

# RESEARCH SEMINAR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Seminar Executive Summary

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## Chapter 1

### Summary Overview

This paper is an executive summary reflecting on themes, concepts, and approaches identified by Niagara University researchers during the ADS:810 courses. This review will reflect upon the class presentations, book executive summaries, and class lectures from the perspective of this author's doctoral research interest in criminal justice and labor relations. Included in this document will be four chapters, starting with chapter 1 which consists of an introduction to the author and the importance of this research to the fields of criminal justice and labor relations.

Chapter 2 focus on connections made between the class materials, supplemental reading and course presenters and how this information can be used to connect, inspire and advance this author's doctoral research interest in the areas of criminal justice and labor relations.

Chapter 3 explore the best methodology for bringing a study to life and current best practices in criminal justice and labor relations; a traditional paper verse a three paper approach and research methods of the quantitative, qualitative or mixed method. Chapter 4 concentrate on the authors reflects and a general summary of anticipated outcomes and contribute to the areas of interest.

### About the Author

It is often difficult to speak of one's self or brag about accomplishments. One of the first lessons introduced in this research seminar course was the digital portfolio, which serves two folds: the first is an introduction to one's personal and professional accomplishment to be shared with cohort members on a platform. The second purpose of a digital portfolio is a platform to record significant course-related and individual experiences including reports, documents, and references. (Polka, 2002; Polka, Latorre, Rossi, 2013). Creating the digital portfolio allowed this

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author to reflect on accomplishments, professional and personal growth and values. The values and ethos identified in the digital portfolio such as family, duty, service to the marginalized and the desire to make the world a better place for everyone are the driving force behind this pursuit of a Doctorate of Philosophy in Leadership and Policy.

The author's background is a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Intelligence Analysis and a Master's Degree in Public Administration with a concentration in Ethical Leadership. Apart from the author's formal education in criminal justice, this writer also has an extensive career in the field. The author's criminal justice work experience includes an internship with the Erie County District Attorney's Office, four years of employment as a residential and non-secure detention counselor at juvenile justice detention center and twenty months as a mental health care manager providing services to clients with a varying level of involvement in the criminal justice system. Currently, this author occupation is a labor service representative at the New York State Department of Labor. As a labor service representative, this author duty is to connect job seekers with employers, enforce state labor laws, and protect workers' rights.

Based on the changes in both the labor market and criminal justice this author plans to research the relationship between education while incarcerated and post-release success in the labor market. This area of research is exciting and intriguing to the author based on the first-hand experience with clients leaving the criminal justice system and trying to enter the workforce. This study is taking place with hopes of the outcomes positively impacting current policies and funding for incarceration education programs.

## **Chapter 2: Related Research and Literature**

Of the in-class presenter, Dr. Timothy Ireland's research in criminal justice is very relatable to this writer's interest. Dr. Ireland's (1996) dissertation *Elaborated Strain Theory: Building and Testing an Individual-Level Theory of Delinquent Behavior* focuses on strain theory, this theory could potentially be beneficial to this writer's study. Strain theory emphasizes adversarial relationships and the reactions they cause and the ability for individuals to adapt to situations during mistreatment. Examining strain theory regarding advanced education for inmates may have some exciting outcome on the reaction and adaptation to the favorable circumstance in an adverse environment. Dr. Ireland's research *Traditional Strain Theory and the General Strain Theory* and used these two theories to build and test a new approach, he called *Elaborated Strain Theory*. The development of this new method is what author Alexander George and Andrew Bennett (2005), refer to as a "Building Block" approach (p.76). A building block approach identifies common patterns in a type or subtypes of a phenomenon and, "Can be component parts of larger contingent generalizations and typological theories" (George & Bennett, 2005, p.76). In the research Dr. Ireland conducted he challenged and expanded on existing knowledge of Traditional and General Strain Theories as to why juveniles offended and tested the new theory using quantitative data from the Rochester Youth Development Study.

What does all that mean for a novice researcher such as this writer? The goal of most researchers is to make a contribution to their field of study and of course most want it to be a groundbreaking contribution. Dr. Ireland gave much advice in the area of choosing a topic that has already assisted this writer looking forward. Some of his advice included not focusing on creating groundbreaking research, take an existing issue and question it, like he did Traditional and General Strain Theories. He says, "Question everything, even those things that you know to

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be true" (Ireland, personal communication, 2017). Dr. Ireland goes on to explain, when it comes to research questions don't assume that the answer is already known. For example in the research that lead to the publication of Dr. Ireland's (2003) article, *Violence Among Adolescents Living in Public Housing*, he asked and answered the question is there a relationship between crime and public housing? Most people would report they already know the answer to this question and most researchers would not try to research such simple problem that's easy to answer. Dr. Ireland, advise the opposite, ask and answer simple questions and questions what others believe to be true. The result of Dr. Ireland's research was the opposite of what was assumed. Dr. Ireland's study is an example of a heuristic case study, which identifies new variables, causal mechanisms, hypotheses and causal pathways based on results that are not expected (George & Bennett, 2005).

Dr. Catherine Fisher Collins research on women, mainly African American women in prison is highly relatable to this writer's area of interest to study. Dr. Collins offers a diverse background in nursing, education and criminal justice. She used her lived experience in all three fields to shed light and guided her research. Dr. Collins states, "Everything you have been involved in, can help guide your thesis" (Collins, personal communication, 2017). At the Niagara University Annual Research Symposium, Dr. Collins discussed that crimes committed by women are mostly for economics. As this writer digs into the literature available for this subject area of interest, the role economic need play in criminal activity shall be at the forefront of the inquiry. Dr. Collins research is relatable to this writer's area of interest because if financial need cause people to commit crimes, and the means to achieve economic stability is missing during the rehabilitation process, the cycle of intrinsic need influencing criminal activity will continue to

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repeat its self. The cycle will stop only when an intervention such as education or skilled trades are introduced to help with economic stability.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Traditional Dissertation Verse Three Paper Dissertation**

Before Dr. Racheal Rossi's in-class dissertation presentation, this writer was not aware of the three paper dissertation. A traditional dissertation style consists of five chapters. Father Kevin Creagh, describes the layout of a traditional dissertation as Chapter I: Introduction, Chapter II: Literature Review, Chapter III: Methodology, Chapter IV: Analysis and Results and Chapter V: Conclusion and Future Reseach (Creagh, personal communication, 2017). Dr. Rossi described the three paper dissertation as Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter II: Paper 1, Chapter III, Paper II, Chapter IV: Paper III and Chapter V: Conclusion. It's important to note that each paper in Chapter's one to three will include an abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology conclusion, and reference (Rossi, personal communication, 2017).

This writer is intrigued by this type of dissertation and is actively considering this delivery system as the benefits seem to outway the cost. The benefits of a three-paper thesis as outlined by Dr. Rossi includes the ability to address the same research question from three different analytical perspectives. The three views Dr. Rossi used were qualitative, quantitative and GIS, which provided more thorough research, resulting in three separate studies with three different publishable papers. Breaking up a massive dissertation into three independent documents makes the process more manageable and increase readability as expressed by Dr. Rossi (personal communication, 2017). Other benefits include shorter studies with smaller participant pools and being, "less inclined to keep reading for fear of missing that seminal work" (Rossi, personal communication, 2017).

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The drawback of a three-paper dissertation includes writing three papers. Although the overall thesis is most likely shorter in length, it takes more research, especially the three required literature reviews. This style of writing also required three Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications, that in themselves can be time-consuming and cause delay to the research as Dr. Rossi experienced. The three paper dissertation also offer organizational limitations including feeling repetitive as the three topics are connected but have to be individually complete. Working on three papers at the same time may challenge one's organizational skills.

### **Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed-Methods**

It is difficult to admit weakness and areas of lacking, but without a doubt, this writer struggles with the research design concepts of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Although these notions were a foreign language buried deep, deep within at the beginning of this course, this writer has gotten more comfortable with the research methods thanks to Dr. Polka, Dr. Rossi and John Creswell. As this writer move forward in building a research framework, the area of research is guiding the writer toward a mixed-method study.

Criminal justice and labor relations independently are complex issues, but studying these two topics at the same time creates an even more complicated issue. With the complexity of the issue at hand, it's essential to provide a well-rounded study that gives credence to both topics. This writer is leaning towards a mixed-method study because this type of method "provides a stronger understanding of the problem or question than either (quantitative or qualitative) by itself" (Creswell, 2014, p.10). Using a mixed method approach allows the focus to be on the research question or problem and utilizing all available strategies to provide the best understanding and thorough research.



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The research design may be a quantitative data collection method such as a survey of recently released ex-offenders, which include demographics and questions related to educational programs or trades they participated in while incarcerated. The quantitative data is made up of closed-end information to be statistically analyzed, and the outcomes are expressed using numerical representation. The writer can then follow up with interviews of a subgroup comprised of 6-10 of the participants surveyed. Adding the qualitative data from the dialogue provides a voice to the participants that are more subjective through open-ended conversation (Creswell, 2014).

If the writer conducts the study as stated above, that research is an explanatory sequential mixed method research, as first is the collection of quantitative data followed by the qualitative. On the other hand, when qualitative data is at the forefront of the collection process, then proceeded by quantitative evidence collection it is called an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach. Dr. Rossi's research was an exploratory sequential mixed method as the interviews directed what data she should look at in the quantitative data collection. There is also an option to collect both the quantitative and qualitative data at the same time which is called a convergent parallel mixed methods study (Creswell, 2014; Rossi, personal communication, 2017).

This writer is also intrigued by the idea of a phenomenological study. Phenomenological research uses the experiences of many individuals who have lived through similar a situation or a phenomenon. A phenomenon could be any event a group of people has gone through such as being incarcerated, join the military, and having the same profession. During the course, three phenomenological research presentations took place. First, Dr. Amelia Gallagher discussed her research in Islamic Studies as a lived religion approach. Her research was about Shan Ismail

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Safavi a Turkish empire and the endurance of the Turkish culture for many centuries. The phenomenon explored by Dr. Gallagher was the culture of the Turkish people she studied their culture through contemporary sources such as folk music, opera's, novels, the legacy of Shan Ismail Safavi in rituals and the modern devotion to this literary figure (Gallagher, personal communication, 2017).

William Campbell, a Ph.D. Candidate, also conducted phenomenological research on the phenomenon of volunteering for military service during a time of armed conflict. Campbell expressed that he interviewed current and former military personnel over the telephone asking them open-ended questions and allowed the participant's answers to drive the remainder of the inquisition. Campbell voiced that conducting phone interviews facilitated an environment for participants to be open and more forthcoming. Conversations over the phone allowed for detailed stories but maintained the anonymity of the process (Campbell, personal communication, 2017). Phone interviews may be a technique this writer implement during the qualitative data collection process.

Kimberly DeSimone, a doctoral candidate who also presented at the Annual Niagara University Research Symposium on Leadership and Policy conducted a phenomenological study of women in corporate America. Her research is entitled "A Phenomenological Exploration of Corporate Women's Perceptions in Navigating Barriers in Achieving Executive Level Top Earner Positions" (DeSimone, personal communication, 2017). DeSimone's phenomenological approach is interviewing women in a fortune 200 company to find out their perception of working in corporate America as a woman. All these women share a collective experience climbing the corporate ladder. DeSimone stated her framework for this study is a feminist lens with her theories focus on feminism and gender (DeSimone, personal communication, 2017).

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DeSimone expressed a transformative worldview with her research; this writer is also a more of a transformative researcher. A transformative worldview is conducting research that challenges oppression by intertwining with a political agenda to affect revolutionary change within society. Transformative researcher maybe feminist, Marxists, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples according to Creswel (2014).

### **Chapter 4: General Summary of Reflection**

As a person, this writer's goals and values are for making the world a fair place for everyone. As a researcher, this writer hopes to bring light to the issue of access to employment after incarceration. Not only would this writer like to bring light to the subject but provide a feasible solution to help reduce the problem. This researcher would like to show that access to education while incarcerated allow ex-offenders to attain work upon release. With an outcome of increasing employment and a reduction in recidivism, this research hope for more funding for prison education and the full reinstatement of Pell grants to felons.

This class provided an extraordinary introduction to research, with knowledgeable instructors, and presenters. At times this subject was difficult as this writer has been away from the academic world for some time now and the information was new and abundant. This course challenged this writer, time management, public speaking, and desire to work in a cohort. The writer was surprised by writing this paper on how much knowledge this course helped this writer attain. This reflection brought together all the materials, books, presentation so this writer can appreciate all the knowledge gained.

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