Incarcerated Women's Perceptions of Their Best Selves in Prison:

Major Themes and Age Variations

by

Hannah White

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

Approved April 2022 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Kevin A. Wright, Chair
Stacia N. Stolzenberg
Jacob T.N. Young

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
May 2022

ABSTRACT

There is a wealth of knowledge about the harmful effects of prisons. This expertise on negative experiences has resulted in a limited understanding of incarcerated people's strengths and how prisons may be places where growth can occur. Some researchers have discovered narratives of positivity and identity reconstruction among people in prison who have described their experiences as transformative. However, there is little knowledge about the nuanced aspects of their positive experiences and less understanding about how this information can be translated into practice. The effects of age on positive experiences have also gone unexamined within this literature, despite known linkages between age and positive outcomes such as fulfillment in life and desistance from crime. Through structured interviews with 100 incarcerated women, the current study uses thematic analysis to identify themes within women's responses to a prompt about a time they felt their best in prison and how these themes vary according to their ages. Four major themes were identified across all responses: accomplishments, personal growth, healthy relationships, and helping and supporting others. While accomplishments and personal growth remained the most common themes across responses from women of all adult life stages (i.e., young, middle, and late adulthood) the theme of helping and supporting others was more often the focus in responses from women in middle and late adulthood (ages 35-83) compared to women in young adulthood (ages 21-34). The results have important implications for taking action to identify the sources of incarcerated people's positive experiences and provide the means to generate and reinforce them.

DEDICATION

For the incarcerated women who played an integral role in the interview team and the

many women who volunteered their time to openly share their experiences. This study

would not have been possible without their expertise and invaluable contributions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my committee members, Dr. Kevin Wright, Dr. Stacia Stolzenberg, and Dr. Jacob Young. Kevin, thank you for your unwavering dedication to my success and for the opportunities you have provided me. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such impactful work. Some of my most meaningful experiences have taken place during my time as a master's student.

I would also like to thank my undergraduate mentor, Dr. Nicole Frisch-Scott. Nicole, I would not be where I am today without your encouragement and guidance.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and my friends, old and new, who have provided me with unconditional support in my endeavors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Corrections scholars have long been preoccupied with analyzing the pains of imprisonment. This body of research has amassed a great deal of evidence showing that prisons are harmful and criminogenic. Prisons are generally characterized by cultures of fear, aggression, and exploitation (Crewe et al., 2014). Upon entering prison, people may experience dehumanization and lack of autonomy. People in prison may further experience physical and sexual victimization, as well as mistreatment by prison staff (Haney, 2012). Women in prison are a particularly vulnerable group who commonly suffer from high rates of trauma and victimization before and during incarceration (Holsinger, 2014). Incarcerated women also tend to experience high rates of drug dependency and psychiatric disorders that often lead to self-harm (Holsinger, 2014). Enduring such harsh prison conditions can lead to a variety of negative outcomes including a high risk of recidivism upon release, and short- and long-term physical and psychological damage (Listwan et al., 2013).

Researchers focused on the negative facets of prison life have missed an opportunity to capture experiences other than pain and harm in prison. Studying more varied accounts of life in prison is useful for three reasons. First, an increased focus on positivity in correctional environments allows researchers to acknowledge and document people's narratives of growth while in prison. In addition to expanding knowledge, an increased focus on positivity can uplift and validate the humanity of incarcerated people who are commonly asked to reflect on their deficits. Second, a more holistic understanding of people's experiences in prison provides insight into how and why

people cope with incarceration in varying ways. Understanding the ways in which people adjust to prison has significant implications for their quality of life while incarcerated and their successful reintegration after their release (Dhami et al., 2007). Third, identifying the factors that support favorable outcomes can help to foster people's existing strengths and create environments conducive to personal transformation. A missed opportunity to study the good in prison means a missed opportunity to understand and promote more good in prison.

One positive aspect in particular that can be studied is how incarcerated people perceive themselves at their best in prison. Asking people to identify themselves at their best inspires them to reflect on what they value most in their experiences. In addition, a focus on the specific elements of these positive experiences can illuminate what exactly makes these experiences feel transformative. Understanding how incarcerated people perceive their personal strengths and successes is necessary to create more opportunities for people in prison to thrive. Importantly, positive experiences may not be evenly distributed across everybody in prison, especially younger and older individuals. Research suggests that as people age, they tend to find greater meaning in life through more effective emotion-regulation and engagement in productive and altruistic behaviors (Bailey et al., 2016; Charles et al., 2001). In addition, nearly all individuals desist from crime as they age, pointing to positive shifts in their mindsets and the institutions that they encounter as a consequence of their age (Laub & Sampson, 2001). Human agency and identity transformation may also play an integral role in the desistance process by facilitating feelings of self-efficacy and fulfillment in life (Martín et al., 2019). Therefore,

it is important to consider both the nature of positive prison experiences and how a person's age may shape the nature of their experiences.

The present study uses appreciative inquiry, a form of strengths-based, generative questioning, to explore women's accounts of flourishing in prison. Through interviews with 100 women in an Arizona prison, the present study identifies the most common themes that arise in responses to a prompt about a recent time they felt at their best in prison. In addition, the current study analyzes variations in the occurrence of major themes in responses according to the ages of the women. As such, this study seeks to contribute to an emerging dialogue about how people are able to overcome adversity and find meaning in life while in prison.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Outcomes in Prison

Many scholars study the possible causes and implications of well-being and human flourishing. For example, Diener and colleagues (1999) proposed that a person's subjective well-being consists of multiple domains and is influenced by both individual traits and life circumstances. Researchers contend that psychological well-being is characterized by a positive outlook and sense of purpose in life that leads to more productive functioning (Huppert, 2009). Psychological well-being can also involve an element of psychological richness in which individuals achieve personal growth by seeking out new and perspective-changing experiences (Oishi et al., 2019). It is possible that growth may also occur through enduring negative events like trauma or crises. The process of enduring these negative events can lead some people to experience altered priorities and a greater appreciation of life, an increased sense of personal strength, and improved interpersonal relationships (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). As a result of research thus far, there is an increasing understanding of how people's experiences shape their well-being and outlooks on life in powerful ways.

Much is known about the pain experienced through incarceration. However, there is limited knowledge of potentially *positive* prison experiences and the perseverance of incarcerated people. The field of positive psychology can provide a useful framework for placing greater value on understudied positive experiences and the human qualities that make life worthwhile (Morse et al., 2022; Seligman & Csikszentmihayli, 2000). Like positive psychology, positive criminology and the Good Lives Model (GLM) can help

4

inform the adoption of a more holistic focus on positive experiences and growth in prison (Ronel & Segev, 2015; Ward & Brown, 2004). Shifting away from approaches that aim to reduce risk to approaches that facilitate positive experiences in prison may aid in promoting desistance from crime and enhance well-being. Although seemingly paradoxical, incarceration could present a unique opportunity to cultivate meaning in life by supporting and expanding upon people's existing strengths (Wright, 2020). Some researchers in the United Kingdom, have taken a positive, strengths-based approach to questioning known as appreciative inquiry to measure the quality of life of both prison staff and incarcerated people. These studies found that the most important dimensions for their quality of life were described as mutual respect, humanity, fairness, help and assistance, safety and order, and staff professionalism (Liebling, 2017; Liebling et al., 1999, 2019). Identifying how incarcerated people describe their positive prison experiences and what they value most about these experiences and themselves can help to create more opportunities for putting those ideals into practice.

Scholars argue that narratives of reinvention and growth can often be found within prison walls (e.g., Crewe & Ievins, 2020; Maier, & Ricciardelli, 2021; Van Ginneken, 2016; Vanhooren et al., 2018). Qualitative studies demonstrate similarities in these narratives among both men and women in prison. As an illustration, van Ginneken (2015) conducted interviews with 30 soon-to-be-released men and women incarcerated in England. Among those who had trouble adjusting to incarceration, there was a "positively adjusted" group of people who expressed that they were able to find meaning in their incarceration. These men and women explained that they would use their time in prison as an opportunity to start on a new life path by learning skills to use after their release and

by rebuilding relationships with their families (van Ginneken, 2015). Similarly, Helfgott and colleagues (2020) analyzed themes within 171 life history essays written by men and women incarcerated in the United States. The narratives revealed descriptions of future-oriented outlooks and positive perceptions of the self. Both men and women in prison discussed the importance of assuming responsibility for their choices, as well as becoming a positive example for their children (Helfgott et al., 2020). In particular, the incarcerated women detailed how they would spend their time in prison more productively by participating in programs and classes, maintaining relationships with their families, and learning self-love (Helfgott et al., 2020). Narratives of identity-reconstruction among both men and women in prison demonstrate that not all individuals experience incarceration as damaging to their sense of self.

Studies with samples of men have also found narratives of identity reconstruction and future-oriented outlooks in prison. For example, Maier & Ricciardelli (2021) conducted interviews with men formerly incarcerated in a Canadian federal prison and discovered narratives of positivity during imprisonment. Many of the men expressed feelings of regret and low self-worth, as well as the need to appear tough and aggressive to survive in prison. However, the men also noted that prison caused them to reflect deeply on themselves and their lives, enabling them to envision hope for their future selves (Maier & Ricciardeli, 2021). The authors detailed several positive developments within the men's narratives including reduced substance use, greater feelings of patience and calmness, renewed appreciation for relationships with family and friends, assumption of responsibility, and prioritization of goals. The men further described how the experience of being in prison fundamentally altered their mentalities and motivated them

to commit to and work toward self-change (Maier & Ricciardeli, 2021). Data from qualitative studies such as this support the notion that some people experience incarceration as a turning point that inspires them to restore their sense of self.

Similarly, researchers have documented narratives of posttraumatic growth among samples of incarcerated women. In prison, posttraumatic growth can take the form of finding meaning in one's incarceration and turning this negative experience into an opportunity for self-betterment (Vanhooren et al., 2018). Through in-depth interviews with six incarcerated women in England, van Ginneken (2016) discovered that the women viewed their incarceration as a new beginning, focusing less on the negative aspects of their prison sentences and more on the knowledge they had gained from their experiences while incarcerated. While the initial shock of prison was stressful and unpredictable, the women found opportunities to improve their coping skills and self-efficiency. Many women took full advantage of the available prison resources to address substance use problems and complete courses and therapy (van Ginneken, 2016). This study and others further demonstrate that both incarcerated men and women find opportunities to engage in positive development and growth while in prison, despite the many challenges they face.

The growing body of research discussed above demonstrates the value of studying positivity in prison. Many approaches to rehabilitation and treatment are focused on reducing risks and negative characteristics. However, positive experiences may have just as much impact on individuals as negative experiences (c.f., Baumeister et al., 2001) and reinforcing the positive can potentially reduce the negative (Ronel & Segev, 2014). A better understanding of the importance of positive experiences in prison can be a

powerful tool for leveraging the strengths of individuals to support favorable outcomes during and after incarceration. Researchers thus far have established the existence of positive experiences among incarcerated people. However, these experiences have tended to be broadly characterized, limiting knowledge about which elements of positive experiences may be most meaningful to people and the individual-level characteristics of those who engage in growth and identity restoration while incarcerated.

Age-Graded Corrections

Generally, the older one becomes, the greater one's drive to find purpose in life by accomplishing goals and developing meaningful relationships. As people age, they also strive to use their acquired knowledge to benefit other people (Bailey et al., 2016). Scholars find that with age, people typically experience increases in positive affect and overall heightened well-being (Charles et al., 2001; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998; Shook et al., 2017). Development and enhanced coping may also coincide in that people begin to avoid overly taxing situations and selectively involve themselves in challenging but advantageous tasks. With age, people typically learn to cope more effectively in ways compatible with their own goals and social resources (Skinner & Edge, 1998). Older individuals often experience a heightened sense of wisdom and maturity that drives agency and identity development (Bailey et al., 2016). Taken together, research thus far has established the importance of age for many areas of a person's life, including positive changes in their mindset and priorities as well as their interactions with others.

Importantly, the positive developments related to age mirror the qualities that have implications for criminal justice involvement. The age-crime curve is a well-known fact in criminology: as individuals grow older, often as they reach their twenties and early

thirties, their offending patterns rapidly decline or cease altogether (Doherty & Bersani, 2018; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Sweeten et al., 2013). Rates of recidivism also decline with age, even when controlling for factors like criminal record and other individual-level characteristics (Huebner & Berg, 2011). There are many explanations for the age-crime curve, including important developmental and sociological factors involved in the aging process (Sweeten et al., 2013). From childhood to adolescence and further into early adulthood, structural brain changes facilitate increases in emotion-regulation and impulse control, accompanied by decreases in susceptibility to the influence of peers; each of these developments is related to less delinquent and criminal involvement (Scott & Steinberg, 2008). Throughout the life course, people also experience increased formal and informal social controls and greater levels of maturation in a variety of domains (e.g., psychosocial, cognitive, social roles, and identity), all of which aids in the desistance process (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Rocque, 2015). The many internal developments and external changes that accompany aging play an important role in desistance from crime and demonstrate the value of taking age into account when studying people's experiences within the criminal justice system.

Identity development and human agency can also play a vital role in the desistance process over the life course. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) suggest that desistance is a deliberate act of self-change in which people reconsider their current and past identities and construct their future selves in a more positive light. Narratives of desistance often include the cultivation of a true self; a sense of determination and control over one's identity; and a desire to engage in constructive behavior and provide for others (Maruna, 2001). Like posttraumatic growth, identity development can also occur through

the lens of "tragic optimism" in which suffering takes on a redemptive quality for individuals. People may view their negative experiences as having a silver lining and ultimately perceive themselves as stronger and better as a result of learning from their past mistakes (Maruna, 2001). Quantitative studies have demonstrated that over the life course, prosocial identity development increases and these identity developments are strongly predictive of desistance from crime (Rocque et al., 2016). The ways in which people reevaluate their current selves and recognize their potential can encourage them to lead fulfilling lives free from crime by giving back to others and further developing their own strengths.

Early narratives of desistance are characterized as those which occur before people leave prison. These narratives can often be found among incarcerated people, who describe envisioning more positive future versions of themselves and indicate their intentions to stop engaging in criminal behavior. According to one study conducted by Martín and colleagues (2019), early narratives of desistance among men incarcerated in Spain were related to age: older individuals (i.e., those in their thirties as opposed to those in their twenties) demonstrated higher levels of identity changes. In addition, this study found that people who entered prison at an older age exhibited greater identity changes compared to those who entered prison at a younger age (Martín et al., 2019). The authors detailed how the positive identity changes related to age were consistent with the expectations of the age-crime curve. They argued the risk and protective factors for committing crime may be more or less influential for a person depending on their age, and that a person's resilience to negative circumstances improves their ability to resist engaging in criminal behavior. The authors also noted that a person's confidence in their

own ability to change helps to begin the process of desistance while they are still incarcerated (Martín et al., 2019). Acknowledging the existence of and understanding people's early narratives of desistance in prison and how they may relate to a person's age is crucial for creating environments that nurture identity development and human agency to promote the desistance process.

Age is inextricably linked to desistance from crime as well as the development of healthy coping mechanisms and human flourishing. If scholars are to study positive experiences in prison, it is also necessary to examine how these experiences may be related to an individual's age. By overlooking the importance of age for a person's positive development while in prison, we miss the opportunity to facilitate more early narratives of desistance and encourage meaningful lives for more people. Understanding the ways in which positive experiences and perceptions of the self in prison vary with age also has important implications that extend beyond incarceration, such as a person's successful reintegration into their community. More opportunities to create meaning in life during and after incarceration could be extended to more people in more targeted ways by identifying how positive outcomes in prison may be related to a person's age.

CHAPTER 3

CURRENT FOCUS

There is an emerging body of research that demonstrates people's experiences of personal growth and success in prison. A better understanding of the value of positive experiences in prison can be a powerful tool for leveraging people's strengths in order to support favorable outcomes during and after incarceration. However, there is little knowledge about how commonly people describe encountering the different aspects of their positive experiences in prison. There is less knowledge about how to translate this useful information into practice. In addition, researchers have thus far grouped people of all ages together without examining the likely influence of age on people's perceptions of their positive experiences in prison. Through appreciative inquiry, a strengths-based approach to questioning (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), this study explores women's descriptions of a recent time in which they felt they were at their best in prison. Specifically, the present study asks, what are the most common themes among incarcerated women's perceptions of their best selves in prison? To shed light on potential age variations in positive perceptions of the self in prison, the current study also asks, are common themes among responses invariant when grouped by age? As such, the current study seeks to expand knowledge on how people perceive their own strengths and successes while incarcerated, with a novel focus on the role of age in these positive experiences.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Setting

The data for the current study were collected from a medium security unit at the women's state prison in Goodyear, Arizona. In October of 2021, there were 34,643 people incarcerated in correctional facilities operated by the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR) (Shinn, 2021). As of April of 2021, there were 3,488 women incarcerated in the state prison and 621 women incarcerated in the unit where the study took place. Within this unit, 46.1% of the women identified as Caucasian, 10.5% identified as African American, 9.8% identified as Native American, 28.2% identified as Mexican American, 1.8% identified as Mexican National, and 3.5% identified as "other" races or ethnicities (ADCRR, 2021).

Sample

Altogether, 100 women interviewed for the current study. Respondents ranged from 21 to 83 years old, with a mean age of 42.59 years old and a median age of 40 years old. Forty-three percent of the women identified as White, 5% identified as Black or African American, 34% identified as Hispanic, 3% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% identified as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 14% identified as "other" races or ethnicities (including mixed-race). The racial and ethnic composition of the sample largely reflects that of the unit in which the study was conducted, except for Black and Native women, who were somewhat underrepresented in the sample. Almost half (45%) of the sample completed some college, associate degree, or vocational school and 29% received a high school diploma or GED. Three percent of

the women had an eighth-grade education or less, 11% completed some high school, 8% obtained a four-year college degree, and 4% completed graduate studies or obtained a graduate degree. The number of times the women in the sample had been to prison as an adult ranged from one to six times and on average, the women were in prison for their first time as an adult. The women had been incarcerated for an average of 7.13 years, with a minimum of less than one year served and a maximum of 26.50 years served.

Method

The current study used a participatory action research (PAR) approach (Haverkate et al., 2020) to data collection in which researchers from Arizona State University (ASU) and incarcerated women conducted structured interviews with participants. Before beginning data collection, the incarcerated interviewers were trained and certified in interviewing protocols and IRB research codes of ethics. The sample was recruited through flyers sent out on the incarcerated women's tablets and posted in public spaces throughout the unit. The team of incarcerated interviewers also recruited participants by approaching other women on the unit to explain the purpose of the study and invite them to participate. In addition, after each interview, the ASU researchers and incarcerated interviewers invited participants to recruit others on the unit that may be interested in participating in the study. After indicating a willingness to participate, participants were randomly assigned to an ASU researcher or an incarcerated interviewer. After obtaining consent, the participants were informed that there were no direct benefits to participating in the study and that their responses would be kept confidential and would not impact their current standing with ADCRR.

Structured interviews were conducted in a private room on the unit, with up to four individual interviews taking place simultaneously. ASU researchers and incarcerated interviewers did not conduct interviews at the same time. Interviews were offered in both English and Spanish and took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The interview questionnaire was developed by the ASU researchers along with the incarcerated interviewers. The questionnaire consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions divided into the following sections: appreciative inquiry, perceptions of PAR and programming, trust and relationships or involvement with other women on the unit, and background information.

Appreciative Inquiry

The current study uses responses to an open-ended question in the appreciative inquiry section of the interview questionnaire. Asking only about deficiencies accumulates knowledge about problems and weaknesses, but also profoundly limits the ability to devise solutions based on individual strengths and qualities compatible with success (Ludema et al., 1997). Appreciative inquiry moves away from commonly used deficit-based approaches to questioning and instead employs a strengths-based, cooperative approach to search for the best in people and systems (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). A guiding principle of appreciative inquiry is, "The single most important action a group can take to liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future is to make the positive core the common and explicit property of all" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 9). Appreciative inquiry can be particularly useful for studying prisons because there are alternative truths about prison life aside from pain and fear that might only be discovered through generative questioning (Liebling et al., 2001).

Prisons are complex moral environments with ethical issues related to humanity, respect, and trust. Appreciative inquiry focuses on identifying possibilities and best memories in addition to engaging those who typically feel voiceless by including them in the participatory process of questioning to foster trust-building and collaboration (Elliot, 1999). By using affirming questions that recognize human potential and exploring what matters most to people in prison, steps can be taken to identify the sources of these values and reconstruct the environment in ways that reinforce them (Liebling, 2017). Without inquiring about what might make people's experiences in prison gratifying, this useful knowledge would remain hidden and unable to be translated into constructive and actionable change.

Key Measures

Best Self Perception is measured using the open-ended appreciative inquiry prompt, "Tell me a story about a time when you were at your best in here in the last couple of weeks." As the interviews were not audio or video recorded, the responses were not transcribed verbatim. The interviewers took note of participants' responses to the best of their ability and when possible, noted particularly revealing quotations. To the researcher's knowledge, this *Best Self Perception* measure has not been used in other studies of incarcerated people in the United States. The *Best Self Perception* measure was chosen to encourage incarcerated women to reflect on the aspects of themselves that affirm their strengths and positive qualities. In this way, the appreciative inquiry nature of this measure can create new perspectives that generate confidence and provide deeper understanding of how incarcerated women maintain their sense of self and encounter positive experiences in a prison environment. The *age* of the respondent is measured

using a closed-ended question that asks, "How old are you?" Respondents did not select their age from a list, but rather stated their exact age at the time of data collection. For the analysis, age is conceptualized into three adult life stages as discussed below.

Plan of Analysis

The current study uses Atlas.ti to conduct thematic analysis and identify major themes and sub-themes within the *Best Self Perception* measure. Themes are abstract concepts that represent dimensions of meaning within expressions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method that systematically identifies, organizes, describes, and interprets patterns across qualitative data to understand people's shared expressions of their thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis is useful as it is a flexible and efficient method of data analysis that summarizes the important features of a body of data and illuminates similarities and differences across data. In this way, thematic analysis highlights the prominent and distinguishing elements of qualitative data that can be used to interpret expressions across responses and gain unexpected insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The current study uses an inductive approach to thematic analysis in which the coding process is data-driven and does not follow a predetermined theoretical framework. Thematic analysis for the current study follows the guidance offered by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) which includes, 1) familiarization with the data, 2) creation of initial codes, 3) identification of themes, 4) review of the identified themes, and 5) definition and naming of the themes. Specifically, all 100 responses are read through before beginning the coding process. Next, the first 20% (n = 20) of responses are carefully read through and initial semantic codes are created and applied to all or parts of each response to

capture the various expressions of meaning within each response. Semantic codes give a summary or description of the data by identifying a word or short phrase that matches or closely resembles the data content provided by respondents (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Next, the remaining responses are reviewed and coded for the initial semantic codes. Throughout the coding process, new concepts and expressions of meaning emerge, in which case, the previous responses are re-analyzed and coded accordingly. The codes are then organized into broader categories that represent overarching themes across all responses and sub-themes within the major themes.

The frequencies at which the major themes and sub-themes occur across all responses are also examined. The themes are analyzed in the context of their individual meanings and implications, as well as the significance that the themes collectively portray. Age variations in the frequencies of the major themes are analyzed according to three adult life stages based on Erickson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development. However, the psychosocial development of people who are incarcerated likely differs in some ways from those in the general population. Their life experiences (e.g., education, employment, marriage, children, etc.) and identity development likely do not correspond exactly with those of the general population due to the disruptions and collateral consequences caused by their incarceration. Therefore, the adult life stages used for the current study differ slightly but closely resemble those put forth by Erickson (1968): young adulthood (ages 21-35, n = 32), middle adulthood (ages 36-49, n = 42), and late adulthood (ages 50-83, n = 26).

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the frequencies at which four major themes and 16 sub-themes emerged across all 100 responses to the *Best Self Perception* measure. It is important to note that multiple themes and sub-themes could, and often did, emerge within the same response, given that different codes were applied to all or parts of the women's responses. Oftentimes, each woman discussed a variety of different experiences that made them feel at their best in prison. Accomplishments and personal growth were the two most common themes across responses. Accomplishments is broadly defined as experiences that were described as inspiring a sense of pride and success. Personal growth consists of experiences that promoted feelings of well-being and empowerment. The themes of healthy relationships and helping and supporting others were relatively less common but remained salient themes throughout the women's descriptions of their best selves. Healthy relationships includes experiences that enabled the women to develop and maintain fulfilling interpersonal relationships. Helping and supporting others represents experiences in which women provided support to others without expecting anything in return or praised others' achievements such as in work or school. Only one woman reported that she did not know when she was at her best and one woman reported that she did not feel at her best recently. The following discussion outlines the sub-themes that comprise prominent elements of each theme, as well as age variations in the occurrence of the four major themes.

Table 1

Frequencies of Major Themes and Sub-Themes Across 100 Incarcerated Women's Responses to Their Best Self Perceptions

Major Themes	Percentage of Responses Containing Theme*	Sub-Themes (Number of Responses Containing Sub-Theme Across All 100 Responses)
Accomplishments	55% (n = 55)	Employment (28)
		Education (9)
		Involvement & Completion of Programs (9)
		Being Shown Appreciation (5)
		Celebrations & Rewards (4)
Personal Growth	47% (n = 47)	Emotion-Regulation & Mature Coping (16)
		Positive & Hopeful Mindset (12)
		Physical Wellness (7)
		Spirituality (7)
		Recovery & Sobriety (5)
Healthy Relationships	26% (n = 26)	Family Relationships (13)
		Friendships on the Inside (7)
		Conflict Resolution (4)
		Correctional Staff Relationships (2)
Helping and Supporting Others	20% (n = 20)	Altruism (17)
		Supporting Others' Achievements (3)
Don't Know or Not at Best	2% (n = 2)	-

*The frequencies do not sum to 100% as multiple themes and sub-themes often occurred within the same response.

Accomplishments

Employment was a predominant sub-theme within the theme of accomplishments. Many women felt at their best when they were learning and being challenged, being productive, and performing well at their jobs in prison. The women often felt that their work was fulfilling and gave them a sense of purpose in their days; one respondent stated, *[I am] grateful every day for the job I have*. Several women also indicated that their education was important to them, stating that they felt at their best when they were attending and participating in classes and receiving good grades. Some expressed a strong motivation to move forward and finish school to obtain a GED or college degree.

Women also took pride in participating in and completing various types of programming offered at the unit. Respondents described their successful ability to actively engage in and complete anger management, financial, and mentorship programs. In addition, women described being at their best when they were shown appreciation in a variety of settings, such as being praised for their hard work or when authority figures and people on the outside believed in them. In her response, one woman mentioned, *[It] feels good to be trusted by another normal person*. Lastly, some women felt at their best when they were able to have celebrations and receive tangible rewards, such as having graduation ceremonies and celebrating birthdays with other women on the inside.

Personal Growth

A relatively large number of the responses within the theme of personal growth contained the sub-theme of emotion-regulation and mature coping. This sub-theme included descriptions of regulating one's temper and limiting retaliation against others. One respondent specifically mentioned that she felt at her best when she was practicing

emotional and psychological maturity. This woman described how she refuses to react to "petty" behaviors and actions of other women on the inside. One respondent said that she was able to tolerate and handle a difficult situation as an adult and in an appropriate manner; she said that she dealt with the problem and did not react in the ways she would have "in the old days." Emotion regulation and mature coping also involved discussions of changes in women's views towards both themselves and their relationships with others, allowing them to re-evaluate their values and priorities.

Several women felt at their best when they were able to maintain a positive and hopeful mindset while incarcerated, either due to intrinsic changes in their attitudes or extrinsic experiences. Women felt that their forward-looking mindsets gave them the strength to better commit to their goals in order to grow as people and overcome adversity. Two respondents expressed feeling a sense of hopefulness for their upcoming release from prison. Another woman said that she always feels refreshed after visits; she stated *[I] got back to the yard and felt like I could keep going*. Others highlighted how their positive mindsets allowed them to push through challenges and know that their perseverance would be worth it in the end. A woman stated that she changed her attitude from bitterness to acceptance, explaining that she could either do her time with acceptance or make doing time harder by having a negative attitude.

Other women felt at their best when they were improving their physical well-being. Physical wellness involved focusing on their health by eating right and engaging in physical activity, and sometimes by receiving medical attention. Spirituality was highly regarded by respondents; several women explained that their religion made them feel "free" and instilled a sense of perseverance that allowed them to "get through" the

realities of prison. One woman said that she learned a great deal from her bible study and developed a greater sense of confidence through the experience: *I didn't even know I was capable of this*. Lastly, some women felt at their best when they had successfully completed recovery support training and maintained their sobriety while in prison.

Healthy Relationships

Many of the responses containing the theme of healthy relationships included discussions of family relationships. These women felt at their best when they were building connections with their family members through visits and other forms of communication. One woman discussed the pride she felt when she learned her daughter was getting married and that she could hear her daughter "smiling through the phone." She later said, *Nothing could ruin that day… having my daughter is the one thing in life that I don't regret*. Another woman detailed how she felt at her best when she received pictures of her grandson. She said that she stays engaged in the lives of her son and grandson and that she taught her son the importance of being a father.

Healthy relationships also involved developing friendships with other women on the inside. Many women took comfort in building friendships and knowing they had other women who they could trust and who could get them through the challenges they faced. Women discussed situations in which their friends provided support by answering questions or by uplifting them when they were down. One respondent explained that her friends "had her back" when she confided in them about a problematic situation she had with other women on the unit: *It was awesome to know that people care because I always help out others*. Furthermore, some women felt at their best when they were engaging in conflict resolution by providing guidance to women experiencing tension with others or

by successfully resolving conflicts that they personally experienced. As an example, one woman told of a time in which she felt rewarded after helping to resolve a conflict among two individuals without getting in between them and later saw the resolution when one of the women showed the other a kind gesture. Two women also mentioned relationships with correctional staff on the unit, saying that they felt at their best when maintaining good rapport with staff or when they were being heard by staff.

Helping and Supporting Others

Engaging in acts of altruism was a common sub-theme within the theme of helping and supporting others. Altruism involved behaviors such as helping others to manage academic responsibilities, mentoring peers, giving advice, assisting with hygiene and substance use problems, and in general making others happy. One respondent said, *Every day I wake up happy. I try to do things for other people*. Several respondents explicitly stated that they felt at their best when helping others, regardless of whether they received anything in return. For example, one woman stated, *I usually help people out as best I can. I don't help people to get things in return*. Another woman explained that when assisting her roommate with a legal battle, *[It] wasn't about me and my happiness*. While less common, others felt at their best when they were supporting others such as praising them for their accomplishments at work or in school and encouraging other women to succeed in their endeavors.

Age Variations in Major Themes

Table 2 demonstrates the frequencies of the major themes that occurred within responses from women in young, middle, and late adulthood. Accomplishments remained one of the most dominant themes in responses from women of all adult life stages. At the

same time, women in young and late adulthood concentrated more on accomplishments as compared to those in middle adulthood. In addition, women in all adult life stages often discussed feeling at their best when engaging in personal growth, with women in middle and young adulthood focusing the most on personal growth compared to those in late adulthood. Women of all adult life stages similarly focused on healthy relationships in their responses, but responses from women middle adulthood more often centered around healthy relationships compared to those in young and late adulthood. Helping and supporting others was most commonly present in responses from women in late adulthood, followed by middle adulthood, and was least commonly discussed among those in young adulthood. Notably, the theme of helping and supporting others was the least common focus among women in young adulthood as compared to middle and late adulthood no matter how age was conceptualized (i.e., three adult life stages, at or below the median and above the median, and by age quartiles).[1]

---

[1]Two additional data-driven approaches were taken to analyze age variations in the frequencies of major themes in women's responses to the *Best Self Perception* measure. Age variations were analyzed according to ages at or below the median (21-40, n = 50) and those above the median (41-83, n = 50). Age variations were also analyzed by age quartiles: the first includes ages 21 to 34 (n = 25), the second includes ages 35 to 40 (n = 25), the third consists of ages 41 to 50 (n = 25), and the fourth is comprised of ages 51 to 83 (n = 25). Overall patterns in the occurrence of themes within responses held when age was conceptualized in these data-driven ways. Importantly, helping and supporting others remained the least common focus among younger individuals. Across the 26 responses with the theme of helping and supporting others, 40% (n = 8) were derived from women at or below the median age and 60% (n = 12) were derived from those above the median age. When analyzed by age quartiles, women in the first age quartile (ages 21-34) comprised just 10% (n = 2) and women in the second, third, and fourth quartiles (collectively, ages 35-83) each comprised 30% (in total, 90%, n = 18) of responses with the theme of helping and supporting others.

Table 2

Frequencies of Major Themes in Best Self Perceptions Within Responses from Incarcerated Women in Young, Middle, and Late Adulthood

Major Themes	Young Adulthood Ages 21-35 (n = 32)	Middle Adulthood Ages 36-49 (n = 42)	Late Adulthood Ages 50-83 (n = 26)
Accomplishments	62.50% (n = 20)	45.24% (n =19)	61.54% (n = 16)
Personal Growth	46.88% (n = 15)	54.76% (n = 23)	34.62% (n = 9)
Healthy Relationships	21.88% (n = 7)	33.33% (n = 14)	19.23% (n = 5)
Helping and Supporting Others	12.50% (n = 4)	21.43% (n = 9)	26.92% (n = 7)

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Positivity can be found even in the darkest of places, including prisons. Studying the failures of prisons produces valuable knowledge but provides more answers to what is wrong than possible solutions. It may appear counterproductive, but the purpose of studying positivity in prisons is not to legitimize the prison as an institution or de-legitimize the trauma endured by people while they are incarcerated. Instead, this approach is an attempt to study prisons and the people within them more holistically by considering perspectives other than pain and harm. That is not to suggest that it is the prison itself that causes positivity; rather, it is the individual and their subjective interpretations of experiences that can create meaning in even the most dismal of circumstances. The current study sought to capture incarcerated women at their best to better understand what they value most about themselves and their experiences in prison. The current study adds to existing literature by identifying how commonly women describe the specific aspects of their positive experiences and perceptions of the self, as well as age variations in these experiences and perceptions. Three conclusions can be drawn that can inform practice and the ways prisons are studied going forward.

First, the women's accounts of positive experiences can be broken down into components that have important implications for putting these values into practice. Incarcerated women's descriptions of their best selves demonstrate that they have the desire to encounter more of the experiences they find rewarding and the personal strength to be successful in their endeavors. Whether it be performing well at their jobs or in school, participating in programs, or simply feeling appreciated by others, more than half

of the women felt at their best when they were accomplishing something that was meaningful to them. Almost half of the women also discussed being to maintain hope and keep a positive outlook despite the challenges they faced, a quality recognized as contributing to their success and well-being. Achieving their goals, no matter how small, and feeling as though they had grown as people made the women feel capable of accomplishing even more for themselves. The women's portrayals of themselves at their best represent just some of the opportunities that could be provided to people in prison to promote enhanced quality of life, the development of skills for reentry, and more positive self-image.

There are a number of possibilities for supporting positive development and purposeful lives for people in prison. More diverse forms of employment and professional development could be provided to people in prison such as entrepreneurship and training to be certified to work in a variety of specialized industries. Meaningful work in prison can restore one's sense of humanity and agency, as well as improve interpersonal skills and provide opportunities for more routine and productivity (Keena & Simmons, 2015; Richmond, 2014). More academic opportunities could also be provided to people in prison such as increasing the accessibility of GEDs as well as postsecondary education. Higher education in prison can provide skills for successful reentry after prison and foster empowerment and motivation to work toward long-term goals (Baranger et al., 2018). Activities like animal care (Furst, 2006), yoga and meditation (Auty et al., 2017), sports (Cashin et al., 2008), horticulture (Timler et al., 2019), and art therapy (Gussak, 2007) could also be unique ways to enhance the quality of life and well-being of incarcerated people in a variety of domains. Parenting programs could help

incarcerated people to rebuild relationships with their children and explore ways to more
effectively connect and communicate with their children and other family members
(Loper & Tuerk, 2006). Other opportunities like hospice care and peer support or
mentorship can also have positive effects on prison environments and increase
compassionate behavior (Bangall, 2015; Wright & Bronstein, 2007). Furthermore, greater
recognition of the achievements and growth that people experience in prison could
inspire them and others to act in more constructive and self-motivated ways. One way
this could be accomplished is through providing certificates for any type of work, class,
or therapy a person has completed in while in prison (Lindsay, 2022). Instead of solely
focusing on penalizing the negative, focusing more on rewarding and encouraging the
positive could be a powerful way to foster the determination and inner strength that many
people in prison already have.

    Second, the themes that emerged in women's descriptions of their best selves in
prison are comparable to early narratives of desistance (Martín et al., 2019). Many of the
themes identified within responses mirror the qualities associated with desistance, such as
maintaining future-oriented outlooks, engaging in emotion-regulation and maturity, and
strengthening social bonds (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Laub & Sampson, 2001). In
particular, regardless of how age is conceptualized, older women more often described
themselves at their best when they were giving back to others, a characteristic closely
linked with desistance (Maruna, 2001). This finding demonstrates that people's positive
experiences in prison likely relate to their age, as older women in the sample more often
felt at their best when engaging in selfless behaviors and sharing their wisdom with
others. In addition, this finding suggests that the process of desistance may begin for

many people while they are still incarcerated. Understanding how people can begin the desistance process while in prison can help to develop strategies that effectively assist in this complex process before people leave prison and increase their chances for success when they re-enter their communities. As such, more attention should be paid to early narratives of desistance in prison as opposed to only acknowledging these narratives after people are released from prison.

Third, given the significance of altruism and supporting others for older women in the sample, it could be beneficial to give older women opportunities to practice these behaviors more often. Many of the older women who felt at their best when giving back to others discussed feeling rewarded when providing guidance to younger women on the unit. This involved giving life advice, encouraging women to participate in programming, helping with classwork, assisting people in maintaining communication with loved ones, and being a peer mentor. Mentorship could be a particularly beneficial practice for both the mentee and the mentor. Establishing more opportunities for older people to mentor younger people in prison in more structured ways can capitalize on the mentor's skills and wisdom and allow them to feel like the best version of themselves by creating more spaces in which they can give back to others. At the same time, younger people could benefit from mentorship by learning from the wisdom of older people who may have been in similar life positions. Mentors can function as role models for mentees while providing them with companionship, giving advice perceived as credible, and directing them towards resources to be successful (Matthews, 2021). Mentorship could also encourage young people in prison to develop the strengths that promote experiences in which they feel like the best versions of themselves. Importantly, it may be possible

through mentorship to foster the desistance process in prison by inspiring more young people to care for the well-being of themselves and others and encourage behaviors linked to desistance like engaging in altruistic acts.

As with all research, this study has limitations that should be addressed. First, only one researcher coded and identified themes in responses. Thematic analysis inherently relies on the researcher's judgment of what constitutes important themes within the data, which can affect the internal validity of the results. In addition, only the frequencies of major themes within responses from women of different ages were used to analyze age variations. Therefore, the current study cannot speak to whether there were statistically significant differences in the occurrence of themes within and across age groups. Future research would benefit from taking mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to analyzing age variations in people's descriptions of their positive prison experiences. Furthermore, the current study did not examine variations in themes according to the race and ethnicity of respondents, their time spent in prison, or the number of times they had been incarcerated. It would be useful for studies to analyze differences in incarcerated people's descriptions of positive experiences according to these and other individual-level characteristics to better understand how they may influence people's positive perceptions of themselves and their experiences while incarcerated. Lastly, the results presented here only reflect incarcerated women's perceptions of their best selves. Moving forward, more attention could be paid to potential differences in the positive attributes and experiences of incarcerated men and people with other gender identities to determine if and how these experiences may be shaped by their gender.

31

Prisons are often damaging environments and the people living within them are typically studied in terms of the damage inflicted upon them. But they don't have to be. Incarcerated people have the drive and capacity to become the best versions they envision for themselves and too often their strengths go unnoticed. Even simply having a conversation with someone in prison about what they are grateful for and what they are proud of can increase their self-confidence and cause them to realize their potential for something greater. Just by acknowledging their small achievements, it can be possible to instill a sense of dignity and motivation to achieve even more. If motivated people are given more opportunities to feel at their best, we increase their chances of truly living their best lives.

REFERENCES

Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR). (2021). *Inmate Ethnic Distribution by Unit*.

Auty, K.M., Cope, A., & Liebling, A. (2017). A systematic review and meta-analysis of yoga and mindfulness meditation in prison: Effects on psychological well-being and behavioural functioning. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *61*(6), 689-710.

Bagnall, A., South, J., Hulme, C., Woodall, J., Vinall-Collier, K., Raine, G., Kinsella, K., Dixey, R., Harris, L., & Wright, N.M.J. (2015). A systematic review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of peer education and peer support in prisons. *BMC Public Health*, *15*, 1-30.

Bailey, A.W., Kang, H., & Schmidt, C. (2016). Leisure routine and positive attitudes: Age-graded comparisons of the path to happiness. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *48*(3), 189-209.

Baranger, J., Rouseeau, D., Mastrorilli, M.E., Matesanz, J. (2018). Doing time wisely: The social and personal benefits of higher education in prison. *The Prison Journal*, *98*(4), 490-513.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2) 77-101.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P.M. Camic, D.L. Long, A.T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K.J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research in methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57-71). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Cashin, A., Potter, E., & Butler, T. (2008). The relationships between exercise and hopelessness in prison. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, *15*, 66-71.

Charles, S.T., Reynolds, C.A., & Gatz, M. (2001). Age-related differences and change in positive and negative affect over 23 years. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*(1), 136-151.

Cooperrider, D.L. & Whitney, D.K. (2005). *Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change.* Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Crewe, B. & Ievins, A. (2020). The prison as a reinventive institution. *Theoretical Criminology*, *24*(4), 568-589.

Crewe, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P., & Smith, A. (2014). The emotional geography of prison life. *Theoretical Criminology*, *18*(1), 56-74.

Diener, E., Suh, E.M., Lucas, R.E., & Smith, H.L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, *125*(2), 276-302.

Dhami, M.K., Ayton, P., & Loewenstein, G. (2007). Adaptation to imprisonment: Indigenous or imported? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *34*(8), 1085-1100.

Doherty, E.E. & Bersani, B.E. (2018). Mapping the age of official desistance for adult offenders: Implications for research and policy. *Journal of Developmental and Life Course Criminology*, *4*, 516-551.

Elliott, C. (1999). *Locating the energy for change: An introduction to appreciative inquiry*. Winnipeg, MB, Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Erickson, E.H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Furst, G. (2006). Prison-based animal programs: A national survey. *The Prison Journal*, *86*(4), 407-430.

Gussak, D. (2007). The effectiveness of art therapy in reducing depression in prison populations. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *51*(4), 444-460.

Haney, C. (2012). Prison effects in the age of mass incarceration. *The Prison Journal*, 1-24.

Helfgott, J.B., Gunnison, E., Sumner, J., Collins, P.A., & Rice, S.K. (2020). "If someone would have showed me": Identifying pivotal points in pathways to crime and incarceration through prisoner self-narratives. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *64*(6-7), 609-634.

Huebner, B.M. & Berg, M.T. (2009) Examining the sources of variation in risk for recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, *28*(1), 146-173.

Huppert, F.A. (2009). Psychological well-being: Evidence regarding its causes and consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, *1*(2), 137-164.

Holsinger, K. (2014). The feminist prison. In F.T. Cullen, C.L. Jonson, & M.K. Stohr (Eds.), *The American prison: Imagining a different future* (pp. 87-110). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Keena, L. & Simmons, C. (2015). Rethink, reform, reenter: An entrepreneurial approach to prison programming. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *59*(8), 837-854.

Laub, J.H. & Sampson, R.J. (2001). Understanding desistance from crime. *The University of Chicago Press*, *28*, 1-69.

Liebling, A. (2017). Appreciative inquiry, generative theory, and the "failed state" prison. In J. Miller & W.R. Palacios (Eds.), *Qualitative research in criminology* (pp. 251-269). New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers.

Liebling, A., Elliot, C., & Arnold, H. (2001). Transforming the prison: Romantic optimism or appreciative inquiry. *Criminal Justice*, *1*(2), 161-180.

Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B.E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D., & Morey, M. (2019). Are hope and possibility achievable in prison? *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, *58*(1), 104-126.

Liebling, A., Price, D., & Elliot, C. (1999). Appreciative inquiry and relationships in prison. *Punishment & Society*, *1*(1), 71-98.

Lindsay, S.L. (2022). Damned if you do, damned if you don't: How formerly incarcerated men navigate the labor market with prison credentials. *Criminology*, 1-25.

Listwan, S.J., Sullivan, C.J., Agnew, R., Cullen, F.T., & Colvin, M. (2013). The pains of imprisonment revisited: The impact of strain on inmate recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, *30*(1), 144-168.

Loper, A.B. & Tuerk, E.H. (2006). Parenting programs for incarcerated parents: Current
    research and future directions. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, *17*(4), 407-427.

Ludema, J.D., Cooperrider, D.L., & Barrett, F.J. (2001). Appreciative inquiry: The
    power of unconditional positive question. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.),
    Handbook of action research (pp. 189-199). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
    Publications.

Ludema, J.D., Wilmot, T.B., & Srivastva, S. (1997). Organizational hope: Reaffirming
    the constructive task of social and organizational inquiry. *Human Relations*,
    50(8), 1015-1052.

Maier, K. & Ricciardelli, R. (2021). "Prison didn't change me, I have changed":
    Narratives of change, self, and prison time. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 1-
    16.

Martín, A.M., Padrón, F., & Redondo, S. (2019). Early narratives of desistance from
    crime in different prison regimes. *The European Journal of Psychology Applied to
    Legal Context*, *11*(2), 71-79.

Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*.
    Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Matthews, E. (2021). Peer-focused prison reentry programs: Which peer characteristics
    matter most? *Incarceration*, *2*(2), 1-19.

Morse, S.J., Wright, K.A., & Klapow, M. (2022). Correctional rehabilitation and positive
    psychology: Opportunities and challenges. *Sociology Compass*, *16*(3), 1-15.

Mroczek, D.K. & Kolarz, C.M. (1998). The effect of age on positive and negative
    affect: A developmental perspective on happiness. *Journal of Personality and
    Social Psychology*, *75*(5), 1333-1349.

Oishi, S., Choi, H., Buttrick, N., Heintzelman, S.J., Kushlev, K., Westgate, E.C.,
    Tucker, J., Ebersole, C.R., Axt, J., Gilbert, E., Ng, B.W., & Besser, L.L. (2019).
    The psychologically rich life questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*,
    81, 257-270.

Paternoster, R. & Bushway, S. (2009). Desistance and the "feared self": Toward an identity theory of criminal desistance. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, *99*(4), 1103-1156.

Richmond, K.M. (2014). Why work while incarcerated? Inmate perceptions on prison industries employment. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *53*(4), 231-252.

Ronel, N. & Segev, D. (2014). How the "positive" can influence criminal behavior: Growing out of criminal spin by positive criminology approaches. In D. Polizzi, M. Braswell, & M. Draper (Eds.), *Transforming corrections: Humanistic approaches to corrections and offender treatment* (2nd ed., pp. 229-243). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Ronel, N. & Segev, D. (2015). Introduction: 'The good' can overcome 'the bad.' In N. Ronel & D. Segev (Eds.), *Positive criminology* (pp. 3-12). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rocque, M. (2015). The lost concept: The (re)emerging link between maturation and desistance from crime. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, *15*(3), 340-360.

Rocque, M., Posick, C., & Paternoster, R. (2016). Identities through time: An exploration of identity change as a cause of desistance. *Justice Quarterly*, *33*(1), 45-72.

Scott, E.S. & Steinberg, L. (2008). Adolescent development and the regulation of youth crime. *The Future of Children*, *18*(2), 15-33.

Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihayli, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 5-14.

Shook, N.J., Ford, C., Strough, J., Delaney, R., & Barker, D. (2017). In the moment and feeling good: Age differences in mindfulness and positive affect. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, *3*(4), 338-347.

Skinner, E. & Edge, K. (1998). Reflections on coping and development across the lifespan. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *22*(2), 357-366.

Sweeten, G., Piquero, A.R., & Steinberg, L. (2013). Age and the explanation of crime, revisited. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *42*, 921-938.

Tedeschi, R.G. & Calhoun, L.G. (2004). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, *15*(1), 1-18.

Timler, K., Brown, H., & Varcoe, C. (2019). Growing connection beyond prison walls: How prison garden fosters rehabilitation and healing for incarcerated men. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *58*(5), 444-463.

Van Ginneken, E.F.J.C. (2015). Doing well or just doing time? A qualitative study of patterns of psychological adjustment in prison. *The Howard Journal*, *54*(4), 352-370.

Van Ginneken, E.F.J.C. (2016). Making sense of imprisonment: Narratives of posttraumatic growth among female prisoners. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *60*(2), 208-227.

Vanhooren, S., Leijssen, M., & Dezutter, J. (2018). Coping strategies and posttraumatic growth in prison. *The Prison Journal*, *98*(2), 123-142.

Ward, T. & Brown, M. (2004). The good lives model and conceptual issues in offender rehabilitation. *Psychology, Crime, & Law*, *10*(3), 243-257.

Wright, K.A. (2020). Time well spent: Misery, meaning, and the opportunity of incarceration. *The Howard Journal*, *59*(1), 44-64.

Wright, K.N. (2007). An organizational analysis of prison hospice. *The Prison Journal*, *87*(4), 391-407.