices and disparities so that appropriate remedies (changes in policies and practices) can be developed to allow for the building of community collective capacity and increased resiliency (Padilla, 2002). Without community collective capacity, it is very difficult for members of a community to address major problems including environmental crises.

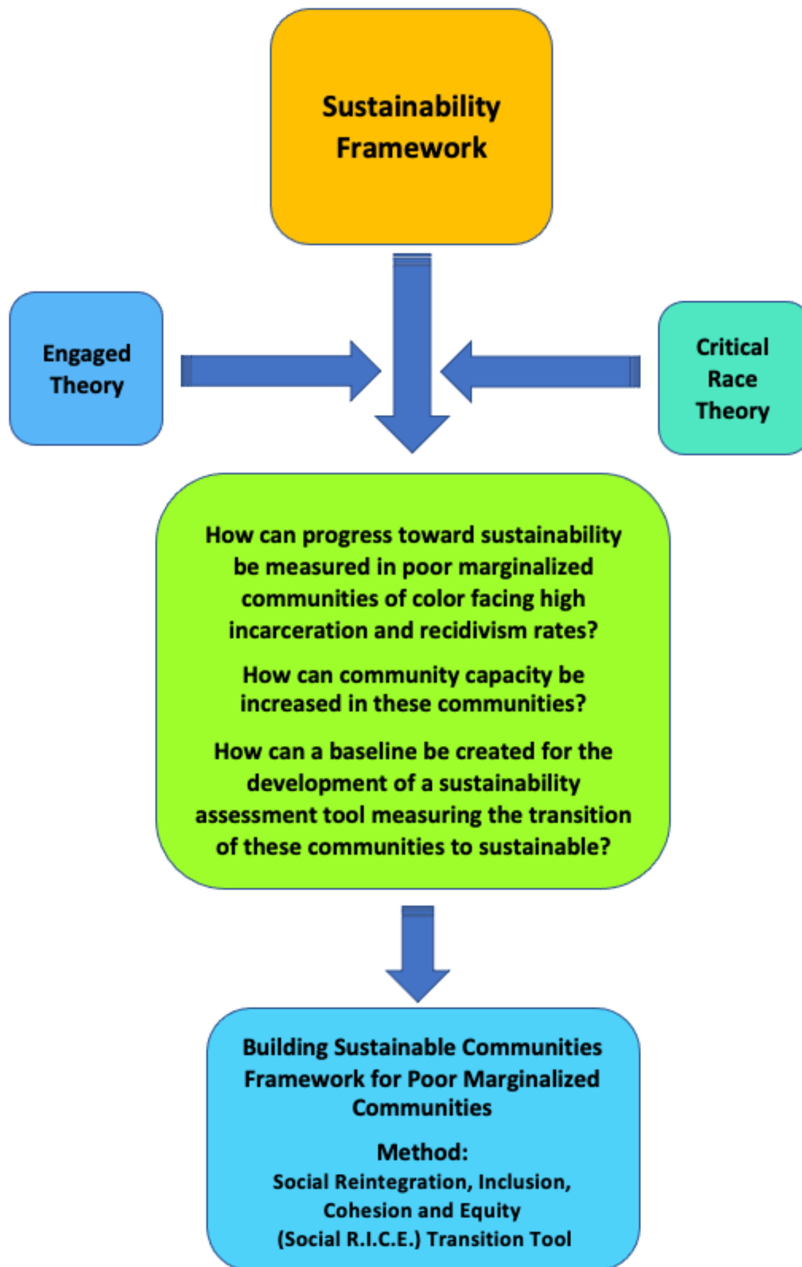

Figure 1: Development of Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool

Contextual Framing of Marginalized Communities of Color

The United States was built with enslaved labor enforced with terrorist tactics and it has not shaken its institutional racist history (Rothstein, 2018; Feagin, 2015; Loury, 2005). Consequently, poor African American communities (and other marginalized communities of color) today reflect the historical injustices of racist laws, policies and practices of the past. Through a sustainability systems-based lens institutional and structural racism --the root causes of segregation and discrimination-- can be seen clearly. Institutional and structural racism create the symptoms of racial disparities in communities of color. These systems are connected producing economic and environmental injustices rendering marginalized communities of color unsustainable (Padilla, 2002; Williams & Collins 2001; Popescu, 2018; Martin et al., 2017). The symptoms of these intricate and often destructive systems affect the livelihood, safety, and wellbeing of individuals and families in communities of color.

In these communities, individuals are relegated to low-level employment with low pay and no health insurance, too often as the result of having been incarcerated and or having inadequate educational levels (Kulkari et al., 2010; Martin 2017**)**. Typically, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and Indigenous populations hold these low-level employment positions categorized today, ironically, as essential workers. Compounding their systemic socio-economic realities in their home communities are external forces -- the criminal justice, bail, foster care, education and healthcare systems – all of which play a huge part in halting their ambitions and reducing their career opportunities and options especially formerly incarcerated individuals. Under these current circumstances,

creating sustainable communities as it is currently defined remains a distant but tangible concern (Adams et al. 2020; Padilla, 2002; van de Noll 2013).

A wide lens systems-based sustainability approach is required to bring into focus the daily needs and struggles faced by members of these communities (Padilla, 2002). This paper examines how past policies and practices connect to the present circumstances in poor marginalized communities. Additionally, there is discussion of the conceptual processes necessary to transition vulnerable communities with the forementioned characteristics in the direction of becoming stable, resilient and sustainable. This paper reveals the circumstances and perspectives of individuals and families living in vulnerable home communities with high incarceration rates, large numbers of formerly incarcerated citizens and high recidivism rates. Consequently, the author has designed a new conceptual sustainable communities framework (Building Sustainable Communities Framework) for poor marginalized communities which acknowledges their particular circumstances (Figure 2). Furthermore, the author developed a transition tool (Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (Social R.I.C. E.) Transition Tool) for assisting sustainability
researchers, academia and policymakers to become more familiar with and better understand the deeply embedded struggles and challenges of building social cohesion and sustainability in these communities (Table 3). The framework and transition tool are designed for community members to be involved in the information gathering, data analyzing and decision-making required for the development of a sustainability assessment tool specifically for their community.

Creating the foundation/baseline of a sustainability assessment tool that can measure a poor marginalized community's sustainability transition (not gentrification) over time will contribute to the knowledge base of researchers, academics, policymakers and community members. The community members can begin to arm themselves with the data collected for future decision-making regarding their own community. Subsequently, they can be more confident, active, empowered and effective participants in championing for improved services and in making other decisions that impact the sustainability of their communities (Amin 2005; Carrasco & Bilal, 2016).

Rationale

Assessing communities for sustainability and determining if they are sustainable is not new. The relatively standardized questions include: Do they have walking and bike paths and green spaces? Do residents compost, recycle and use energy-efficient appliances? Does your community use solar energy and efficient landscaping watering systems? This list of questions, that can be checked off affirmatively, is most often used by more affluent and privileged communities. Thus, more often these communities in the United States are made up of higher income (white) residents. These sustainable communities are described as socially inclusive, cohesive and equitable (Adams et al., 2020; Blake et al., 2008). These attributes, as well as being environmentally just are foundational in attaining sustainable community levels (levels which meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs).

For poor marginalized communities, the distinction of becoming socially inclusive, cohesive, equitable and environmentally just is unrealized. For these communities, the impact of racism, segregation and discrimination has created systems

that are harmful to people of color and their communities (De La Garza & Ono 2016; Delgado & Stefancic 2001). For example, as a result of environmental and systemic racism, environmental (in)justices have caused many residents of these communities to suffer from debilitating physical and mental health issues (often undiagnosed because of lack of access to services) decreasing their life expectancy (Ikeme, 2003, Padilla, 2002; National People of Color Environmental Leadership, 1996). Moreover, the United States criminal justice and corrections systems have arrested and incarcerated a disproportionate percentage of marginalized people of color (Clear, 2014; Harding et al., 2013). Hence, the impact of these activities and over-policing in these communities has had a detrimental effect on the stress levels of families and the fabric of these communities (Clear, 2009). The racially unjust systems are in large part responsible for prison cycling (incarceration-community reentry-recidivism) which significantly decreases community collective capacity needed for sustainability efforts (Adams et al., 2020).

Given the mental and physical health impacts of such discriminations, many cities have declared racism a public health issue (Yearby, 2020). Hence, communities with these aforementioned attributes require more engagement and recognition of racial oppression, exploitation, appropriation and the exclusion from full citizenship rights, privileges and opportunities in order to begin to make the necessary strides toward becoming sustainable (Blake, 2008; Atkinson, 2012). Accordingly, social reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals plays a major part in the success of reducing incarceration and recidivism, while improving community safety, stability and advancing sustainability efforts. (Martin et al., 2017; Gilligan 2014).

An Advantageous Combination

To date the sustainability framework has not embraced social justice in a historical way accounting for past environmental and economic injustices while engaged theory acknowledges the importance of history, place, social formation and relations (Figure 2). Furthermore, the sustainability framework does not sufficiently through its society/social justice pillar recognize the power structures (past and present) creating racial oppression through unjust laws, policies and practices resulting in economic, environmental injustices and health disparities in communities of color. The combination of the sustainability three pillar framework (environment, economy and society/social justice), engaged theory and critical race theory (Figure 2) fit the requirements necessary for poor marginalized communities to become more active participants in the race for creating a more sustainable world.

Engaged theory recognizes history and place in the formation of social relationships and cultures. A proponent of this theory is the Circles of Sustainability model which is used to manage major projects (e.g., urban settlements and cities) toward outcomes that are more sustainable (James, 2015; Magee et al., 2013). Although Circles of Sustainability assesses sustainability in its four-stages model, it does not broach the subjects of race, racism, white supremacy, white privilege, redlining or criminal justice (Adams et al., 2019; James 2015).

Critical race theory accomplishes this. Hence, the inclusion of engaged and critical race theories appropriately strengthens the ability of all communities, cities and nations to collectively build the necessary capacity and increase the probability of reaching a level of sustainability to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Moreover, foundational to critical race theory is the importance of personal experiences and storytelling. It recognizes the barriers facing black and brown people (historically marginalized people of color) and it appreciates cultural differences, accomplishments and contributions from these communities (De La Garza & Ono, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Bell 1992).

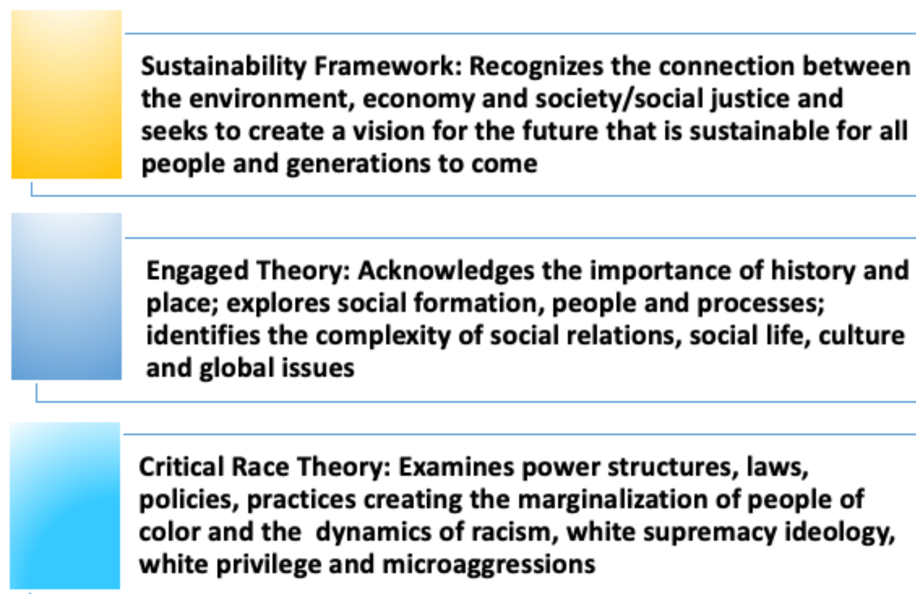

Figure 2: Combining Sustainability Framework, Engaged Theory and Critical Race Theory

The combination of the sustainability framework, plus engaged and critical race theories are essential to bringing poor marginalized communities into the fold (Figure 2). This combination widens the range of those presently considered to be involved in sustainability efforts (e.g., discourse, planning, decision-making, preparations) and development of sustainability assessment tools. The present sustainability assessment tools do not adequately take into account the realities of poor marginalized communities

of color, therefore, excluding them and making the feasibility for achieving sustainable community status unattainable (e.g., STAR) (Table 2) (Bridger & Luloff 2001). By using this combination of approaches (sustainability framework, engaged and critical race theories) to design a foundational transition tool, these communities can begin to move in the direction of cohesion, stability and sustainability, which encompasses justice and equity (Figure 2).

Engaging poor marginalized communities of color to participate in efforts that increase community collective capacity and resilience while society addresses dismantling of racial inequities and disparities is critical to managing and protecting the earth's sustainability. (Gilligan, 2014).

Historical Context Appropriate for Research in Communities of Color

It is extremely important for those researching in communities of color and designing sustainability assessment tools (instruments designed to measure: sustainability of a land area, an eco-system, the risk of a potential hazard, the progress of sustainability efforts, etc.) for poor marginalized communities to be cognizant of the history of community and its residents (Popescu et al., 2018). Without understanding the history of racial injustices and their impact on the people, then it is relatively easy to construct scenarios that do not represent the facts behind how these communities came to be in their present state of despair. It is easy to blame the residents fully for their circumstances. For example, redlining was an exclusionary practice by the government, banking and real estate industries (Popescu, 2018). It kept African Americans and other people of color segregated from white communities, therefore, keeping people of color relegated to certain communities where banks refused to invest or give loans for home

improvements or business loans. When banks did/do approve loans for people of color they are at much higher interest rates for lower credit amounts (Anderson, 2016; Woods, 2012). There were also restrictive covenants that stated in the deed of property that anyone not considered White/Caucasian could not own, rent or live in the home (Rothstein, 2017; Lipsitz, 2011). Thus, communities of color, that are often located in areas where environmental hazards (e.g., factories, sewage plants and landfills) were allowed, are communities that are now dilapidated and in ill-repair due to lack of investments in homes and community businesses (Woods, 2012). Businesses that come into African American and other communities of color most often are not residents of those communities, therefore, the earnings do not stay in the community. Hence, the earnings are not used for community development.

Racial residential segregation still exists in the United States negatively affecting healthcare, safety and the socioeconomics of black and brown communities. The communities where redlining has occurred have been found today to have direct connections to residents with poor health and healthcare (Lee, 2019; Rothstein, 2018; Williams & Collins 2001). Residents of white communities have had the ability to use their homes with low mortgage interest rates to create wealth for present and future generations. Homes in marginalized communities of color today are undervalued when compared to white communities (Chetty et al. 2020; Lee, 2019; Perry et al., 2018; Rusk, 2001). Additionally, this has negative consequences for schools in communities of color. Furthermore, the greater the devaluation of properties in black neighborhoods, the less upward mobility black children in those communities experience (Chetty et al. 2020; Perry, 2019).

Communities with predominately white residents (71.6% white) enjoy higher home valuation, have higher incomes which allow for better homes (and home improvements), schools, services, and thriving businesses, and clean and safe environmental surroundings such as parks and other outdoor spaces (Frey, 2020; Rothstein, 2017). They also have fewer residents with felony convictions, therefore giving white communities more electoral/political power. This power and privilege historically have been used to discriminate and oppress -- keeping African American, Hispanic/Latino and Indigenous communities from accumulating wealth, providing and creating safe, economically thriving, environmentally friendly places to raise and educate their children, to work and to live and play (Zonta, 2019; Rothstein, 2017; Loury 2005).

Individuals from poor communities of color are overwhelmed by the stigma of incarceration, the mental fatigue caused by prison life and the fear of having to return to a society that is unwelcoming. They are returning from a dehumanizing place where the purpose is to punish -- not rehabilitate and prepare individuals for the new world they are entering (Adams et al., 2020; DeVeaux 2013). Their families and communities also are traumatized and stressed by the consequences of the incarceration, community reentry and recidivism. Most individuals released from prisons, jails and detention centers return to their home communities. More than 40% of these individuals recidivate within the first year after being released and 75% return within 5 years of being released (Shannon, 2016).

Development of an Integrative Assessment

Assessment tools measuring sustainability usually focus on how to achieve environmental sustainability. Most often they are measuring a region's, city's or a local

government's ability to move in the direction of sustainability (Kramer, 2010). Presently, sustainability assessment tools do not measure an individual community's or communities within a single zip code's ability to progress toward sustainability. Furthermore, relatively few, if any, attempt to measure family and community relationship building (sustainable community building) in communities faced with high incarceration and recidivism rates, hence leaving knowledge gaps which could be instrumental in identifying solutions to the needs of poor marginalized communities.

Breaking a city or locality into smaller more delineated units that represent different cultures, races or ethnicities to discover their ability to attain sustainability is essential to becoming more sustainable. If this approach is not examined, then certain communities are left on the margins and their issues and ability to reach an acceptable level of environmental, economic and social sustainability are overlooked and neglected. The assessments and studies completed in poor, marginalized communities have focused on student achievement, housing needs, crime, environmental (in)justice, services and basic needs.

Community Level Data Collection

Data have to be collected at the community level, not just city-wide or at the smaller zip code level in the United States, to better understand the intersection of poor marginalized communities, the systemic barriers to their wellbeing, economic opportunities, education and sustainability. Zip code areas can be made up of several different communities (ethnically, racially, culturally and income levels). Measuring large swathes of land (regions, cities, zip codes) can conceal the disparities in some communities. In order for an adequate assessment tool (mechanism) to be developed, a

transition tool needs to be created to gather pertinent data, a precursor to a sustainability assessment tool. Additionally, it needs to be made for community level usability and should be access friendly. Furthermore, community members need to be active participants in the research, decision-making and design process (Robinson, 2004). Therefore, the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool was created and it is grounded in honoring and collecting personal experiences and storytelling. A compilation of years of these data on these poor marginalized communities in the future can be used, in addition to other information, to aid in changing policies and practices that are detrimental to the community and consequently, its ability to become sustainable. The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool can gather data useful at the community level, smaller areas than zip codes, which will provide greater context and enable a more customized approach.

Increasing Community Collective Capacity

In poor marginal communities of color in the United States, steps toward increasing community capacity can be better understood through the Building Sustainable Communities Framework as well as the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool that the author developed leveraging four core conceptual processes that are crucial for the transformation into sustainable communities: Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesiveness and Equity. This framework offers a different process for understanding and building community capacity, collective action and community resilience as they relate to these communities and the characteristics incurred with incarceration, community reentry and recidivism. Currently, no sustainability assessment tools (were found by this study) are used and adequately measure or assess the progress of poor marginalized communities' transition to becoming sustainable. The Social R.I.C.E.

Transition Tool discussed in this paper is a move in the direction of creating a sustainability assessment tool for poor marginalized communities of color faced with high forced mobility rates due to incarceration.

There are presently several indicators for poor marginalized communities, such as, infant mortality rate, life expectancy, income, mortality rate, incarceration rate, recidivism rate, poverty rate, health, and many more that do not adequately provide a full story of the injustices and struggles of African American, Hispanic/Latino and Indigenous peoples or move these populations closer to having sustainable communities (Table 1) (Klinker-Lockwood et al., 2015; Valera et al., 2017). While these indicators provide a period-in-time snapshot perspective of a population's circumstances and can be compared to past data, the culmination of this type of data cannot be used to explain the movement in direction of the numbers or the negative or positive cause(s) behind the information collected. (Table 1). This comparison process result is an information gap and incomplete data collection for purposes of developing community resilience and sustainability is in effect detrimental to the effort(s) being made.

Table 1: Statistics Chart *-Pew Research Center- US Census Bureau*				
	African American	Indigenous Tribes	Latino / Hispanic	White
Infant Mortality (2018) Rate per 1000 (CDC)	10.8	8.21	4.9	4.6
Life Expectancy (born in 2015) (CDC.gov)	74.8	75.1	77.9	78.5
Percentage of Population (2017) (PEW / U.S. Census)	12%	2%	16%	64%
Incarceration Rate *PEW Research / Bureau of Justice Stats (2017)*	33% *475,900*	2.4% N/A – *(Other Races-191,808)*	23% *336,500*	30% *436,500*
Unemployment Rate (2015)	10.3%	N/A	7.2%	4.5%
Poverty Rate (2014)	26%	29.2% (2013)	24%	10%
Household Income (2014)	$43,300	$36,252 -Less on Reservations	$43,300	$71,300
Homeownership (2015)	43%	N/A	45%	72%
Median Net Worth (2013)	$11,200	N/A	$14,000	$144,200
Children in Foster Care (2018) Annie E Casey Foundation	23% 99,025	2% 10,449	21% 90,688	44% 193,117
High School Completion (2015)	88%	82.2% (2013)	67%	93%
College Degrees (2015)	23%	13.5% (2013)	15%	36%

Data are necessary to determine how best to move communities forward, and different assessments are required to assess communities with these unique attributes. There is not a universal standardized and consistent community assessment tool. Through a sustainability lens, consideration of several systems' impacts on a community

will provide a wider breadth and in-depth look at issues facing these communities as they try to achieve greater sustainability levels. The issue of trade-offs, when it comes to which communities should be saved or prepared for major environmental events due to climate change is an unconscionable thought.

Building Sustainable Communities Framework

In poor marginalized communities of color when external and embedded systems become barriers to creating sustainable livelihoods and lifestyles, families and communities suffer the burden. Relationships and social networks fray or are dismantled. Decline in collective community participation, stress and social dysfunction become evident through poor individual and community health, increased crime, and economic and environmental decline (Olutola & Bello, 2016; Freudenburg, 2001; Amin, 2005; Gillian et al., 2014; Sherrieb 2013). A pivotal point in these communities is the reentry back home of individuals (fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, siblings) previously incarcerated. Many questions arise that would be helpful in addressing family and community sustainability: How can the process of reintegration become more welcoming? In what ways can poor marginalized families and communities contribute to repairing the harm of incarceration so they can become stable, resilient and sustainable? How can these families and communities build relationships, develop networks and build capacity? How can progress toward sustainability in these communities be measured?

Social reintegration, social inclusion, social cohesion and social equity are key to resilience and sustainability, therefore, examining and measuring these processes is the starting place. Creating a baseline and measurement system that is community-friendly

is paramount. An assessment tool that recognizes the life experiences of members of the community, and is not used to gentrify the community, but rather looks to build relationships and networks, helps to create a sense of belonging, ownership and collective wellbeing. These processes in the Building Sustainable Communities framework are fluid as are the ebbs and flows of differing individuals, families and communities. This framework treats all people in the community as stakeholders in the process of transitioning the community.

Recognizing that incarceration has a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities, the importance of progressing through each of these processes determines the ability of the community to move toward resiliency, stability and sustainability. The conceptual Building Sustainable Communities Framework, with its four concepts in Figure 3 is an approach that can be used for transitioning poor marginalized communities that are accepting formerly incarcerated individuals home.

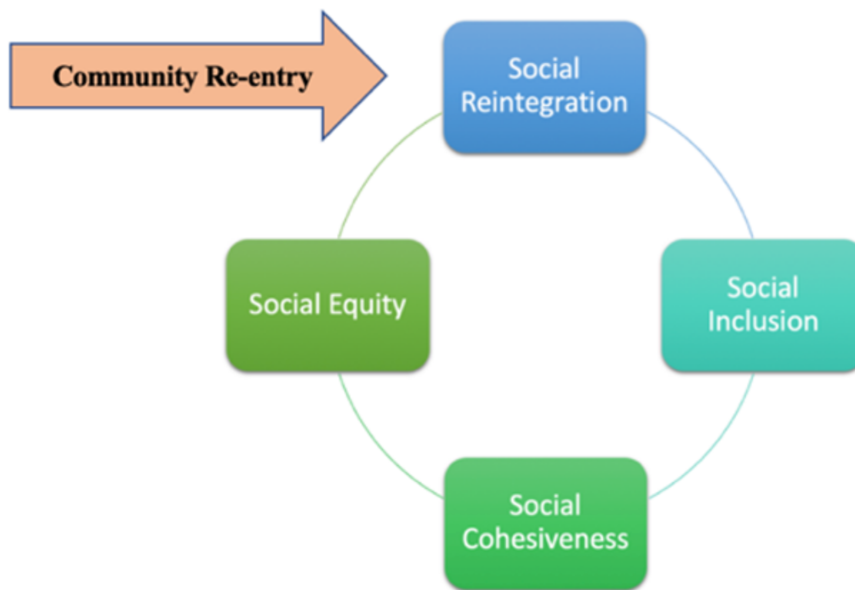

**Figure 3: Building Sustainable Communities Framework
4-Core Concepts**

These four core elements are necessary for community building, transitioning, empowerment and sustainability in poor marginalized communities. As formerly incarcerated individuals move through the four sequential phases, community competence is gained. There is overlap of the different phases of the Building Sustainable Communities framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool to allow for personal life adjustments. The four phases of the framework are categorized in the following way:

1) Social Reintegration: The initial reentry process after being released from incarceration is comprised of (1) establishing basic interactions with family and close

friends, (2) personal responsibility, (3) getting credentials/personal identification, (4) seeking housing and employment and (5) finding healthcare if needed. This is a period of rediscovery and it happens when formerly incarcerated individuals return to their home communities. They engage in activities in which they have to be personally responsible. They use public engagement to a limited extent only connecting with families, close friends, and possibly a few others.

2) Social Inclusion: This phase involves actively pursuing public engagement and acceptance through volunteering, bartering and improving the community environment. This phase is considered moving out of your comfort zone to interact with others by participating in community activities. It is re-developing a sense of belonging and a safety net.

3) Social Cohesion: This phase includes being accepted by a group of individuals or an organization, networking, securing employment, having a safety net, and having a sense of belonging. This phase is about building new relationships and social ties, networking, trusting, cooperating, collaboration and reciprocity.

4) Social Equity: This phase includes participating in group decision-making related to community activities and affairs, voting, and a sense of community ownership. It is also future-focused, about decision-making, creating generational increase and sustainability.

As individual communities participate in sustainable activities, it is important to recognize that a concerted national effort is needed to make a huge difference in realizing sustainability. This participation can only happen if individual communities have the capacity to become sustainable (Pearson, 2018). If they do not, then building capacity

within all communities is the first significant step toward sustainability. Because social inclusion, cohesion, and equity play a large part in building community capacity, it becomes important to find out the circumstances prohibiting, deterring or undermining poor marginalized communities from fulfilling these prerequisites. Community health and networking ability round out the building blocks for establishing a strong community, economy and environment (Alper, 2016).

Because of the need for long-term solutions in sustainability versus short-term reactive solutions, preemptive strategies and actions in poor, marginalized communities need to be taken (Adams et al., 2020). There is an opportunity to develop assessment tools that provide data, qualitative and quantitative information, that moves life and preparedness in these communities forward toward sustainability. This required a thorough review of literature on assessments from environmental sustainability to community reentry from incarceration to postwar veterans assessment tools (Table 2). These sources contributed to a better understanding of the complexity of family, community and societal dynamics which must be considered for assessing communities with high degrees of forced mobility (incarceration, recidivism, foster care placement, housing relocation) and community reentry. These resources can be viewed in Table 2.

Table 2: Global, National and Local Assessments, Indexes and Surveys										
	Scale	**Description**	**Social Reinte-gration**	**Social Inclusion**	**Social Cohesion**	**Social Equity**	**Education**	**Well-being**	**Life Expec-tancy**	**Income**
Assessments:										
1) Quality of Life Assessment	Individual/ Groups	Measures 5 domains: Well-being, Relationships with others, social community and civic activities, Personal Development and Fulfillment, Recreation	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
2) Tool for Rapid Assessment of City Energy -TRACE (World Bank)	City	Identifies underperforming sectors: passenger transport, municipal buildings, water and waste water, public lighting, solid waste, and power and heat.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
3) STAR Rating System (Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating Cities)	City	Measures local resilience	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
4) Social Inclusion Assessment Tool Who is excluded? (World Bank Group)	Organizations	Assesses how social inclusion can be addressed in projects, programs, policies or in analysis	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
5) Community Assessment of Resilience Tool (Disaster Management)	Community/ Organizations -Not designed for community comparisons	Assesses community resilience to disasters with 21 core community resilience items	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No

Table 2: Global, National and Local Assessments, Indexes and Surveys

	Scale	Description	Social Reinte-gration	Social Inclusion	Social Cohesion	Social Equity	Education	Well-being	Life Expec-tancy	Income
6) Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (United Nations)	Global	Assesses the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Indexes:										
7) Human Development Index (United Nations)	Global/ Country Comparisons	Measures life expectancy, expected years of schooling, standard of living by country	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8) Social Progress Index **-** Country Scorecard	Global/ Country Comparisons	Assesses basic human rights, foundations of wellbeing, opportunity by country	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9) Better Life Index (OECD)	Global/ Country Comparisons	Compares well-being across countries based on 11 topics	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10) Happy Planet Index: Measures Wellbeing and Life Expectancy	Global/ Country Comparisons	Ranks countries on 4 areas: life expectancy, wellbeing, ecological footprint and inequality	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
11) Sustainable Development Index	Global / Country Comparisons	Measures the ecological efficiency of human development -Uses CO2 emissions and material footprint	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12) Policy Link's National Equity Atlas	USA - Country	Measures racial and economic equity in the United States	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Global, National and Local Assessments, Indexes and Surveys										
	Scale	**Description**	**Social Reinte-gration**	**Social Inclusion**	**Social Cohesion**	**Social Equity**	**Education**	**Well-being**	**Life Expec-tancy**	**Income**
13) The Community Loss Index	Community	Measures collective loss -focuses on place as a source of stress and patterns of loss in high and low loss neighborhoods	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Surveys:										
14) World Values Survey Survival to Self-Expression Factor Scores	Global/ Country	Measures changing beliefs, values and motivations around the world	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
15) US Census: American Community Survey	Country to Tracts (avg approx. 4000 Individuals)	Collects data on social, economic, housing and demographics for states, counties, cities and towns	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
16) Surveys Question Databank Worldwide (OECD)	Country	Measures social capital using personal relationships, social network support, civic engagement and trust and cooperative norms	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
17) Circles of Social Life Questionnaire	City	Measure for comparative analysis 4 domains; Economics, Ecology, Politics and Culture	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
18) Families and Reentry: Unpacking How Social Support Matters	Community	Family support and social services	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Table 2: Global, National and Local Assessments, Indexes and Surveys										
	Scale	**Description**	**Social Reinte-gration**	**Social Inclusion**	**Social Cohesion**	**Social Equity**	**Education**	**Well-being**	**Life Expec-tancy**	**Income**
Military Reintegration:										
19) Reintegration Unit Risk Inventory	Individual	Stressful events experience risk	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
20) National Former Prisoner Survey	Individual	Experiences suffered in prison	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No

Methodology

Presently, there are indicators, indexes and assessment tools measuring: quality of life, happiness, community wellbeing, poverty, health, sustainability, economics, reentry needs, life expectancy, veterans' reintegration, social capital and more (Tables 1 and 2) (Elnitsky, 2017). There is a great deal to be learned from these index and assessment tools (Table 2). However, there are very few, if any, that try to measure family and community relationship building (sustainable community building) in communities faced with high incarceration and recidivism rates. Hence, information was drawn from the assessment tools and data sources as a basis for identifying information gaps useful in constructing the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool.

Unlike a sustainability assessment tool, the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool does not measure the information collected. The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool is an interview guide developed to create a foundational baseline for the future design of sustainability systems-based assessment tools for poor marginalized communities (Table 3). The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool draws out information about several systems (e.g., family, community, criminal justice, education and healthcare) while also connecting and gaining a sense of inter- and intragenerational equity and daily life experiences. The intentional and unintentional consequences of structural and institutional racism and oppression plaguing these communities (e.g., foster care) are also open for participants to address through their answers to these questions. The qualitative data collected through interviews can be utilized as explorative data useful in examining patterns and themes and expectantly shedding light on negative systems impacts relatively overlooked by sustainability needs assessments for measuring sustainable community progress.

The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool is used to gather data from community members (formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of formerly incarcerated individuals and other concerned community members) for analysis that is relevant to the four-phases of the Building Sustainable Communities Framework (social reintegration, inclusion, cohesion and equity). The outcomes/major themes derived after analysis from the data gathered can be used to assist sustainability scientists and researchers in conjunction with community members in designing a sustainability systems-based assessment tool to address the particular characteristics (high incarceration, community reentry and recidivism rates) of poor marginalized communities of color and measure the community's progress towards sustainability goals. The outcomes from the data can also be used by academia, policymakers, NGOs and the community at-large to focus on the pertinent issues determined by the data outcomes to create action steps for moving the present residents of the community into a more stable, safe, resilient and sustainable future.

Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool

The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool uses carefully designed interview questions to better understand the concerns, needs and circumstances of the people in three groups: formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of formerly incarcerated and community members (Table 3). The Social R.I.C.E Transition Tool interview questions were informed by literature regarding community reentry from prison and military reentry program studies (Table 2). In addition to these, the questionnaires, surveys and indexes on health, social capital, community services as well as the global, national, regional and city sustainability assessment tools on Table 2 informed the Social R.I.C.E Transition Tool interview questions.

Using a systematic approach, the author carefully assessed and reduced an original set of one hundred questions compiled down to twelve questions. The twelve final open-ended questions selected are key to getting more relevant answers for each of the four phases. Some questions were merged and any explicitly overlapping questions were deleted while others determined to be less essential were removed. This approach allowed the author to reduce the questions to a smaller and more meaningful set that would allow for deeper responses from participants and garner better insight by researchers and community members. Hence, answers that illicit more in-depth consideration or thought by the interviewee or follow-up questions for clarification lead to a more robust conversation and a well-rounded interview. Ultimately, the information gathered will help in creating baseline information to be used in a sustainability systems-based assessment tool to be designed at a later date for poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates.

The questions in the Social R.I.C.E Transition Tool are categorized into four phases (social reintegration, social inclusion, social cohesion and social equity), but they can be asked in sequential order or in reverse order (from individual to community questions or vice versa). The structure of assessing sustainability in communities of color needs to be different from affluent areas. It needs to be a more inclusive and participatory process allowing for inclusion of cultural nuances. Therefore, the selection of qualitative interview questions verses using Likert-scale surveys and interview questions was purposeful.

Table #3	Social R.I.C.E. Interview Questions
Social Reintegration	
How is your health? (*Physical /Mental, Emotional*)	
What makes you feel good about yourself?	
How did life change outside while you were incarcerated?	
Social Inclusion	
What makes you feel good about your community?	
Do you think school or a training program is important to your future?	
How have you handled any stigma from being incarcerated or having a family member that was in prison?	
Social Cohesion	
What is the benefit of welcoming formerly incarcerated individuals in the community?	
What would help you to feel more part of the community?	
In what ways do you feel more connected to the community? How long did it take?	
Social Equity	
How would you like to see your community improved?	
Do your parents, children and/or grandchildren live in your community?	
What issues are people in your community facing?	

African Americans, Native Americans and other marginalized communities of color have an oral tradition of storytelling that dates back to before slavery (Thompson 2015; Saddam 2015). In the United States, education has historically been denied, limited and/or often inadequate for these populations. During slavery, it was against the law to teach slaves to read. Family histories and other important information were passed down from generation to generation orally through storytelling and song (Morris 2019; Thompson 2015). Throughout American history, the history, struggles and accomplishments of marginalized communities in America have been diminished, if not erased from history books and other mediums (Heim, 2019; Stewart, 2019). Many of the cultural attributes of marginalized communities- the music, dance, dress, speech, hair styles and other facets of their lifestyles have been appropriated (Morris, 2019; Rosenblatt, 2019; Feagin, 2015). Yet, the history of their ancestry has lived on through oppression, racism, discrimination, prejudice (implicit bias), stereotypes, segregation,

community disinvestment and social and environmental injustices continuing to be expressed through spoken word, written language, music, song, art, dance and many other ways (Morris, 2019; Payne et al., 2019; Heim, 2019; Rose et al., 2017; Dirks & Mueller, 2015; Thompson, 2015, Absher, 2014).

To be clear, the Building Sustainable Communities Framework and the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool do not in any way replace or dwarf the need for dismantling the systemic institutional and structural racism which permeates every aspect of society. They do not sanction oppressor-oppressed ideology in these systems. They also do not shift the responsibility of dismantling systemic institutional and structural racism onto the shoulders of oppressed peoples.

Analysis

Community-based Focus Group In-depth Discussion

A focus group was needed to discuss whether the Building Sustainable Communities Framework accurately reflected the process and experiences that formerly incarcerated individuals would move through to fully reintegrate into their communities and become productive, contributing members. Also, before going forward with testing the Social R.I.C.E. tool, developed based on the framework, an in-depth discussion of the framework processes was critical. Individuals who experienced the processes first hand needed to be involved in this discussion, actually leading the way, offering insight and feedback. Therefore, if any changes or revisions had to be made, it had to happen immediately. Participants had to have an understanding of the circumstances that surrounded incarcerated individuals and their mindset. This required the participants to have been formerly incarcerated, family members who were actively involved with a formerly incarcerated family member or community members who were interacting with

the formerly incarcerated regularly. The individuals who volunteered and were selected to participate in the focus group all fit within these parameters.

A community-based group of individuals from the Phoenix, Arizona area made up of individuals convicted of felonies, family members of individuals with criminal records and community members actively engaged with assisting formerly incarcerated individuals. They discussed the Building Sustainable Communities conceptual framework during the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. The group members considered how their lives and experiences fit into the four-phase framework. The Building Sustainable Communities Framework has four phases because it is based on three relatively accepted concepts for a sustainable community (inclusion, cohesion and equity). For the framework to be viable and appropriate for communities of color with high incarceration and recidivism rates, the reintegration phase is included. Reintegration plays such a major role negatively impacting families in these communities and it effects the community as a whole.

The focus group and the author discussed the different phases of the framework and how to make it easier for some of them to better understand the different phases. The four phase concepts were put into more simplified terminology by the group. The social reintegration phase was determined to be a *period of rediscovery*. The social inclusion phase was described as *stepping out of your comfort zone*. The social cohesive phase was a time delineated as *new friend zone/bonding*, and the social equity phase was regarded as *future focused*. The focus group believed this terminology was easier and more relatable. Therefore, both headings were displayed during later sessions when the group met.

The focus group agreed that the first phase, social reintegration, was a very difficult phase and that most individuals that returned home did not make it to or past phase 2, social inclusion. This coincided with statistical data stating close to 50% of formerly incarcerated individuals recidivated within 6 months (Adams et al., 2020). The group members, remaining anonymous, stated the following reasons for recidivism: the heavy debt owed from being incarcerated, child support, the immaturity of former inmates, lack of preparedness for life outside of the walls of prison, the stigma of incarceration, the inability to find employment and housing with a felony conviction, the requirements of criminal justice system during parole, harassment from the police, time management, and the responsibilities of parenthood.

One formerly incarcerated individual stated that he felt that he made it through all four phases, but only after recidivating before reaching phase two several times. He stated that he made it past the social reintegration phase after determining that he needed to create a realistic plan for when he was released, one that involved the assistance of family, sheer determination and undeterred courage. He took jobs that were menial. He went back to school, a junior college, then transferred to a prominent university after receiving funding and a stipend for living expenses. Another formerly incarcerated member of the group shared that he too had struggled with phase one, but he believed that he was able to make it past because he was incarcerated at a later stage in life. He stated that most of the men incarcerated came in as young guys 18-25. They have not developed the social and life skills to make it on the outside. The skills you need to survive in prison are different from those you need outside of the walls. Unfortunately, when the guys who came in at a young age are released, they go back home and do what they were doing before they were incarcerated and since they have not had the opportunity in prison to make life choices and learn from relationship

decisions made on the outside, they act emotionally the way they did at the age they were when they were initially incarcerated. They do not get the services they need to make it on the outside and the services they do get are inadequate or unnecessary.

The formerly incarcerated stated they do not trust the criminal justice, prison and parole systems and it is extremely difficult to trust anyone because in prison honest and humane treatment are not priorities. They learned to trust no one. The focus group collectively agreed that this is the case. There is also a lack of trust by family and community members in those who are formerly incarcerated because of the difficulty of demands and adjustments placed on everyone in the reintegration phase. Therefore, relationship building and healing are a major priority in communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates. With this being the situation, the need for ways to build community capacity which is in part based on a level of trust created through community engagement, cooperation and collaboration. This lack of trust issue must be understood by family and community members and the formerly incarcerated before the focus on building sustainable communities can be realized more fully. All in all, the discussion of the four core phases of the Building Sustainable Communities framework was confirmed by the focus group members as an accurate representation of the transition process made by formerly incarcerated individuals as they reintegrate into home communities and society. The group also reiterated that most of those released with a felony conviction on their record do not successfully make it to the end phase, social equity.

Discussion and Conclusion

In an effort to stop recidivism, poor marginalized communities must find a way to welcome back community members from prison. The communities cannot do this without resources and services that address the needs of those individuals that have been

released. In prison, the lives of those incarcerated require a different skill set for survival. Outside of prison, in their home communities, they need to be offered programs that meet their needs such as job training and employment, and also provides a way for them to cover their expenses. The trauma experienced in prison has to be addressed in a way that keeps the families and communities where they live safe. This paper explores how communities subjected to high degrees of forced mobility through prison cycling and foster care can be set on a trajectory to become more sustainable. It examines the reality of life after prison, the lack of opportunities for those returning home as well as the major obstacles and concerns faced by their families and community members. From the information in this paper, it is apparent that there is a sustainability assessment gap for poor, marginalized communities and researchers to use for efficiently measuring the efforts and progress made toward sustainability. Furthermore, a major sustainability goal for poor communities of color is to build community collective capacity. Increased community collective capacity increases the opportunity for collective wellbeing and resilience. This cannot be achieved solely by these communities.

It is extremely important to recognize these communities of color are fluid--having a high degree of forced mobility (incarceration, recidivism, foster care removal of children from their families). I provide a transition process and tool that examines interlinking systems, family and community bonds and societal barriers to increased stability and sustainability. Understanding the barriers in sustainability for these communities and the discontinuities in the Social R.I.C.E process for formerly incarcerated individuals, their families and their communities is a first step in assessing and trying to strategize a plan for the way forward. Community participation in all

phases of Social R.I.C.E is required to remove or reverse the circumstances of unsustainability.

Taking the opportunity to assess poor marginalized communities to determine if they are moving toward a sustainable future is imperative to our creating a sustainable world. It is a myth that marginalized communities do not care about the environment. According to PNAS (2018), marginalized communities care about the environment, but they have fewer resources to make needed changes or the decision-making power to influence and to push for environmental change in their communities. They are the most affected by climate change and major environmental hazards. In fact, they have issues and barriers that preclude their ability to work toward building environmentally friendly, safe, economically sound neighborhoods (Adams et al., 2020).

Building relationships and networks are key factors in building cohesive, stable, sustainable communities and in achieving success. Also, in order for sustainability in the United States to be achieved, more individuals must be included in the decision-making process and in sustainability efforts in their communities. Furthermore, understanding the impact of external institutional systems (U.S. criminal justice and corrections, Prison-Industrial complex, foster care systems) and embedded interlinking systems (school system) on communities is also extremely important to understanding how to make progress toward becoming a sustainable community (Adams et al., 2019).

Integrative sustainability assessments and indicators are needed to provide information and measurements of progress (or lack of progress) toward sustainability for unsustainable, poor, marginalized communities faced with complex, persistent problems, underlying issues and barriers (e.g., prison cycling), that do not allow for them to build the capacity needed to become socially cohesive, stable and sustainable communities (Adams et al., 2019). A metric for increased sustainability is reflected in

communities' ability to increase individual social capital and community capital, therefore, community collective capacity.

Radically broadening sustainability efforts requires that increasing numbers of participating, decision-making stakeholders help build capacity, processes, policies and activities to adequately improve the earth's environment and the quality of life of individuals for maximum intergenerational impact. The voices and challenges of those in these communities should be heard, so that a more comprehensive understanding of the needs and hardships faced by community members can be included in developing a realistic and complete plan of action toward sustainability. This paper addresses the start of this process by creating a foundational transition tool, Social R.I.C.E., to determine a baseline for future measurement toward sustainability in poor marginalized communities faced with high incarceration rates and recidivism rates. Additionally, using community-based participatory research and a strategic utility for providing equitable input (hearing of differing perspectives) and an equitable, collective decision-making process allows for the very important work of community inclusion in developing and ensuring that their needs for a sustainable living space are truly being met. A restorative justice circle process should be considered as a utility for discussions of this type.

A paradigm shift is taking place which is moving social sustainability (equity and justice) to the forefront. A new way of thinking about our lived space and our place in the world is required for our collective present and future well-being. The natural and social environment we live in is changing. Therefore, sustainability issues need to be looked at through a wide sustainability systems-based lens that examines and addresses interlinking and embedded systems and barrier. Additionally, the barriers to justice, inter- and intragenerational and racial equity, hence, social sustainability, will need to be

confronted in a proactive manner, so that racial inequalities and disparities, racial stigma, discrimination, segregation and injustice can be dismantled (Finney, 2014). In poor marginalized communities these barriers block the opportunities to increase community capacity and social capital which are needed to become sustainable communities. Sustainability narratives have to be more racially inclusive, not exclusive, in order for the world/earth to keep its ability to care for human, plant and animal kind.

Trust, understanding and relationship building between communities of color, researchers, and policy makers is another benefit of the Building Sustainable Communities Framework and use of this community-based, participatory action research Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool. Asking questions that respect the humanity, history and hope for the community and having a dialogue with community members leads to what is clearly necessary -- a collective approach to increasing sustainability.

CHAPTER 4

ARTICLE 3

Building Sustainable Communities Framework, the Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (Social R.IC.E.) Transition Tool and Restorative Justice Peace Circles: The Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project

Abstract

Across America there are states considered tough-on-crime states. They are known for their zero tolerance laws including truth-in-sentencing, three strikes laws, and mandatory minimum sentences. These laws add greatly to the level of already disproportionately incarcerated people of color (African American, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous). Many have served longer sentences than the dominant population for the same crimes. Racial inequities and racism are evident throughout the criminal and corrections systems in federal, state, private prisons, and detention centers. Yearly over 700,000 incarcerated individuals are being released from prisons, jails and detention centers. Most are returning to their home communities and families. Many have been convicted of felonies which will limit their prospects for employment, where they can live and healthcare. Most recidivate within the first six months after being released.

From a sustainability and sustainable communities systems-based perspective, how does this high degree of forced mobility affect poor marginalized communities ability to become sustainable? The Building Sustainable Communities Framework, the Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (Social R.I.C.E.) Transition Tool and the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project described in this paper were informed by critical race theory and is focused on the reintegration process of individuals from prisons to their home communities and

society. Many formerly incarcerated individuals of color are returning home to unhealthy and unsustainable communities. Furthermore, many formerly incarcerated individuals return home with physical and emotional issues and debt. The criminal justice, bail, foster care, and corrections systems have had devastating effects on families and communities of color leaving them fragile.

This Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project seeks to examine, "What can these vulnerable communities and families do to help reduce recidivism, thus increasing community wellbeing and collective capacity which are necessary to adequately address sustainability problems?" This five-week pilot project utilized the Restorative Justice Circle process (Native American and other indigenous tribes' based practice). This study found trust and strong family and community relationships were weak due to the incarceration experience and this poses challenges for building community collective capacity and networking, but visioning of a safe, stable, sustainable community was desired by all.

Introduction

"You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round... The Sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours.... Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves."

Black Elk First People (Metoui 2007)

A step toward increasing the earth's sustainability is to create a foundation for the transition of poor marginalized communities of color into resilient and stable places to live. When communities are inclusive and cohesive, they are safer and more sustainable. In this paper, a transition tool based on the Building Sustainable Communities Framework for communities with high incarceration and recidivism is also used to gather information on community social reintegration, inclusion, cohesiveness and equity (Social R.I.C.E.) with the goal of exploring family and community relationship-building, in essence to create a pathway for community sustainability transformation. The paper explores how these vulnerable communities can be more welcoming and supportive of formerly incarcerated individuals. The Building Sustainable Communities -Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project utilized the Restorative Justice Circle process during a 5-week period to bring together formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of formerly incarcerated and community members in an effort to repair and build family and community relationships. (The restorative justice circle process is based on Native American and other indigenous tribes' way of communicating, problem-solving and resolving conflict.)

With community-based participatory action in the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project the findings were that with the combination of the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool and the utilization of the Restorative Justice Circle process, repairing the harm of incarceration and racial injustices, personal, family and community emotional and physical wellbeing potentially increases. Thus, the opportunity to improve the ability to build trust, community wellbeing, collective capacity, stability and sustainability increases.

Sustainability Transition Process for Poor Marginalized Communities

The communities that are most negatively impacted by the United States criminal justice system are marginalized communities of color (African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American). High unemployment, homelessness, health problems and poor education are major barriers blocking individuals from these communities from successful reintegration into society (Adams et al., 2020; Executive Office of The President of the United States, 2016). Furthermore, the formerly incarcerated often lose their voting rights and are stripped of jury duty responsibility. Over 75% of formerly incarcerated individuals return to prison within 5 years, almost 50% within the first 6 months (Adams et al., 2020; Harding, 2013; Woodcraft, 2012). This combination adversely affects their community's reputation, decision-making power, government representation and funding at the local, state and federal levels (Morenoff, 2014; Aday, 2014; Harding, 2013). In order for these fragile communities to become sustainable places where residents want to live, they need to be inclusive, safe, cohesive and equitable. Sustainable communities provide affordable housing, quality education, social organizations and networks, clean environments, healthy food stores, health care and other local services. High incarceration and recidivism rates have led to prison, jail and detention center overcrowding and unhealthy circumstances. Moreover, tough on crime laws, policies and practices in states like Arizona have added to these adverse effects.

Communities affected by the intended and unintended consequences of high incarceration and recidivism are not sustainable communities (Adams et al., 2020). From the purview of achieving sustainability, the major sustainability questions remain unanswered or ignored are: "What are the sustainability goals, objectives and strategies for poor marginalized communities that do not require the gentrification of the

communities? Who is involved in the decision-making process? How do these communities build the collective community capacity and knowledge necessary to withstand present and future dangerous environmental threats? Sustainability assessment tools help in the decision-making process (Bond, 2012). Are the affected stakeholders engaged in the process of developing sustainability assessment tools? What are the learning processes and policies that need be implemented for poor marginalized communities to be prepared under the circumstances of their daily realities?

It is imperative to start a sustainability transition process by understanding the realities faced from the perspective of individuals and families living in poor marginalized communities, by examining the systems negatively affecting their lives and the barriers blocking the ability of the communities from advancing economically, environmentally and socially. Since we know very little about how to change or prepare poor communities of color impacted negatively by prison-cycling (incarceration-release-rearrest) into resilient, sustainable communities, included in this paper is the Building Sustainable Community Framework designed for use with poor marginalized community members and by researchers, academics, sustainability scientists, NGOs and policymakers to help better understand the process by which these communities can achieve a more sustainable outcome. Also, included is the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool (social reintegration, inclusion, cohesion and equity) which was used in the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project to better understand marginalized communities struggles with building collective capacity, an essential requirement for adequately managing present and future major environmental issues and wicked sustainability problems. If there is community collective capacity, it makes it easier to produce in advance plans, goals and strategies for emergencies and decide who will do what during the emergency.

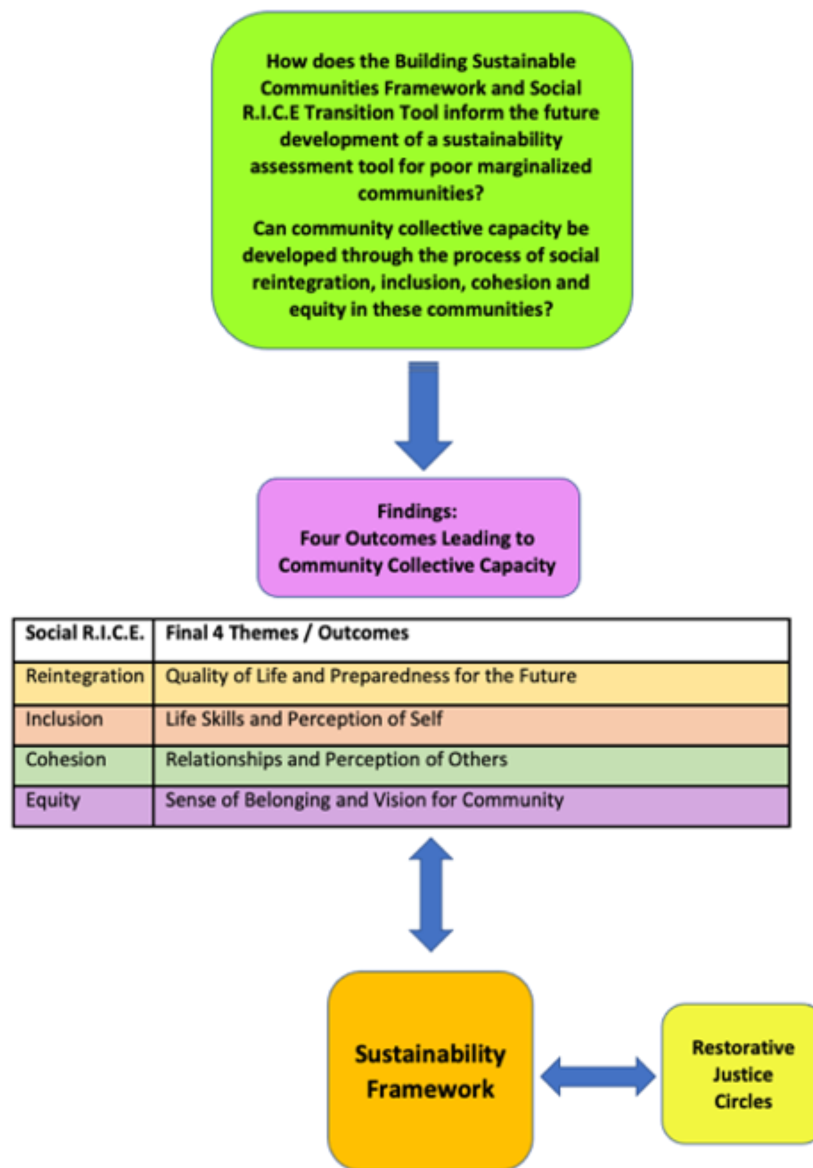

Figure 1: Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool Findings Leading to Community Collective Capacity

What is apparent is that important aspects of sustainable communities such as social cohesiveness, social inclusiveness and social equity (Woodcraft, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2011) are missing in poor and marginalized communities into which formerly

incarcerated individuals are making their re-entries and attempting to embed themselves again. The Building Sustainable framework and the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool presented in this paper can be used to inform and change sustainability goals into specific actions for poor marginalized communities faced with high incarceration and recidivism rates. Also, the restorative justice peacemaking circle process (an indigenous based practice) in the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project is examined for its utility to help in the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals for increased community and family stability and sustainability.

Home Communities, Vulnerable Populations and Society

The population of formerly incarcerated individuals must be understood in the context of their communities. Prisoners are considered a vulnerable population in the United States prisons and jails according to institutional review boards. Special precautions by prisons are taken to protect them from those who may take advantage of their incarceration status. Upon their release they are still vulnerable and they are returning to vulnerable communities and fragile families (Clear, 2009). Additionally, public health is put at risk when prisoners are released and return to their home communities with illnesses and diseases that spread to family and community members. Many of the prisoners have spent time in solitary confinement which researchers have discovered to have detrimental psychological effects (Deveaux, 2013). Upon release, formerly incarcerated individuals who have paid their debt to society, live with the ongoing consequences related to their convictions and incarceration. Removal of parental rights are often a byproduct of incarceration. Some of these individuals have their pensions and property rights dissolved.

Across the country, those with felony convictions are met with thousands of restrictions and barriers to employment opportunities, housing, public benefits (i.e. food assistance), healthcare, insurance, self-improvement, education and improving livelihood (NIJ, 2017). Additionally, the removal of voting and jury rights prohibits their representation in decision-making at the local, city, state or federal level which adds to social inequity (Clear, 2009). Many end up homeless and hungry. Reentry and social reintegration of this vulnerable population into already struggling families and overwhelmed poor marginalized communities is an extremely challenging and traumatic experience (Adams et al., 2020; Nesmith 2008). The systems in place in the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals, their families and communities weigh heavy on their ability to overcome their life's challenges, stresses and realities. Most released prisoners succumb to the grave reality of their circumstances. Public safety is put in jeopardy when this occurs. That is why the reentry process is pivotal to their successful transition to home and community (Adams et al., 2020; Clear 2014; Williams 2007).

The Building Sustainable Communities conceptual framework and the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool recognize that incarceration in prisons, jails and detention centers negatively impact not only the individuals incarcerated, but also their families and communities. Additionally, this is true for returning war veterans and their families. They, like formerly incarcerated individuals, also have higher suicide rates than the general public (Weinstein et al., 2017). In reviewing information and questionnaires for veterans who have experienced trauma (Table 2), they have been diagnosed with PTSD or head injuries. Many of them, now home, have been incarcerated and are homeless (Bronson, 2015; Sayer, 2011). Thus, finding a way to reintegrate the formerly incarcerated back into society will help to increase public safety, family cohesion, a community's stability and resilience in addition to the earth's sustainability. Therefore,

the focus of the Building Sustainable Communities Framework is on families, friends and community support as major factors and influences in determining the processes and the ability of poor marginalized communities to move in the direction of resiliency, stability and sustainability.

Figure 2: Path for Moving Towards Resilience and Sustainability

Restorative justice practices have shown promise in building community relationships and reducing recidivism in juvenile and sex offender programs (Davis, 2019; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2012; Bazemore & Maruna, 2009). This process with the use of the Social R.I.C.E. (social reintegration, social inclusion, social cohesion and social equity) Transition Tool in the Building Sustainable Communities - Repairing the Harm

of Incarceration was beneficial in helping to create the environment for contemplating the future design of sustainable community building assessment tools for poor marginalized communities.

This work contributes to sustainability and sustainable community building discourse, academic scholarship and the development of future sustainability assessment tools. It also utilizes community-based participatory action methodology in the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project.

Rationale

For sustainability to be relevant for poor marginalized communities major problems affecting these communities, such as criminal justice, high incarceration, community reentry, and recidivism, must be part of the sustainability discourse. The Building Sustainable Communities Framework (Figure 3) for communities facing high incarceration and recidivism shows the phases of progress toward sustainability.

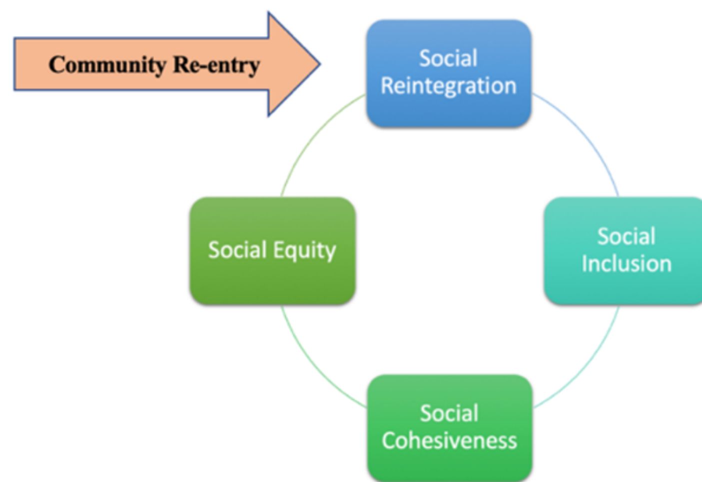

Figure 3: Building Sustainable Communities Framework 4-Core Concepts

The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool (Table 1) goes further in gathering pertinent community data.

Social R.I.C.E. Interview Questions
Social Reintegration
How is your health? (*Physical/Mental, Emotional*)
What makes you feel good about yourself?
How did life change outside while you were incarcerated?
Social Inclusion
What makes you feel good about your community?
Do you think school or a training program is important to your future?
How have you handled any stigma from being incarcerated or having a family member that was in prison?
Social Cohesion
What is the benefit of welcoming formerly incarcerated individuals in the community?
What would help you to feel more part of the community?
In what ways do you feel more connected to the community? How long did it take?
Social Equity
How would you like to see your community improved?
Do your parents, children and/or grandchildren live in your community?
What issues are people in your community facing?

Table1: Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool

Sustainability and Restorative Justice Synergies and Limitations

Sustainability and restorative justice (conceptual frameworks) are complementary approaches that will provide poor marginalized communities with a more comprehensive way toward becoming resilient, sustainable communities. Sustainability was originally introduced as a conceptual framework to inform policy and development related to conservation and preservation of the environment (Dempsey et al., 2009). Consequently, social sustainability (a segment of the three pillar sustainability framework) has been interpreted by policy-makers, researchers, activist, businesses, governments and NGOs from their own perspectives (Robinson, 2004). Nevertheless, this research employs these two theoretical approaches to help advance

both the connection as well as the fundamental importance of social sustainability (equity and justice) in the building of sustainable communities. Social sustainability is critical because it demands the inclusion of fair opportunities and distribution of goods; inter- and intragenerational equity --often ignored (Golub et.al., 2011); participation in decision-making processes; public awareness of sustainability issues and encouraging alternative sustainable consumption patterns; and social cohesion which is linked to happiness/well-being, interpersonal trust, reduced crime and antisocial behavior (Adams et al., 2020; Murphy 2012; OECD 2009).

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is an alternative to the traditional adversarial criminal justice system. The restorative justice conceptual theory is based on three guiding principles: 1) crime is a harm against people and relationships; 2) violations create obligations; 3) putting things right is the obligation. To put things right involves victims, offenders and community members if possible (Zehr, 2015; Umbreit & Armour, 2010). There are three fundamental questions posed in restorative justice which are different from the focus of criminal justice system because they focus on victim needs and offender responsibility/accountability: Who has been hurt? What are their needs? Whose obligations are they? (Zehr, 2015; Umbreit & Armour, 2010)

Although restorative justice is becoming more mainstream, with several states in the U.S. using restorative justice practices and language in legal proceedings, restorative justice practices are used most often on the margins of society (e.g., in some courts, jails, prisons, juvenile detention centers and schools (often for disciplinary issues) (Gonzalez, 2020, Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos, 2018). As such it has several practices useful for individual and community relationship building: victim-offender dialogue/mediation, family group conferencing, sentencing circles, victim panels, talking circles, panel juries

in schools, restorative conferences (Zehr, 2015; Pranis, 2007; Braithwaite & Parker 1999). The practices uses have spread to faith-based organizations, businesses, and community organizations (Zehr, 2015; Pranis, 2007; Braithwaite & Parker 1999).

The restorative justice approach and practices have been applied internationally. A restorative justice program, Circles of Support and Accountability in Canada, has been successful in helping reduce recidivism of convicted sex offenders. The program assists these individuals re-establish themselves in communities. It is also being used in the United Kingdom and parts of the United States (Richards, 2011). A major proceeding that reflected restorative justice principles was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (1995). It investigated human rights violations and helped in the transition from apartheid to a free democracy (Allais, 2012).

Shared Ideologies, Limitations and Discord

While sustainability is often viewed as a top-down, systems-based framework, restorative justice is viewed as a bottom-up, non-adversarial grassroots approach. This combination can be extremely useful in strategically addressing complex systemic injustices and also providing guidance for transforming unsustainable communities into healthy, safe, sustainable places to live. Both powerful concepts acknowledge everything is interconnected and it takes a concerted and inclusive effort of stakeholders to grapple with "wicked problems." Both restorative justice and sustainability require systems thinking and the importance of shared values and collective decision-making. The concepts focus on the obligations and responsibilities of individual and collective decision-making and actions. Notably, they are also considered to be interventions/ disruptors to systems that are not working for the common good. Furthermore, they are transformational in their utility to gather stakeholders that bring differing perspectives and viewpoints.

The concepts of sustainability and restorative justice share similar foundational ideologies: we are all connected and social equity and collective wisdom are critical to humanity's survival. But similar to many in the sustainability field of study, research and practice, the restorative justice community has not fully embraced the subjects of white supremacy, implicit bias, racial inequalities and disparities (Evans et al., 2019; Gavrielides, 2014). Umbreit and Coates (2000), leaders in the restorative justice community, from the Center for Restorative Justice & Peacebuilding (University of Minnesota) informed restorative justice practitioners of possible pitfalls and dangers that can occur in working with people from different races, cultures and ethnicities. Moreover, practitioners, victims and offenders often come from different social environments, have diverse communication styles and world views. Furthermore, Umbreit and Coates warned that racism, imbalanced power dynamics (political power), and cross-cultural differences can sometimes lead to incorrect assumptions and stereotypical outcomes, confusion, misunderstandings or increased conflict, all of which can jeopardize or bring an end to the process of repairing relationships.

More recently, Davis (2019) stated the restorative justice community in the United States has had a lack of racial justice consciousness due to structural and institutional racism. Restorative justice practitioners are usually white, privileged people and are not immune to internalized racial supremacy nor taught about oppression during restorative justice training even though they are working in schools in the United States to reduce the number of children in the school-to-prison pipeline and the juvenile justice facilities and prisons where structural and institutional systemic racism also permeate (Davis, 2020; Davis, 2019; Evans et al., 2019, Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos 2018). To increase racial awareness and to attract more people of color, the conference theme was Race and Restorative Justice for the first national restorative justice conference

(2013) after the 2012 incorporation of the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ), followed by the 2017 national conference where the central focus and presenters were from historically marginalized communities (Davis, 2020; Davis, 2019). Earlier conferences (2007, 2009, 2011) drew approximately 200-300 attendees. The 2013 and 2017 conferences drew 400 and 1,300 attendees respectively.

Diversity in perspective is critical in trying to create social transformation and racial justice (Davis, 2019). Moreover, due to the present social unrest, some restorative justice practitioners and researchers have broached critical race theory to inform restorative justice theory and the impact of white supremacy and racism on their field of work (Vaandering, 2010; Evans et al., 2019). Additionally, theorizing is being done to reconfigure the restorative justice theory including its language away from criminal justice labels (e.g., victim and offender) to expand the reach of restorative justice practices (Stauffer, 2019). The fields of restorative justice and sustainability are both being transformed by including the diverse voices and perspectives of marginalized people of color.

Peacemaking Circles

Restorative justice peacemaking circle process is a vehicle that promotes relationship building. For this reason, it was selected by the author for use in the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. The practice helps to develop problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills ((Bazemore & Maruna 2009; Pranis, 2001). Additionally, the Restorative Justice Peace Circle process has been used to discuss complex issues such as crime and gang conflicts, family and community issues, race relations and sexual orientation discussions, religious challenges, police and community strategy issues and environmental issues. Therefore, the Restorative Justice Peacemaking Circle has the capacity to be used as a vehicle to

discuss sustainability issues. Because of the Restorative Justice Peacemaking Circle process, use of a talking piece provides the structure needed for this to occur, all voices of individuals in the circle can be expressed in a nondominated equitable way (Zehr, 2015; Pranis, 2003).

Methodology

As more people come to the realization that everything is interconnected, they will better understand the importance of community building. Both sustainability and restorative justice frameworks have made this a foundational principle from which all else is derived. Therefore, the author worked with community partners to facilitate restorative justice peace circles with people reentering their communities after the release from prison, family members of formerly incarcerated and community members. This community-based participatory action research was informed by engaged and critical race theory. Engaged theory recognizes history and place in the formation of social relationships and cultures (James, 2015; Magee, et al., 2013). Critical race theory examines power structures that focus on the marginalization of people of color (De La Garza & Ono 2016; Delgado & Stefancic 2001). These power structures use laws, policies and practices which create a dominate and oppressor relationship between races of people resulting in less favorable and disproportionate circumstances and resources for marginalized populations (black and brown people).

Critical race theory also uses narrative storytelling and personal experiences to explore and share the lived experiences and barriers faced by the underclass populations (De La Garza & Ono, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic 2001). Additionally, this work is grounded in indigenous methodologies and knowledge, meaning it is an exercise in self-determination, decolonization and social justice, steeped in a horizontal power structure, shared values, rituals, historical traditions, empowering relationships and environmental

justice that allow for reimaging the world and a space for belonging (Hooks, 1990; Smith, 2012; People of Color Environmental Leadership, 1996).

The author used her skill as a Restorative Justice practitioner and facilitator, as well as, the knowledge she acquired through the Community Based Participatory Research Institute for Health: Indigenous and Critical Methodologies (University of New Mexico 2019), and the Public Science Project Critical Participatory Action Research Institute (City University of New York 2018) as a foundation to create the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. She was able to initiate and build relationships with national, state and community organizations to get support for the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. She also did narrative interviews with formerly incarcerated participants, family members of formerly and presently incarcerated individuals, in addition to community members, to get an understanding of community and familial connections, frustrations and achievements; get a sense of what sustainability, sustainable community and intergenerational and intragenerational equity means to them. The author asked participants to take self-surveys to get demographic information, get a feel for the person's sense-of-self (self-esteem, self-awareness) and how these feelings play into community interaction, social cohesion and community building. Additionally, the self-survey responses acted as support and verification of information in the interviews. The author also facilitated a community mapping exercise with participants to get a better idea of what is important to the community or missing in or needed by the community.

Methods

The author, to prepare for hosting the Building Sustainable Community-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project, participated in Arizona's Department

of Justice Reentry Simulation at the Reentry Summit sponsored by the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University and the Children of Incarcerated Parents sponsored the Center for Child Well-being at Arizona State University. She attended these forums to better understand the struggles of people who are returning to their home communities from prison. She also interviewed the Arizona Department of Corrections reentry coordinator responsible for inmate programs and reentry. She attended the Maricopa County Reentry Coalition (MCRC) hosted by Arizona State University's Center for Behavioral Health Policy.

The author contacted and made presentations to several African American organizations: the Commission on African American Affairs, Phoenix chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) regarding the upcoming Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. She also met with formerly incarcerated individuals about the Building Sustainable Communities Pilot Project who founded organizations which trained or hired formerly incarcerated individuals: AZ Common Ground and Tiger Mountain. The author also met with a formerly incarcerated individual at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in the Smart Justice program. She was asked to make a presentation for Smart Justice at a regularly scheduled Saturday Breakfast (for formerly incarcerated individuals and family members of formerly and incarcerated individuals) in the Smart Justice office and to facilitate a restorative justice peacemaking circle with the group of individuals (approximately 20) that would be in attendance. The presentation and Circle went very well, resulting in several participants signing up to participate in the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project.

Two community-based organizations sponsored the Building Sustainable Communities Pilot Project providing meeting space on a campus once a week for

approximately 3-hour sessions. One organization arranged for the use of the library on the campus in the evenings on Tuesdays and the other organization provided the use of the auditorium/gymnasium in the morning on Fridays. The author arranged for a third group to meet at a public library in Phoenix, Arizona on Thursday evenings (Table 2).

A bilingual group (Spanish/English) met in the auditorium/gym on Fridays. The author is not bilingual, so the challenge was to have all the handouts translated to Spanish and figure out how to manage translation issues during the group sessions. The organization agreed to translate any documents into Spanish and translate during the 3 hour sessions. With three locations available, the author visited 8 churches in the Phoenix and South Phoenix areas and made flyers for electronic and print distribution to bring in more participants. An advertisement was placed in the Arizona Informant Newspaper regarding the events.

Weekly Sessions

For all three group locations a light meal was available for participants followed by activities: Restorative Justice circle, focus group activities and completion of a short survey. At no time were individual criminal convictions discussed. Each week there was a discussion of the following topics:

Week 1-Personal Perspectives and Wellbeing

Week 2-Family Dynamics

Week 3-Community and the Environment

Week 4-Hardships, Inter- and Intragenerational Equity

Week 5-Collective Wellbeing, Opportunities and Empowerment

Table 2: Group Demographics		
	Group 1:	**Group 2**
Location	Tuesday Nights- Campus Library	Friday Mornings Auditorium / Kitchen
Participants	13	11
Races	Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, White	Hispanic- Puerto Rican and Mexican Americans
Number of Women	5 women-2 formerly incarcerated, 4 women of color, 1 Caucasian	All women-1 formerly incarcerated
Number of Men	8 men- 4 formerly incarcerated, 7 men of color, 1 Caucasian	0
Relations	Mothers, Daughters, Granddaughters, Wives, Partners, Fathers, Husbands	Grandmothers, Mothers, Daughters, Wives, Partners
Family members with formerly incarcerated relatives	3 (sons, brother, partner)	6 (son, brothers, daughter, spouses, brother-in-law)
Community members	4	5
Range of Incarceration periods	1.5-15 years	1-13 years
Relative or formerly incarcerated participant out of prison	2 months to 12 years	< 1 year to 15 years
Children placed in foster care as a result of incarceration	0	0
Children received financial assistance from grandparent while parent was incarcerated	1	1
Group 3: Thursday Nights Meetings Canceled at Phoenix Public Library - Closures due to Covid-19 Pandemic		

With all Restorative Justice Circles, the same materials (short stories, poems, inspirational cards and stationery supplies) were used. Personal information shared in Circle discussions are not disclosed. Only general discussion information will be shared in this article. Focus group and narrative interview information will be shared in this article. The interviews were completed after the 5 sessions ended for each group because of time limitations due the Coronavirus Pandemic. The author was able to meet face-to-

face with the group 1 participants and the interviews were over the internet or by phone with group 2 participants. The 9 individuals that participated in the interviews all spoke English and were present for most if not all of the five sessions. The interviews followed the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool (Table 1).

The first week for each group started with the explanation of the following poster which was placed on the wall each week as a reminder that we are all connected.

Figure 3: Community Empowerment

The Community Empowerment poster was explained in the following way: This Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project process starts with you. We will be looking at each step of the process from your perspective. You will get to speak your truth. You are part of a family in a community.

Families are not all the same. We are all connected. Your community is surrounded by the environment. Everything is interconnected. The future is uncertain with opportunities and hardships. A sustainable community is resilient, cohesive, healthy, safe and empowered. How can we make our families and communities healthier, safer, more stable and sustainable?

Although the author believed that each group member would attend all five of the weekly sessions, this was not the case because of their other responsibilities. The groups had a core of people who attended all the sessions.   Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Phoenix public library closed. Hence, group 3 meetings were canceled. Additionally, the public school system's spring break lead to postponement of the women's bilingual group session by one week. All the women in the group had children or grandchildren they had to care for. The public schools were closed the following week, so the Tuesday night group met again in the business office and the women's group meeting placed met at an outdoor community garden (Figure 4). The library was also closed for the school holiday week, but the sponsoring business allowed the group to meet in their space.

Figure 4: Outside Circle

The last three sessions for the women's group were held in the school kitchen where we sorted, washed and packed fresh fruits and vegetable to be distributed to families in need. Although the suitability of the setup for the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project was in question, the women requested that I continue the Circle process and additional activities in our new space. As we worked, I told short stories, read poems, asked questions and gave instructions for activities. In both groups, a bond had been created. We spoke our truth, shared our pain and hope for the future.

The Tuesday group meeting in the library was the first to discuss the Building Sustainable Communities Framework (Figure 5). Members of this group participated in a focus group that met during the pilot program and discussed the Building Sustainable Communities Framework terminology. Some of the group preferred more familiar language to describe the different phases of the framework, terminology different from the more academic descriptions used for sustainable communities. Consequently, both descriptions of the four phases were used during the pilot project. We used part of the time during the 5-week pilot project in focus groups continuing to discuss the four phases of the framework: Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesiveness, Equity and in other focus group activities.

Figure 5: Library Circle

We did two focus group activities in silence after our discussions of the Building Sustainable Communities framework concepts and personal experiences of incarceration and incarceration of a family or community member.

On the poster boards marked with the headings of the four phases (and with the informal terminology), the groups were given directions about the exercise and post it notes to write feelings and actions that represented three types of individuals living and working in communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates (Figure 6). The participants independently wrote words or phrases before approaching the boards, then silently came back to their seats in group 1. After reflection and focus group discussion, we were able to talk for a short while more intensely about some of the experiences when we moved into the safety of our Restorative Justice Circle. In group 2, the posters were filled as work in the kitchen was being done by some and afterward by others (Figure 7).

The activities were also done in silence, so each individual could reflect more on their own personal experiences. The author's reflection was that there was silence in both groups after the activity as participants took in the information and saw other participants had shared similar feelings and experiences. There seemed to be a group sigh of relief. In group 2, because of limited time available, we did not have the opportunity to discuss issues or experiences more deeply.

In addition to focus group data, weekly short self-surveys were also a part of the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project.

Figure 6: Library Posters - Silent Focus Group Activity

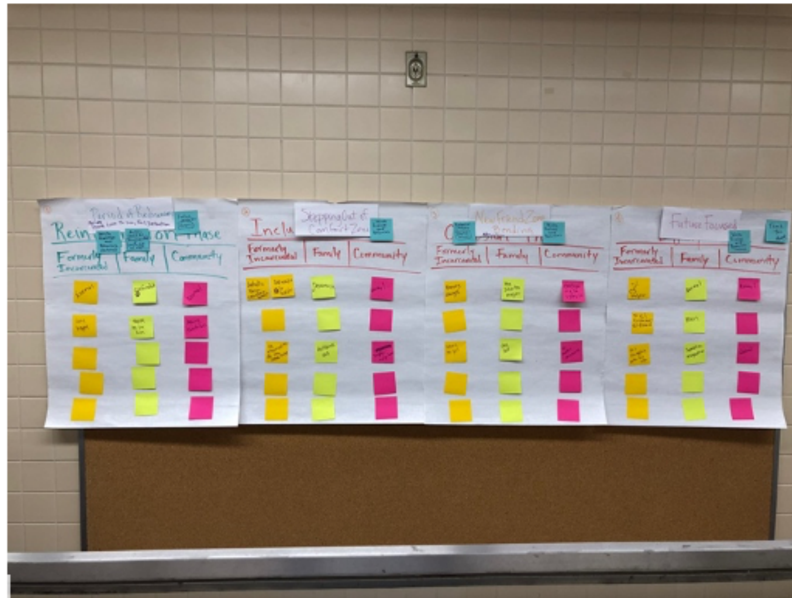

Figure7: Kitchen Posters -Silent Focus Group Activity

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The main research question addressed in this paper is, "What can communities of color do to be more welcoming to formerly incarcerated individuals, so there is a decrease in recidivism and an increase in community capacity?" Stable personal and family networks and organizations in a community help provide the crucial collective capacity necessary during major negative events and emergencies. An essential subset of questions needed for getting a better understanding of the community and being able to the answer the main question are: 1) Who lives in these communities? 2) Who are the formerly incarcerated individuals, their families and community members?" 3) How do they perceive the world? 4) How do they experience the community where they live? 5) What are their values?

The Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach matched well with the engaged and critical race theory, the principles of the sustainability conceptual framework and the restorative justice circle approach because of its recursive analysis process of the entire

data collection, looking for patterns of meaning and elements of storytelling. "The endpoint is the reporting of the content and meaning of patterns (themes) in the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reflexive thematic analysis approach was chosen for its flexibility. It can be used by one coder. The approach was also used because it does not require large data sets. The approach can be used with qualitative interviews, focus groups and qualitative surveys, all of which were a part of the Building Sustainable Communities – Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project. The reflexive thematic analysis approach is also a good method for work in participatory action research with participants as collaborators (Braun & Clarke 2006). Additionally, this approach recognizes that researchers bring their backgrounds, academic knowledge and own experiences with them and the process asks the researcher to reflect on the assumptions that he/she is bringing to the work. Therefore, the approach is not theoretically neutral. Other approaches usually require more than one coder to collect, compare and determine the data's reliability.

Reflexive thematic analysis requires the researcher to build codes and create "storytelling" themes. The author followed a six phase process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006)-- Phase 1: Familiarize yourself with your data; Phase 2: Look for important information in data and generating initial codes/categories; Phase 3: Search for patterns and themes in the data; Phase 4: Review the themes; Phase 5: Define the scope, focus and story behind the themes and name the themes; Phase 6: Weave the narrative and producing the report (Braun and Clarke 2006). The first 5 steps require a great deal of reflection and are iterative as you make sense of the data and shape the narrative.

The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool (based on the Building Sustainable Communities Framework) was utilized to gather relevant data for the purpose of

analysis. The data collected over a 5-week period from two groups of participants in the Building Sustainable Communities–Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project went through several iterations as the author looked for patterns of meaning to develop the codes from the data sets (focus groups, qualitative interviews (transcripts) and self-surveys). The author chose an inductive approach to build the themes which allows for the data to determine the themes as opposed to preexisting themes being chosen and a semantic approach to keep the participant's stated opinions as true to the theme development as possible. Also, to better visualize the codes and data created, a colorful Dandelion diagram was created (Figure 8). This diagram offers a powerful look at the enormity of the issues and chaos being faced by poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates. It is an illustration of unsustainable communities –communities and families in crisis. After completing the diagram, the author's first impression was that this is overwhelming. This is a clear picture of "inter- and intragenerational oppression" caused by the destructive external forces working on this community. This is the result of institutional and structural racism. The path to inter- and intragenerational equity is definitely obscured. Hence, revealing the complexity of the issues is a step in the right direction.

Figure 8: Diagram of Codes and Potential Themes

Reflecting and organizing the issues further into distinct codes (categories) was the next step. (Sixteen codes from the diagram are also listed in Table 3.) These codes were organized even further into different overarching themes. From these codes, potential themes were created.

Table 3: Final 16 Codes	
• Residual Effects of Prison Life	• Understanding Life's New Trajectory
• Development of Life and Coping Skills	• Levels of Distrust
• Homecoming -Dreams vs Realities	• Still Connected to Corrections' System
• Stigma and Stereotypes	• Under Educated /Under Served
• Overwhelming Financial Issues	• Unskilled Labor Jobs
• Criminal Justice /Police Harassment	• Physical and Mental Healthcare Issues
• Parenting and Other Family Issues	• Emotional Roller Coaster
• Learning New Technologies	• Homelessness and Recidivism

After careful reflection and several iterations of looking for meaning, patterns began to build from the original data sets, the codes and potential themes. These potential themes were reviewed further and narrowed down to eight potential themes (Table 4).

Table: 4 Potential 8 Themes	
▪ Quality of Life Health / Finances /Shelter	• Sense of Belonging Safety / Stability / Resilience
▪ Perception of Self Self-Esteem / Self-Worth	▪ Preparedness for Future Education / Job Skills
▪ Perception of Others Trust / Discernment	▪ Life Skills Coping Skills / Negotiation Skills
▪ Relationships Family / Social Network	• Vision for Community Shared Values / Collective Capacity

The conceptualization of the four final themes and the overarching theme began to mesh. The overarching theme is repairing the harm of incarceration and the four sub-themes help tell the story of how that can be accomplished (Table 5). There are major challenges, but the foundation for putting this into action has begun with the use of the

Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool based on the Building Sustainable Communities Framework (Table 5).

Table 5: Repairing the Harm of Incarceration	
Social R.I.C.E.	**Final 4 Themes / Outcomes**
Reintegration	Quality of Life and Preparedness for the Future Health / Finances / Shelter / Education / Job Skills
Inclusion	Life Skills and Perception of Self Coping Skills / Negotiation Skills / Self-Esteem / Self-Worth
Cohesion	Relationships and Perception of Others Family / Social Network / Trust / Discernment
Equity	Sense of Belonging and Vision for Community Safety / Stability / Resilience / Shared Values / Community Collective Capacity

The Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool is an important step in moving poor marginalized communities closer to reducing recidivism. The reflexive final four themes developed can be used as a guide for future development and shed light on a way forward to the creation of a sustainability assessment tool for poor marginalized communities. The themes can be used as the foundation to creating a sustainability assessment tool for poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates. The findings reflect the data can be used to better understand the challenges, fortitude and desires for community stability and sustainability. The data collected can be used to better understand the concepts of the four core Building Sustainable Communities Framework. After a great deal of analysis and reflection to identify patterns, major themes were found that led the author to conclude the information was relevant to better understanding of the formerly incarcerated, family members of the incarcerated and community members.

Theme One: Quality of Life and Preparedness for the Future – This theme relates to the reintegration phase. The reentry back to the community is a period of rediscovery. Formerly incarcerated individuals are back home, but they are not truly free yet because of parole and an mental adjustment period. This theme is about the change in the quality of their life after release. Although, formerly incarcerated individuals are not behind bars, the fast mental adjustment most are required to make is overwhelming. Dan and Rose (parents of formerly incarcerated individuals) confirm this to be the case. **Dan:** "The parole system gives you a whole laundry list of what you can't do, who you can see, where you can go. It's a lot of pressure." **Rose:** "They act like teenagers. They want to be free, act free."

The emotion of being released from behind bars is tremendous. Many formerly incarcerated individuals discover their new reality comes with new responsibilities and tasks that they are unprepared to handle. It is overwhelming and sometimes frightening for them. The future does not look like how they thought it would be. Jake, Mike, Sam and Rick (formerly incarcerated individuals) explain it this way. **Jake:** "It's like self-doubt when you first come out. I had $7 to my name when I came out. I'd seen a lot of guys were released and would come right back and I'd always ask what happened. They would tell me they got somebody pregnant and you know the stress. They would get their 1st paycheck and eventually go back to what they used to do." **Mike**: "When you're released, you're given a set of criteria that you need to complete-- counseling, service hours, color drops. You have randomly scheduled color drops. You have to call in everyday and if your color gets picked, you have to go in that day for drug testing. You have to leave your job to get to probation or parole." **Sam**: "You have to deal with probation and parole officers that are looking at your record and judging you beforehand. You try to do all this good citizen stuff. My probation officer looked at me

like I had already violated and I was wasting his time. Looking at my record I could kind of understand. It was like he wanted to hurry up and send me back." **Rick**: "Time management is key when you get out. In prison you don't have to worry about your schedule. When you're out, you have to figure out where to go? How to get there? How long it's going to take? How to get from work to the probation or parole office? If you're on the bus or riding a bike, you have to figure out how to get everything done and be back by a certain time. You can't be late or miss probation or parole." **Paul:** When you go to counseling, you can't really say how you feel to probation or parole officers, especially if they're white. They just can't relate to my life."

Theme Two: Life Skills and Perception of Self - This theme relates to the social inclusion phase and the ability to step out of your comfort zone phase. Theme two pertains to the life and coping skills that must be learned or re-learned by the formerly incarcerated (e.g., time management, money management). These skill are important because many newly released prisoners may have been incarcerated when they were parents of toddlers and now they are parents of teenagers. Upon release, some find themselves heavily in debt from child support owed while incarcerated, room and board bills from the prison for the time they resided there. Additionally, if released on parole, they may have to pay their parole officer every time they are required to meet with them. Another essential skill is being able to have interactions with civilians comfortably. A change in body language and eye contact may be required. Self-esteem and self-worth are tied to developing these personal skills. Also, coping skills developed or used when incarcerated may be inappropriate for outside of the walls of prison. Learning these skills is necessary when looking for employment, negotiating a contract and trying to find a place to live. All of this is a heavy responsibility and overpowering for many of those who are often undereducated, unskilled and returning from prison. Some formerly

incarcerated individuals are able to get into schools and training programs. According to these family and community members, this time period is tremendously difficult.

Mary: “Little jobs aren't paying much. Doesn't have enough money to pay the rent. Doesn't have enough money to buy a car. Doesn't have enough money to pay child support. Doesn't have enough money to pay restitution. You're stressed out about bills.” **Jose:** “They're never going to be secure. The kinds of jobs they can get are only temporary. This one guy said to me, every time I lose my job, I come back to prison. Why? Because he's frustrated and depressed. Then they get into drugs and do stupid stuff.” **Pete:** “Inmates can get training in prison and get certificates, but when they come out they can't get hired because of their record. They can learn plumbing or train to be an electrician.” **Jessie**: “I went back to school. It was an adjustment, but when I had a person of color as a professor, I was so happy. I felt comfortable enough to share my story with her and the class.”

Theme Three: Relationships and Perception of Others -This theme relates to the social cohesion phase – This is a new friend zone, meaning that trusting relationships have to be developed. Rebuilding family and friend relationships is hard for both the person who was incarcerated and the other person. Family and community members of formerly incarcerated individuals shared these comments. **Carl**: “My grandchildren live in a stressed family. Their dad has been incarcerated. So, as a grandparent I'm trying to hold that family together.” **Frank:** “Sometimes children feel they were abandoned.” **Angie:** “My grandson went with me the first time my daughter was in prison. He was small and missed his mom. The second time around he was very angry.” **Melissa:** “Making new friends is often easier because they (new friends) do not know of the formerly incarcerated individuals background and may be more accepting of the present circumstances. Formerly incarcerated often end up being homeless because

of the toll of incarceration has put on family members." **Dan:** "I have church. That's my community. They (sons) have their own communities. One lived an alternative lifestyle--living off the grid --where they don't have electricity or water, maybe sell scrape metal. Now he's in a halfway house and has some kind of construction job. Some people make other arrangements." **Sarah:** "He can't rent a place. Has to count on a female to get a place." The stigma and stereotypes placed on those who have felons stops many of the formerly incarcerated from being able to work certain jobs or be hired by companies. The family members of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals are also stigmatized. **Alicia:** "I tried to keep it quiet. I felt embarrassed. As a mother, what would people think. I was a teacher. I didn't want people to know I had a daughter in prison." **Rose:** "I don't talk about it with family because it ends up you're the bad mother with the bad kids. I tend to talk to people who don't know them."

Theme Four - Sense of Belonging and Vision for the Community - This theme relates to the social equity phase. It is future focused and there is a sense of safety, collective energy and shared values. Formerly incarcerated individuals, family members and community members have bonded on some level. Family and community activities are planned at this level. A higher level of communication and trust has been built. A couple of community members stated the following. **Bob:** "When you hear about transitional housing going into a neighborhood and the neighbors rebel, it's discouraging. I have optimism when I go to homeless meetings. **Sharon:** Some people they're more accepting and forgiving. They see beyond the labels of homeless and felon. They know people sometimes need second chances."

The sample size for this study may be considered small, but the results are significant and important to the sustainability community in moving the attainment of earth's sustainability forward. More participants involved in sustainable activities is

critical at this time. Understanding how to get more people involved and the issues and barriers preventing them from being involved is crucial to discovering and creating the means and new pathways to advance sustainability efforts.

Lessons Learned

Through the reflective and reiterative processes used during the Building Sustainable Communities–Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of those incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, and community members discussed several topics. These discussions helped the participants to better understand each other. They discovered their shared values and sense of determination and strength. Through stories of life experiences, where they had to draw on courage and strength to survive heartbreak and disappointment they bonded, supported one another and showed signs of resilience. Two groups of individuals saw the humanity in each other and worked in their groups to learn about how to manage their lives, families, and business better. Many who had buried their pain, hurt, fear and despair found refuge in the companionship of their group members.

The mix of groups brought different insights, inspirations and resolutions to the forefront. Group 1 had a mix of different races, genders, ages and stations in life. The male members of the group, during focus group discussions and restorative justice activities, brought forth situations of work experiences and interactions. Group 2 was made up of all Hispanic women participants of varying ages. The women talked more about family issues. The groups both talked about situations in which they were overcomers. They grew to share more intimate stories about family and personal struggles and hardships. Everyone in each group had Ah Ha! Moments when they

learned to see a circumstance from a different focal point. I saw in each group an increased sense of confidence, openness and vulnerability.

Toward the end of our time together we worked to discover what was happening in our communities and to shed light on how we might begin to repair the harm of incarceration on a deeper and more wide scale level. Many of the participants asked me what's next? How can they continue this work, work to strengthen, increase stability and sustainability in their communities and in the wake of devastating personal and family hardship? They now know that collective community wisdom and supportive actions are key. It appears that community capacity can be developed through the use of restorative justice circle process and the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool. They now know there is a path to social equity through social reintegration, inclusion and cohesion but it is still fraught with barriers and hazards.

The cycle of arrest-release-recidivate causes further damage to systems of support (family and community). Restorative justice circles have been used in schools as an intervention in this cycle. The Restorative Justice circle process gives individuals and communities the opportunity to practice collective problem-solving, conflict resolution, building relationships, hence, increasing community capacity and support systems. These life skills are needed to strengthen communities. Restorative Justice circles offer a way to address external factors that exacerbate issues faced by individuals, families and communities in a safe, non-judgmental, nonthreatening space utilizing the collective wisdom of the group. Restorative Justice circles are equitable, non-adversarial places for dialogue. Everyone involved has unique strengths, knowledge and insight to contribute to the discussion. Rituals are used to provide an atmosphere that is protective and empowering. Through personal storytelling, engaged deep listening, interconnectedness

is exposed and connections are developed. Shared experiences and self-reflection prompt moments of insight within the circle and empower individuals (Zehr 2015).

Criminal justice system interventions like arrests and incarceration damage individuals and tear families and communities apart. The unexpected and unintended consequences of these interventions are immense. Hence, the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool looks to identify individual and community needs and attributes of sustainable relationship building and community resilience across the four core concepts of the Building Sustainable Communities framework (Figure 1). It also creates a foundation for the design of future assessment tools that are scalable, consequently, allowing for future metrics of progress in community stability, resilience and sustainability. This Transition Tool was designed with community involvement and feedback. The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool with repeated use can be used to assess the progress of formerly incarcerated individuals as they embed themselves in their home communities. Attributes of sustainable communities (social cohesiveness, social inclusiveness, social equity) are investigated and include attributes such as health, wellbeing, housing, and safety, which are regarded as essential in making communities sustainable (Dempsey et al. 2011; Agyeman et al. 2001).

The narrative interviews with the formerly incarcerated, family members of formerly and presently incarcerated individual and community members are separated into these three groups perspectives. They can also be categorized into the following themes: health, housing, time management, family dynamics, money and employment, community concerns, education and training, values, attitudes, emotions, sense of belonging, racial equity/ stigma/ stereotypes, recidivism. They can also be placed in the more formal categories of social reintegration, inclusion, cohesion and equity. Different

points of view were expressed in the narrative interviews. They all needed to be heard and validated.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool can act as a guide and compass for academia, sustainability scientist and researchers, restorative justice practitioners, policy makers and poor marginalized communities in better understanding the path the communities have to take to increase social reintegration, inclusion, cohesion, equity, community collective capacity and reduce recidivism. Becoming more sustainable for these communities definitely requires the development of a sustainability assessment tool that recognizes the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals and the additional toll and energy it takes on families and communities. It is imperative to establish attainable goals and sustainability measures for these communities based on qualitative information which gives a fuller picture of the families living in poor marginalized communities of color. These communities need assistance in their efforts to increase reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals back into society. They need help to build community collective capacity, a major factor in being able to participate in sustainability efforts.

Sustainability goals, objectives, strategies and assessment tools are necessary for transitioning poor marginalized communities of color into more stable and sustainable communities. Unfortunately, too often gentrification appears to be the result of those efforts. Since this is the case, different strategies and tactics must be used to address the problems faced by these communities. "Sustainability assessment tools are designed to fit into decision-making and need to have affected stakeholders engaged in the decision-making process" (Bond 2012). Commitment needs to be set in place, if transitioning without gentrification is to take place. Gentrification only moves the present residents

out and new ones in. The problems for poor marginalized communities with high forced mobility remain unaddressed and unresolved.

Sustainable communities are healthy and resilient. Inter- and intragenerational equity cannot be realized by people in communities that are damaged and vulnerable. A paradigm shift is needed that will bring about social change. A tipping point must be reached that will shift the arc of justice more toward human and environmental wellbeing for the present and future generations. Learning to living well together, with respect and caring, honesty and integrity, will require changes in social and cultural habits. Pertinent questions must be asked and answered with honesty through the processes of new and old ways of knowing (collective wisdom), radical democracy, and active and inclusive citizenship. None of us is as smart as all of us. Strategies and collective action is needed to address the huge harms of past injustices and the competing needs of the present and the unforeseen problems of the future.

Poverty, poor education, poor health, no/low economic investments in a community are stressors on individuals, families and communities. The Building Sustainable Communities Framework and the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool bring to the forefront community awareness and engagement in the process to increase community inclusion and cohesiveness, therefore, decreasing recidivism as well as increasing community collective capacity needed for participation in sustainability efforts. The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool is the foundation for creating a sustainability assessment tool which recognizes and embraces the needs of poor marginalized communities. It is a community-based tool that can produce outcomes to inform community decision-making. Consequently, these outcomes can be used as evidence for establishing policies that contribute to more sustainable communities.

The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool is the tool by which the community uses to inform the development of a sustainability assessment tool for the community. The sustainability assessment tool will measure the progress toward sustainability. The Restorative Justice circle process cannot fix these major issues, but it can help increase empathy and self-awareness. Circle meetings help to decrease frustration and increase the understanding of the impact of negative actions on others. The Circle process can help to create healthier relationships, and bring about ways to consider the common good of the community and community solutions. The restorative justice circle process allows for a safe place to have restorative community dialogue, increase community understanding and healing, therefore, building community stability.

Restorative Justice Circles can help build a community's capacity to address future issues and endeavors through dialogue and shared values. Communities are made up of individuals, families, businesses, banks, churches and schools and as a collective they are responsible for what happens in their community. Therefore, collectively, the community has a responsibility to create a place that nurtures the wellbeing of its members. Individuals who are removed from a community usually return to that community, the place they call home. Hence, it is beneficial for the community to find ways to more adequately address their return in a holistic, more welcoming way because the health and safety of the community and community members are at stake. Learning to live together well takes time, but it is well worth the effort to attend to the wellbeing of the individual and community collectively (Pranis, 2017).

Restorative justice peacemaking circles have the ability to build capacity for individuals and communities to address through dialogue, past and future, large and small issues. The keys to addressing these issues positively begins with the principles put forth in restorative justice and sustainability. Individuals, families and the

community as a whole are the victims of racial injustice, racism, incarceration and recidivism. The victim's voice is integral to the process. Acknowledging and validating the harm done and making amends are imperative for healing and future productive dialogue and engagement. Restorative Justice peacemaking circles are nonjudgmental, safe spaces for dialogue and sharing of personal stories. Forgiveness can also be a part of the healing process. Restorative justice takes time and commitment from all stakeholders and culminates in stronger relationships, families and communities.

The ones who are the most vulnerable and have the least are usually hit the hardest by major environmental events and hazards. We must keep in mind that all life has value and holds unique knowledge and answers as we search for solutions to environmental problems. We all are responsible for this earth. Meeting collective needs can be grappled with through collective wisdom and consensus, and met through collective action of all stakeholders. We must find restorative and equitable ways to live on this precious earth together. Building sustainable communities must take precedence over radical individualism. Embracing racial equity, acknowledging structural and institutional racism and eradicating racial injustices is what is required so that all communities can begin to flourish and become sustainable.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The articles contained in this dissertation are groundbreaking. They expand the knowledge base of previous scholarship. They focus on acknowledging the sustainability barriers poor marginalized communities face and the need to move these communities from experiencing "inter- and intragenerational oppression" to "inter- and intragenerational equity." These are high priorities for reimagining sustainability and creating a sustainable earth. To accomplish these milestones, a paradigm shift is required on several fronts because of the complexity and enormity of issues. Without a shift in how major sustainability problems are perceived, researched and addressed to include the struggles of poor marginalized communities, the discovery and effectiveness of sustainability solutions will be limited. Truly transformational efforts must be made to change the lives of people in these vulnerable communities, so they can participate more fully in decision-making processes and the tremendous efforts needed to handle increasingly destructive sustainability issues.

The earth cannot reach the necessary sustainability levels with poor marginalized communities in crisis. Underlying systems of oppression continue to be barriers jeopardizing humanity's opportunity to explore the full range of sustainability solutions. In the United States of America, the basis of structural and institutional racism began when enslaved peoples were brought to this country. Inter- and intragenerational terrorism of African Americans, Native Americans and other people of color has existed in some form until the present day. There has been progress in the past decades to improve the lives of those who have been the targets of racism and discrimination (e.g., civil rights voting acts of 1964 and 1965). Nevertheless, this progress has not removed

the negative impact of structural and institutional racism on the descendants of enslaved peoples and others discriminated against because of the color of their skin. It has not removed the impact of Jim Crow laws or today's disproportionate incarceration rates of African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native Americans.

The Covid-19 virus ravaging communities of color today and killing members of these populations at a disproportionate rate are a reflection of the discriminatory injustices of past and present laws, policies and practices. The articles in this dissertation, reveal the present circumstances of poor people of color and their lived experiences. Major complex and persistent sustainability issues are being faced in communities of color and by people of color daily. Certainly, the ability to address and find answers to sustainability issues on a community level is what is needed now. Clear direction provided by goals, objectives and strategies based on efficient, accurate measures from a sustainability assessment tool(s) will help instill in these families and communities a stronger sense of belonging and confidence in their visions for establishing safe, stable, resilient and sustainable places to live.

Article 1 points out the struggles and devastating impact of the criminal justice, corrections, prison-industrial complex and foster care systems on poor communities of color and the article asks the question "Sustain what and for whom?" It emphasizes that if more stakeholders are to be involved in sustainability efforts then there must be a change in decision-making power and increased inclusion of all stakeholders in that process especially during this time of climate change and urgent sustainability problems. In this article, I provide an exploratory System-of-Communities conceptual model transforming the description and perspective from what is presently defined as a sustainable community or sustainable communities.

Article 2 poses the questions regarding the development of sustainability assessment tools for poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates. This article examines the historical context of poor marginalized communities including the past injustices of redlining and segregation which still have ramifications on loan and mortgage policies currently in existence in black communities. In the article, I have developed a four-core Building Sustainable Communities Framework for poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates was introduced. It is a first step in laying the foundation for these communities to reduce recidivism and by doing so increase collective community capacity, a process needed to increase collective community sustainability efforts and community resilience. The Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity Transition Tool (Social R.I.C.E.) is also described in the article. I developed this transition tool for communities transitioning from unsustainable to more sustainable. Unlike sustainability assessment tools, it is not a measurement tool. It is a tool designed to help lay the foundation for the design of future sustainability assessment tools which will measure the progress of movement toward sustainability for communities of color with high incarceration and recidivism rates. Knowledge regarding sustainability issues in these communities will empower residents in the community to participate in the sustainability decision-making process for their community.

Article 3 begins the process of better understanding the issues confronted by people in poor marginalized communities. It further opens the discourse of sustainable communities and sustainable solutions. This article describes the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project I developed for working with community-based organizations. The project utilized the Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool to address my research

question, “How can poor marginalized communities become more welcoming to formerly incarcerated individuals, so that community recidivism would decrease allowing for increases in community inclusion, cohesion and equity? Additionally, it used the Restorative Justice process which has synergies in principles with sustainability principles. The question of becoming more welcoming is broad and overarching, but a relevant and essential sustainability question. The Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool interview guide assisted in examining the research question by asking questions more specifically in terms that related to the Building Sustainable Communities Framework designed for working with poor marginalized communities with high incarceration and recidivism rates.

For the purpose of sustainability studies as well as other studies, it is vital that people in communities of color not be or feel as if they are being studied for the scientific advancement of others. Historically, studies on people of color and their communities have not boded well for them. They must be involved as equal decision-making partners in the process to make their communities more sustainable. It is imperative for sustainability researchers to understand how these community members perceive the world, and the communities and circumstances in which they live. The Reflexive Thematic Analysis method for analyzing data was chosen because it is a flexible and reflexive process not requiring more than one researcher or large data sets. Additionally, this method continued the underlying values and principles of sustainability and they extended through the Building Sustainable Communities Framework, the Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool, as well as the restorative justice circle process.

Using the data gathered through the qualitative interviews, focus groups and open-end question surveys through Reflexive Thematic Analyses four themes/outcomes developed (Braun and Clarke 2017). The major, complex and persistent sustainability

problem underpinning the chaos and unsustainability of the community was the ever-looming existence of structural and institutional systemic racism and discrimination. The analysis of the data reflected the impact of these systems on the community and the toll they took on the physical and emotional health of the individuals. The negative impact of these systems could be seen on inter- and intragenerational family members within the community.

Understanding the historical and present circumstances of poor marginalized communities from the community level gives sustainability researchers and scientists a deeper level of insight, hence the ability to make more informed and appropriate sustainability assessment tools, and to provide strong recommendations and decisions to help increase a community's sustainability efforts. Communities understanding that they are part of a system-of-communities should act accordingly to truly become more sustainable. Finally, individuals understanding their part in maintaining the status quo (oppressor-oppressed stance) or their responsibility in transforming their personal actions (rejecting racism and unjust systems and barriers to sustainability) is critical to creating safe, stable and sustainable communities for all. There are tremendous opportunities for academia, sustainability researchers, restorative justice practitioners and policymakers to make a huge difference in dismantling systemic racism and in helping to develop sustainable communities a reality for all unsustainable communities in the United States. The trajectory of the earth's sustainability is at stake.

This has been an extraordinary journey for me. Table 1 shows my path through the completion of this dissertation. I look forward to continuing this valuable work.

Table 1: Pilot Project Preparation and Execution for Dissertation Completion	2017	2018	2019	2020
Building Sustainable Communities – Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project Preparation				
Conferences and Trainings				
National Association of Community and Restorative Justice Conference - Oakland, CA				
Public Science Project Critical Participatory Action Research Institute at City University of New York (CUNY)				
National Children of Incarcerated Parents Conference at Arizona State University				
Community-based Participatory Research Institute at University of New Mexico				
Academy of Justice Reentry Summit – O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University				
Published Article				
Article 1: "Barriers to Sustainability in Poor Marginalized Communities in the United States: Poor Marginalized Communities in the United States: The Criminal Justice, the Prison-Industrial Complex and Foster Care Systems"				
Building Sustainable Communities Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project Prep				
Literature Review				
Developed and Tested Building Sustainable Communities Framework				
Developed and Tested Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (Social R.I.C.E.) Transition Tool based on Building Sustainable Communities Framework				
Created Surveys based on Building Sustainable Communities Framework and Social R.I.C.E. Transition Tool				
Developed Registration and Consent Forms				
Designed Flyers for the Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project for Recruiting Participants				
Relationship Building with National, Regional, Local Organizations				
Relationship Building with Community-based Organizations and Businesses				
Relationship Building with Faith-based Organizations				
5-week Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project Weekly meeting time in groups was spilt between focus group activities and restorative justice circles.				
Welcome and Introduction of Building Sustainable Communities-Repairing Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project to Participants				
Completed Participant Registration and Consent Forms				
Weekly Focus Group Activities (Data Used for Analysis)				
Weekly Restorative Justice Circles – Discussions Confidential (No information shared was used for analysis)				
Weekly Self-Surveys (Data Used for Demographic Information and Analysis)				
Individual Interviews of 9 Participants: Face-to-Face at Park and Through the Internet (Interviews completed at the end of 5-weeks due to Covid-19 Pandemic concerns and time constraints.)				
Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Interview and Survey Data				
Articles: Submitting For Publication				
Article 2: "Restructuring the Building Sustainable Communities Approach: Building the Foundation for the Development of a Sustainability Assessment Tool to be Used by and with Poor Marginalized Communities of Color in the United States"				
Article 3: "Building Sustainable Communities Framework, the Social Reintegration, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equity Transition Tool and Restorative Justice Peace Circles: Repairing the Harm of Incarceration Pilot Project"				

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APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO THE CIRCLE

INVITATION TO THE CIRCLE

by Muriel E. Adams

Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
Our homes are built on top of landfills, near solid waste dump sites, on top of nuclear waste dump sites, next to toxic plants that spew toxic chemicals that pollute our air and our drinking water, and the food we grow and eat.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
We have higher degrees of health problems —asthma, cancer, ADHD and other physical and mental problems and illness.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
You talk of sustainability. What we hear and think is more stuff to be added to the junk piles our families must live above, next to or nearby.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
We hear more contamination being added to our water supply and into the air we breathe.

Trust you. Trust you? Why?
Because of the good and fair relationship we have.
Because you in the past have "taken care of our needs so well"?
Because you have never lied to our grandparents, our children.
Because you have never broken your word or stolen from us.
Because you have never put your desires and dreams over our needs and our human rights?
Trust you. Why?
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
You want us to pay more for sustainable products? Your more environmentally friendly, biodegradable diaper cloths, shopping bags and solar panels.

You who have taken our land and our homes.
You who have abused, tortured and experimented on us.
You who are the decision makers, who decided where we must live, who decide what jobs we can do. You who pump alcohol and drugs into our neighborhoods and then over police our communities and fill your jails with our husbands and sons.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
You who take money out of our communities with your banks and corner stores.
You who make us live in food deserts and You who won't lend us money to improve our communities and charge exorbitant rates for home and business loans.
You who won't even acknowledge that your decisions have caused us harm.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.

Trust you?
You have taken away our rights— our human rights, our voting rights, our voice in how we live our lives in our communities and how we educate our children.
You who continue to appropriate our culture and ways when it suits you.
You who have erased or changed our past in your history books to make you and yours feel better about who you are and the decisions you and your ancestors made and who benefit from those past and present decisions.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.

Trust you. Trust you?
You who see us and our children as criminals to fill your jails and immigration holding cells and facilities.
You who dismiss the connection between our suffering and your profit.
You want us now to think sustainability.
You who decided to save the trees and use plastic bags and bottles that now pollute the land and choke oceans and waterways.
You who believe you know what is best for all and who have never invited us to the table as stakeholders. You, the decision makers, who have created the problems, the hardships, the pain for us and who have made us assimilate or be forcibly molded into hardly recognizable glimpses of our true selves.
Those of us who have the least suffer the most.
Trust you. We dare not.
How many times have we heard it is for our benefit and it is not.
How many doors have been closed in our faces and opportunities taken away when you heard our names or saw our skin color before we uttered one word.

Enough.
Your sustainability plan sounds a lot like how our ancestors lived.
Leave a small footprint on the earth.
Maybe, just maybe if I squint my eyes, I can see that we are the original teachers.
If I listen closely I can hear the rumblings of us coming to sit around the circle to share our truth, to participate equally in the discussion.
We are not inconsequential, nor are we invisible.
This earth belongs to us also.
Those of us, you so lovingly call the masses, those on the fringe, those at the bottom of the pyramid.

This earth belongs to us also.
Those of us who have the least and suffer the most.
We belong at the table, included in the circle.
We are a large part of the solution. We are not inconsequential, nor are we invisible.
We hold the keys to some of the doors where the answers to the problems
will be found. We recognize this as inclusiveness.
We know this as justice.
So, we invite you to the circle, to listen, to share, to repair the harm, to build new relationships, to explore how we, all of us together, can make our earth and our realities more sustainable.

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APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

Nalini Chhetri
SFIS: Future of Innovation in Society, School for the
480/727-0745 Nalini.Chhetri@asu.edu
Dear Nalini Chhetri:

On 12/8/2019 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Building Sustainable Communities: Barriers to Sustainability in Marginalized Communities in the United States
Investigator:	Nalini Chhetri
IRB ID:	STUDY00011139
Category of review:	
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form -Long (R5), Category: Consent Form; • M_Adams -IRB Social Behavioral-Building Sustainable Communities (R4).docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Script (R3), Category: Recruitment Materials; • Survey and Interview Guide, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB approved the protocol from 12/8/2019 to 12/7/2022 inclusive. Three weeks before 12/7/2022 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Title of research study:

Building Sustainable Communities: Barriers to Sustainability in Marginalized Communities in the United States / Repairing the Harm of Incarceration

Investigator:

Dr. Nalini Chhetri

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We are asking you to take part because you are an adult community member, a formerly incarcerated adult (FIA) or an adult family member of a FIA. We ask that you to take part in this study to learn how the reentry process of formerly incarcerated individuals can be improved to build family and community relationships.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to learn about how family and community inclusion and cohesiveness relates to community stability. This study is being done to look at the impact of the criminal justice, bail, prison-industrial complex and foster care systems on community sustainability.

How long will the research last?

The research project will last 5-weeks, once a week for 3 hours. Activities will focus on building relationships, self-awareness and repairing harm. Participation in restorative justice talking circles will be used to allow for sharing of personal stories, feelings and insights. Participation in community mapping activities will help to understand family and community relationships, individual responsibility and increased self-worth. Short, weekly self-surveys and a one hour audio recorded interview will be taken. This will help to better understand how the community can improve the reentry process for families and community.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 40 people to participate in this study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

Participating in this 5-week study is voluntary. We expect it to be a benefit to you and the community. Possible benefits may include increased self-esteem, self-confidence, new relationships, and movement toward community sustainability.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time. It will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There may be a minimal risk. There may be slight discomfort answering or sharing information about your experiences. We will make every effort to respect your privacy.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and release of your personal information. A master list of contact information will be put together so that the information can be correctly organized and analyzed. Every person will choose a random ID to protect their identity. You will use this ID on all surveys and any other information. We ask your permission to audio record the interview. The recording will be deleted once analysis of the transcript is complete.

The master list and other information collected during the study will be securely stored. It will be stored for no more than one year before being destroyed. The master list and data collected will be held for this amount of time in case there are follow-up questions. Follow-up questions will take approximately 5 minutes. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations or publications but your name will not be included.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to the research team, Muriel Adams and Dr. Nalini Chettri. Feel free to ask any questions now or later. You can contact Muriel Adams at Muriel.Adams@asu.edu or at 708-466-3488. You can contact Dr. Nalini Chhetri at Nalini.Chhetri@asu.edu.
This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

________________________________ _______________

Signature of participant Date

____

Printed name of participant

________________________________ _______________

Signature of person obtaining consent Date

________________________________ _______________

Printed name of person obtaining consent Date

APPENDIX D

CO-AUTHORS PERMISSION

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED MATERIAL AND CO-AUTHOR PERMISSION

All co-authors have granted permission for the use of this material in this dissertation.