

# A QUALITATIVE ARTICLE CRITIQUE

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### Article Overview

Joyce Arditti and Tiffany Parkman authored the article entitled *Young Men's Reentry After Incarceration: A Developmental Paradox* in March 2011. This article is a qualitative research design that contains six chapters with titles and sections included the Abstract, Background and Significance, A Life Course Perspective on Young Men's Reentry, Method, Findings: Young Men's Reentry as a Developmental Paradox, and Discussion. The article also contains numerous subsections that assist with organization. The study examined the perception and lived experiences of young men's transition to adulthood after incarceration within the context of returning to their families. The article investigated two research questions to understand the developmental processes of young men entering adulthood through prisoner re-entry. Joyce Arditti and Tiffany Parkman (2011), posed the following two research questions:

- (a) What is the lived meaning of young men's re-entry? Lived meaning refers to how a person experiences and understand critical aspects of the world.
- (b) How do the lived meanings of re-entry influence young men's developmental transition to adulthood? (p. 205)

Utilizing a qualitative approach Arditti and Parkman collected, analyzed and summarized the findings of nine in-depth and semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated young adult males ages 18 to 24 (2011). By employing a combination of qualitative research methods and supporting literature evidence from the primary fields, of criminal justice and human development, Arditti and Parkman (2011), concluded that there was a developmental paradox around re-entry creating contradictions regarding maturity, employment, and dependence on family.

## A Qualitative Article Critique

### **Abstract**

The article opens with an abstract which *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) and Creswell (2014), express can be the single most important paragraph in an article, study or dissertation. This article meets the criteria set forth by both Creswell (2014), APA manual (2010), and Frances Ryan, Michael Coughlan, and Patricia Cronin (2007) to illustrate a well written abstract. This study's abstract is accurate and reflects the purpose and content of the document. The language used is clear, concise, coherent and readable. The authors of this article identified the problem, noted the study participants, the methodology used in the study, the primary research findings and recommendations.

### **Background and Significance**

The significance of the study explains the contribution it will add to the field, the need for the research and the anticipated outcome. This section may also contain a justification of the qualitative approach to the study (Ryan et al., 2007). The author identifies the extent of the problem of incarceration with supporting background information including large statistical figures and many examples of struggles with re-entry and of high rates of federal, state, and local incarceration. To improve this section, the authors needed to identify the gaps in the research that this study would fill.

The characteristics of an outstanding literary review section of any study include defining the problem within a broader context, identify the area of research, summarize the investigation of previous studies, and provide a comprehensive and accurate representation of the current state of the investigation. It is also essential to identify themes and relationships along with contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps in recent studies. An outstanding literary review section will establish a theoretical framework for exploring holes and inconsistencies and suggest the

## A Qualitative Article Critique

next steps in solving the problem (Ryan et al., 2007; American Psychological Association, 2010; Creswell, 2014).

This literature review was an extensive summary of previous research, theories to support the research, authors prior knowledge on the subject, and philosophical underpinnings of the study. The authors cite many primary sources, examples, and other study outcomes to illustrate the need to inform the public about the problems young men experiences with re-entering society after the incarceration. The philosophical underpinning used in this article was ontology form an interpretivism perspective. The nature of this reality according to Arditti and Parkman (2011), is that the experiences of young men re-entering society are set apart from their counterparts by social exclusion and social capital deficiencies. The researchers used a personal and flexible research approach to capture the meaning of the subject interactions with their families to make sense of the perceived reality of society. The researchers discussed their preunderstanding and prior insight on the subject matter but are open to more knowledge and assume, the need for more information for a fix research design. The goal of this interpretive research is to interpret and understand the lived meanings of employment, maturity, and dependence on family for young men re-entering society. Other strengths of this literature review include the number of primary sources, and most of the references were less than ten years old.

The section also contains a robust discussion of the theoretical framework that conceptualizes the article. The theory identified by the authors was life course theory which includes the timing of when life transitions occur and the meanings associated with such events. In the literature review, a clear description of life course theory was available; this theory seemed appropriate for the research.

## A Qualitative Article Critique

### **Methodology**

The method section of an article is an in-depth description of the process of conducting the study. According to the APA Manual (2010), and Ryan et al. (2007), the method section should contain elements including a description of the participants, delivery mechanisms, sampling size, and the research design and analysis. The chosen approach of this study by the researcher is a qualitative phenomenological method. According to Arditti and Parkman (2011), they adopted a qualitative methodology, “Because it aligns well with our aim to give voice to marginalized person and groups” and life after incarceration lacks economic, social and political power for ex-offenders re-entering society and their families (p.208). The authors chose the phenomenological analytical lens as they focused on the lived experiences of significant events and the meaning of those experiences for ex-prisoners returning home after confinement. The goal of using the phenomenological approach was to find insight concerning the essence of the subject's experiences based on reflections of essential themes.

### **Sampling and Participants characteristics**

The recruitment of study participants took place at two urban parole offices. The researchers were able to involve gatekeepers to gain access to department of correction staff and information. Nine study participants met the criteria of the study after researchers engaged in purposeful sampling to select information-rich cases to bring depth to the search. The small number of participants meet the standard outline for a qualitative researched as noted by Ryan et al. (2007). One of the critical elements of a research method section is the participant's characteristics. Demographic characteristics may include gender, age, level of education, ethnic and racial groups to name a few. The demographics of the participants in this article are young men with an average age of 21.3 years and 17 years old at the time of incarceration. Study

## A Qualitative Article Critique

makeup included one caucasian subject and eight African American; five participants struggled with substance abuse, and two contributors reported enrollment in education programs. The crime involvement of participants ranged from drug possession to reckless endangerment, and armed robbery.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Some data collection technique used in qualitative research including open-ended questions from a non-numerical questionnaire, unstructured or semi-structured interviews, observation of participants and historical documents to name a few according to Ryan et al. (2007). The data collection method used by Arditti and Parkman (2011), was face to face semi-structured interviews with open ending questions with opportunities to probe interviewees to elicit the experiences of participants and encourage the telling of their stories. Questions for the interview originated from the empirical literature on the experiences of young men and their caregivers, transition to adulthood and prisoner re-entry information.

Data analysis is the means of determining the credibility of the research findings according to Ryan et al. (2007). Criteria for a successful research data analysis includes a description of the process, organization of data, coding steps taken and verification strategies. The data analysis techniques undertaken by Arditti and Parkman (2011), was a highlighting approach to organize text after reading it and categorizing the data in the following themes re-entry expectations, reliance on family, and role conflicts. The vague and redundant text was eliminated during coded and was noted in the analysis write-up. A peer-reviewed verification process was used to ensure themes chosen were consistent with the research questions (Arditti & Parkman, 2011).

## A Qualitative Article Critique

### **Trustworthiness**

According to Ryan et al. (2007), trustworthiness also known as rigour is the means of demonstrating that a qualitative research process as credible, plausible, and have integrity. Trustworthiness is when the reader finds rigour in the documentation, procedure, ethics and during audit development process of the study. Ryan et al. (2007), notes rigour in the documentation is ensuring the relationship between the research questions and the research process. Arditti and Parkman (2011), confirmed the correlation excited by using the peer-reviewed verification process. Procedure rigour refers to using data collection techniques that are appropriate and exact. Encompassing a reflection component is also important in this section. The biases or preunderstanding as Arditti and Parkman (2011), called them were identified early in the study. The use of bracketing was implemented to reduce biases. The used of field notes, and reseracher meetings regularly was used to evaluate changes in thoughts during the interview and study write up process.

Ethical rigour refers to the process of dealing with participants rights and confidentiality and falls under the section of ethical consideration. Researchers have to ensure the concealment of participants' identities; although one hundred percent anonymity is not possible as the name of the participants are known to the researchers. Ways of covering identity include using coding to give participants aliases. In this study, it was not clear if pennames gave to participants as names were used in the published articles. The authors noted participants were interviewed in a separate room away from parole officers. Another component of ethical consideration is ensuring the participants understand the purpose of the study, and as a volunteer, they can withdraw at any time. Arditti and Parkman (2011), noted they used the informed consent and had an ethical

## A Qualitative Article Critique

responsibility to protect their human subjects from harm. Participants are informed that participating in the study would not affect their parole status and vice-versa.

### **Finding and Conclusion**

The finding of this study related back to the original research question and purpose. The research relayed the essence of the lived experience and perception of ex-offenders meaning of employment, maturity, and dependence on family. The authors used direct quotes at a time to illustrate the views of study participants. Recommendations were made based on the finding to improve the outcome of young men returning to society. To place the results in context, the researchers noted the cutting of funding and access to programs that would help reduce the negative impact of re-entering society after incarceration. The information attained for the lived experiences of ex-offenders may be able to provide necessary information to change course on the elimination of reentry programs.



## A Qualitative Article Critique

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