Article

Space, Time, and Reflexive Interviewing: Implications for Qualitative Research with Active, Incarcerated, and Former Criminal Offenders

Steven Downing, PhD
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
University of Ontario Institute of Technology
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

Katherine Polzer, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Criminal Justice
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas, United States

Kristine Levan, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Criminal Justice
Plymouth State University
Plymouth, New Hampshire, United States

Abstract

Space and time are concepts familiar to physicists, philosophers, and social scientists; they are operationalized with varying degrees of specificity but are both heralded as important to contextualizing research and understanding individual, cultural, and historical differences in perception and the social construction of reality. Space can range from, at the macro level, geographic region, to at the micro level, the immediate physical surroundings of an individual or group of persons. Similarly, a conceptualization of time can range from era or epoch to the passing of seconds and minutes within a situational dynamic of human interaction. In this article we examine the microcosmic end of the space-time spectrum, specifically as it relates to doing qualitative interviews with current or former criminal offenders. Through a comparative discussion of interviews with incarcerated, recently released, and active offenders, we pose questions and offer insights regarding how interviewers and interviewees perceive physical space and the passage of time and, most importantly, how these perceptions relate to the interview process and resulting data. Notably, we suggest that interviewer reflexivity should take into account not only the relationship, dialogue, and discourse between interviewer and interviewee but also space and time as perceived and constructed by both parties. Finally, we offer several key strategies for incorporating these considerations into the interviewer toolkit.

Keywords: qualitative research, reflexivity, space, time, active offenders, prison research

Citing the relevance of the Chicago School of thought to contemporary sociological research, Abbott (1997) emphasizes that this orientation "felt that no social fact makes any sense abstracted from its context in social (and often geographic) space and social time" (p. 1152). It is our goal in this article to closely examine some of the theoretical and practical implications of space and time when doing qualitative research—here focussed on interviews—with former and active offenders.

Indeed, it is almost indisputable that a major strength of qualitative sociological inquiry is its ability to create texture through "thick descriptions"—to capture and understand the context in which its findings emerge. To be realized, these strengths require the investigator to pay close attention to not only what respondents have to say but also where, when, and under what circumstances they say it. For example, Howard Becker is heralded for his ethnographic narratives (see, for example, Van Maanen, 2011). In part this is because of his attention to context. This attention to context is particularly relevant to the current inquiry because it incorporates elements of the where and when (see, for example, Becker's 1974 discussion of visual sociology).

While, as Van Maanen (2011, p. 10) points out, Becker's style focussed on the observation of research subjects and their world, we contend that the emergent artifacts, places, experiences, and cues to the respondent as his or her narrative is formed during the course of an interview constitute a process that can be strengthened by an engagement in reflexivity on the part of the researcher as well as the respondent. This approach, however, requires that elements of space and time be assessed during the research process.

Accordingly, in this inquiry we frame the concepts of space and time as central components of understanding the context of one's research and the experiences of the groups and individuals being researched. As will be discussed, space and time are far from new concepts to sociological inquiry, but in this inquiry we hope to shed light on how these concepts play a role in interviewing active, released, and incarcerated offenders.

Though emergent from concerns about "social" space and time, considerations of these components as related to qualitative interviewing tend to focus on technical issues, such as making a respondent comfortable and accommodating her scheduling needs (see, for example, Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 151). We will argue that technical considerations are important, but they are only some of the many considerations that should be considered when conducting interviews, especially with active or former offenders. Thus, we will define space and time within the context of narrative and reflexivity, addressing it from an epistemological and methodological perspective. Our primary purpose in locating space and time in narrative and reflexivity is to contend that reflexivity can and often should be engaged in by not only the researcher but also the researched, and that approaching interviewing with space and time in mind aids in accomplishing this goal.

The Current Inquiry

In this inquiry we will seek to first provide a brief overview of the roots of philosophic, scientific, and sociological handlings of the concepts of space and time and then proceed to link their contemporary manifestations (e.g., reflexivity and narrative interviewing) with real world "field experience." We (the three co-authors) each have experience interviewing either active, former, or incarcerated offenders, and we will relay some of our experiences, discussing how space and time have played a role in recruiting, interviewing, and interpreting the data collected in our research.

Ultimately we seek to ground the often abstract concepts of space and time in practical field experiences. It is duly noted that our own experiences are just that: our own; but it is our hope that this grounding will provide the basis for an ongoing examination of how and why qualitative criminology can incorporate space and time into its methodological paradigm(s). To do so, we will argue, requires attention specifically to the micro-level constructs, including the aforementioned comfort and convenience to respondents but also concepts such as life-histories, current degree of subjection to "total control," pressures of "street life," and so on.

In the context of the current inquiry we define interviews as conversations with respondents that fall both inside and outside of the intended research protocol (e.g., implementation of a survey). As such, we also argue that concepts central to good ethnography can also inform interviewing that is removed from participant observation. Thus, we will draw from ethnographic literature as well as work on interviewing. In the sections and subsections below, we will define key terms and outline our objective with more specificity. To do so, we have drawn on literature that we believe most accurately captures our own encounters with space-time issues when doing interviews, and we have also focussed, when possible, on literature that incorporates elements central to the study of crime and deviance. We acknowledge that there is a large body of literature addressing space and time, but what is presented here should provide a working foundation for future dialogue about these concepts as applied to criminological inquiry.

Space, Time, and Criminology: Framing the Current Inquiry

Space and time are concepts familiar to philosophers, physicists, and sociologists. Although it is reasonable to assume that each of these orientations formulates distinct understandings of space and time, the following sections will attempt to link the historical and contemporary understandings of space and time across fields and disciplines, ultimately offering a transition into these concepts applying directly to doing qualitative research on active and former criminal offenders. In doing so, it is our goal to operationalize the concepts of space and time, as they specifically relate to micro contexts. To do so, it is necessary that we first define some terms that are key to our inquiry.

We will obviously use the terms *space* and *time* quite frequently. As we will discuss below, these terms can be examined from a variety of perspectives, but ultimately we define time primarily at the micro level, and in doing so stress the importance of temporal ordering of events by individuals and groups (e.g., prisoners sitting in a cell or active offenders standing on a street corner). We will also evoke the term *narrative*. In doing so, we refer to the methodological concept and focus on holistic accounts. These accounts require that both the researcher(s) and respondents return to previous events in order to frame the context of the current study. As Ward (2007) stresses, qualitative research and writing itself is naturally a narrative experience. Indeed, as many cultural criminologists have noted (see, for example, Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008), much quantitative research constitutes what Mills (1959) refers to as abstract empiricism (i.e., research taken out of the social and historical context in which it is conducted). In other words, narrative is a term and tool that, we argue, provides contextual clarity and helps avoid abstraction. It is, however, not our goal to suggest that narrative can reify complex personal and social experience.

We will also make reference to *reflexivity*. This is another methodological concept that is commonly evoked in qualitative designs. Here we intend to stress that reflexivity requires the "presence" of a researcher. We do not intend to suggest that this presence requires a commitment similar to Bourgois' (2003), wherein he lived with the groups he studied for over a year, but that the researcher remain relationally present (see Noddings, 2003) to respondents. Relational

presence requires that researchers open themselves to the emotions and needs of their respondents, reacting organically rather than according to script or protocol. We will contend, as Noddings (2003) does, that relational presence offers an organic alternative to often more rigid structures based on ethics and practices of principle. In doing so, we assert that adopting a care focus facilitates drawing out reflexivity from respondents because it allows the researcher to adapt freely, incorporating her own emotions and those of the respondent(s) in a way that can clash, contradict, and challenge both parties without violating a standardized protocol.

We contend that openness to and with respondents provides an opportunity to methodologically and theoretically expand the concept of reflexivity. More specifically, we will argue that research participants, in this case interviewees, are capable of reflexivity in the course of their own sharing of narrative accounts. As Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) suggest, reflective (here we use the term reflexive) research is focussed on unravelling how "perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political and cultural circumstances ... form the backdrop to – as well as impregnate – the interpretations" (p. 9). In the current discussion, we put forward the notion that reflexivity, defined in this way, can and in many cases should also extend to a dynamic involving respondents, in real time during and perhaps even after the data collection process.

In order to establish a case for engaging respondents in reflexivity during data collection, we pay particular attention to concepts of *foreground* and *background*. In doing so, we are attempting to link space and time with actionable methodological frameworks centered around reflexivity. More specifically, we suggest that the foreground of a research project relates to a point of contact between a researcher and respondent. Thus, foreground refers to the micro space-time of an interaction. On the contrary, background refers to what Abbott (1997) suggests is "social time." In other words, the background factors of an interview refer to those social, historical, cultural, and personal experiences from which a respondent and researcher arrive at the present, and foreground factors include the present place and time in which their meeting occurs and during which reflexivity can occur.

Ultimately, all of the terms we evoke in this inquiry are interconnected. Below we will go into some more detail about the evolution of these concepts and their presence in broad spheres of intellectual and scholarly pursuits, and finally, we will link these concepts through personal research experience.

Scientific & Philosophic Roots of Space & Time: The Importance of Relativity

Our current inquiry into the nature of space and time is certainly not novel or a new endeavour. In the 24th Century B.C.E., the Egyptian philosopher Ptahhotep devoted a good deal of thought to the nature of time (see Allen, 2000). He ruminated on the passage of time—a subject that Leibniz and Newton still wrestled with during the European Enlightenment (van Fraassen, 1970). They, as was Einstein some two centuries later (Einstein, 1920), were concerned with how to define space and time—its essence and continuity, or lack thereof.

Across the various theories of space and time emerges a similarity: these concepts are subject to the relative state of the observer. This state is by no means constant. One example of an "altered state" of relative perception results from the use of certain narcotics, which may have an impact on perceptions of space and time, creating "out of body" experiences and alterations in one's temporal construction of the passage of time through connecting discrete memories and events (see, for example, Dawson, 2001). Although chemically induced, these effects illustrate the malleability of human perception, particularly with respect to the ordering of events. As

sociologists, it is in part our task to recognize that these events are not necessarily discrete and, along with the respondent, to uncover their narrative continuity, insofar as it exists.

Applications to Sociology: Transitioning Theoretical Paradigms

The physics of space-time are interesting with respect to sociological inquiry because of their emphasis on relativity and perception. Whereas physicists focus on these concepts with respect to celestial bodies and speeds relative to that of light, sociologists are concerned with the less cosmic concepts of space and time—namely how space and time differ across cultures, through the movements of people, ideas, and so on. However, in this discussion we argue that sociologists may benefit from an even more microscopic evaluation of space and time, particularly as it relates to the situational dynamics of the qualitative interview. To do this, we might turn to an enlightenment thinker with whom sociologists are likely familiar: Locke.

Locke emphasized the temporal nature of time, suggesting that the perception of events in a particular order is what gives time meaning and significance, particularly with respect to the observer (Uzgalis, 2007). Marxist concepts of space-time emphasize the relationship between technology, labour, production of capital, and temporal disjunction (see, for example, Harvey, 1989; Marx, 1939/1973). Here we will focus our attention on the Chicago School, which emphasized the relevance of the observer of space and time, particularly with respect to his or her temporal ordering of events and situations (Abbott, 1997). Focussing on these concept of space and time as a lens through which to view qualitative interviews, we can begin to formulate an understanding of how a respondent and interviewer might construct the interview experience both similarly and differently depending on foreground situational cues (e.g., whether an interview takes place in an office or a respondent's home) and background contextual issues (e.g., the cultural and historical backgrounds: social time). Locke's emphasis on the temporality of space and time also provides a foundation for qualitative research focussed on narrative accounts, as these provide continuity and context.

Thus, as we move forward with this discussion, our focus will narrow to four core concepts: space, time, narrative, and reflexivity. Throughout this discussion we will return to the notion that narrative accounts require an understanding of the foreground and background factors surrounding fragmented or connected events, and that reflexive interviewing is an appropriate and useful approach for facilitating such understanding. Before connecting these concepts, however, we will examine several examples in criminological research where space and time have played a particularly important role.

Space

When going about their scholarly work, qualitative researchers likely find it difficult *not* to confront issues involving space. Much qualitative research is conducted in, or at the very least with members of, communities. Fine and van den Scott (2011) draw attention to the reality that many communities, gatherings, and events are fleeting and situational. These events and situations are not merely stages for human interaction, because indeed **"**our lived-space is filled with meaningful 'places' that orient our life" (Leder, 2004). Furthermore, persons and groups carry experiences across space and pass them across time through culture, making it particularly important to understand the current, past, and even future orientation of those we (qualitative researchers) are studying (Ettlinger, 2007).

Anderson (1999) recognizes the importance of place in orienting subjects' lived experiences. He describes the context around his street ethnography when he shares that "impressionistic materials

were drawn from various social settings around the city, from some of the wealthiest to some of the most economically depressed" (Anderson, 1999, p. 10). Anderson goes on to describe these settings, tracing the visible changes as one moves down Germantown Avenue in Philadelphia (the area where he conducted his ethnography). He describes the contrast on Germantown Avenue as, in many respects, "a metaphor for the whole city" (p. 15). Space is a concept negotiated and constructed through the formation of and reaction to physical and symbolic barriers, particularly in neighborhoods and communities identified by shared and/or diverse characteristics (see van Eijk, 2011).

Beyond capturing the effects of space on groups and individuals, an awareness of space serves practical purposes when interviewing incarcerated, former, and active offenders. This approach does not require ethnographic work constituted by participant observation—it can be applied to interviewing as well. Wright and Decker (1994), for example, used space to enhance their naturalistic approach to interviewing active offenders. They conducted interviews in cars, allowing respondents (active residential burglars) to point out former target homes and discuss the neighborhoods in which they lived and offended. This approach offered challenges (see, for example, Wright & Decker, 1994, p. 29) but was overwhelmingly beneficial in lending "texture" to their interview data. We contend here that reflexive thinking on the part of respondents also adds to texture, but this reflexivity is best facilitated by acknowledging and, to the best of the researcher's ability, understanding the space-time context of the interview and interviewee.

Not all space issues can be resolved in a way that directly benefits a research project in the way that it did for Wright and Decker (1994). In some cases, the space in which research occurs presents challenges to data collection. We argue that in such cases the researcher should adapt to the space inhabited by, or to be inhabited by, the studied group, even if it inconveniences interviewers and makes data collection more difficult. Indeed, active and former offenders may simply have certain constraints on their space and time availability (e.g., probationary restrictions, lack of transportation, and incapacitation). It is important in these cases, as it is in all qualitative research, to conduct interviews in "spaces" available to and contextually appropriate for the studied population (see, for example, Ward & Wasby's 2010 study of law clerks). Copes and Hochstetler (2003) took these issues into consideration when deciding where to meet with probationers in their study:

> We conducted interviews in places that were convenient for respondents. Interview locations included probation and parole offices after their regular appointments, their homes, local libraries, or other quiet places. In a few instances, we conducted interviews in areas that were not ideal settings for interviews, including parks, cars, and taverns. (p. 284)

While interviewing female prisoners, Ferraro and Moe (2003) "conducted interviews, one on one, with women in private rooms *without* the presence of a correctional officer" (p. 18, italics added). In this case, the researchers understood the implication of the presence of a correctional officer— that it would fundamentally alter the meaning of a given space for the respondent(s). This example is a good illustration of the connection between the practical and the theoretical. The practical implication here is that researchers must consider respondent comfort levels but also that these comfort levels represent larger theoretical, sometimes abstract, constructs of space, which is also illustrated by Rhodes' (1998, 2001, 2005) prison ethnographies, in which she notes that "given the extreme nature of this form of confinement and its inaccessibility to prolonged round-the-clock observation, what prisoners are able to say in interviews is akin to messages in bottles—small bits of a larger picture, smuggled out" (2005, p. 390).

Thus, space becomes a prison both literally and figuratively—the interview is a disruption of this space, but also an experience that takes place within it. As will be discussed below, the concrete and figurative also coalesce around the concept of time.

Time & Narrative

As we have already asserted, time is often abstract and relative, influenced by internal and external factors. As qualitative researchers, it is our task to make sense of this abstractness and relativity—to connect it with our interviewing and the interviewed. This section will examine how a narrative approach to interviewing can help achieve this goal.

To begin with, a researcher herself can benefit from framing her research in the context of a personal narrative. For example, Ward (2007) recalls that:

> In writing the methodology chapter of my doctoral thesis, I was spiritually returned to the state of "being" I occupied while conducting my research and the sometimes complicated practical, personal and ethical dilemmas I faced not only while collecting the data, but also in the years that passed beyond the close of my study. (para. 14)

Thus, Ward is able to place her research within a timeline, and in the process she re-situates herself in the moment(s) of data collection. Through this process of reflection, Ward has merged foreground (the research moments themselves) and background (the time spans around and since the research) concepts of time. This approach is at its core a narrative one.

Anderson (1999) similarly incorporates time in his description of the research setting. He notes the change in lower Germantown Avenue at nightfall, citing its impact on offending and non-offending residents. Apart from painting a narrative picture within which to frame his ethnography, Anderson simultaneously acknowledges the impact of the passage of time on the people who occupy his research setting.

Just as Anderson incorporates time into his account of his research setting, respondents themselves are likely to convey narrative accounts of the passage of time. For example, Copes and Hochstetler (2003) recall that in their research, "offenders located the events that they described within a larger lifestyle and extended course of events including repeat offending" (p. 285). Thus, a researcher concerned with narrative context must account for the passage of time across these life events and offending moments (i.e., background and foreground elements of time). As Richie (2001) illustrates, repeat offending is common among samples of interviewed offenders. Repetitious behaviour is more than fodder for theory or intellectual curiosity; it represents the passage of time—narrative.

Furthermore, the qualitative interview can serve as a place where former and active offenders construct such a narrative in a reflexive way, accounting for the space-time dynamics that affect their own perception of events that have occurred in the past. These narratives not only provide contextual clarity to the research project but also provide the respondent an opportunity to incorporate her experiences into her identity, which is a dynamic central to reflexivity (Presser, 2004). This opportunity may be particularly important to former and active offenders because they are often demonized, and in the case of the incarcerated, subjected to total control, part of which is the intentional distorting of time (see, for example, Rhodes, 2004). In prison,

> Time itself has become something that must be served, an instrument of disempowerment. This is true not only on the macroscopic scale, but also in the intricate management of daily time to which an inmate is subjected. (Leder, 2004, p. 55)

We will return to this concept of total control and the distortion of time while in prison, but it is important to note here that the experienced time of an incarcerated offender is likely to differ vastly from that of an active offender, especially a "street" offender. Much of the literature on active offenders describes the offender's lifestyle as "high living," wherein the offender rapidly gains wealth and rapidly spends this wealth on maintaining a fast, temporarily luxurious lifestyle (see, for example, Jacobs & Wright, 2006). In contrast, incarcerated respondents experience monotonous time, void of luxuries. This reality has practical and theoretical implications. As Ferraro and Moe (2003) note of their own research:

> Our only constraint on the number of women who could participate was funding as we were only able to pay thirty interviewees a ten- to twenty-dollar stipend. The ability to earn such money by participating in a research study proved to be a strong incentive for women who said they would use the funds to purchase such basic supplies as shampoo, conditioner, tampons, stamps, paper and pencils, soda, and candy bars. (p. 17)

Again, the researcher must contend with the lived realities of the persons whom she is studying. These lived realities are wrapped up in moments, experiences, and life-stages. Accounting for these dynamics can be made easier through the employment of reflexive interviewing, by which we mean the practice of reflection *during* data collection itself that involves reflexivity on not just the part of the researcher but also the respondent.

Reflexivity

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) assert that reflective researchers should be engaged in four primary areas of data analysis; they should focus on their research procedures, their interpretive activities, the political and ideological elements of the research, and the representation of their work as authoritative regarding the subject and data. Although we agree that these approaches are fundamental to reflexive research, we contend that reflexivity in the context of data collection also needs to encourage the respondent(s) to engage in similar practices. We argue that without doing so, especially in research involving former or active offenders, it becomes difficult to accomplish reflexivity post-interview (during the analysis stage of research).

Indeed, reflexivity is common to ethnography, where a naturalistic approach may address some issues regarding, for example, the subjectivity of an interviewer's/ethnographer's representation of a studied population (Katz, 1997). However, the qualitative interview that falls outside of ethnography can also benefit equally from a reflexive approach wherein the interviewer responds to the dynamic state(s) of the respondent, by encouraging him or her to also engage in reflexivity during the course of the interview.

We contend that reflexive interviewing acknowledges the dynamic nature of interaction between respondent and researcher, as well as the contextual nature of the respondent's experiences inside and outside of the interview. As such, a reflexive interview and analytic approach aids in maintaining a contextualized narrative, primarily by engaging the respondent's reflexivity (O'Connor, 2001). As part of this process, the context of language and narrative within the research setting, particularly in the case of the respondent, relies on concepts of space and time (see Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009).

To draw out a contextualized narrative, our conceptualization of the reflexive interview relies on a collaborative, organic, and space- and time-sensitive relationship between interviewer and respondent. Noddings (2003) notes that "the caring attitude ... pervades the situational time-space. So far as it is in my control, if we are conversing and if I care, I remain present to you throughout the conversation" (p. 20). This "remaining present" applies as much to interviews as it does to the general caring relationships to which Noddings refers. Noddings (2003) further articulates that caring can be positioned as an alternative to principled approaches to ethics. In this sense, it is itself highly contextualized, responsive, and malleable—all features useful in interviewing, particularly from a narrative perspective.

Ruddick (1995) makes a strong case for the value of care to reflexivity in her distinction between abstract and concrete. In Ruddick's terms, "to abstract is to simplify complexity, in particular to reduce the manifold issues of moral life into dichotomous choices—to steal or not to steal—which can then elicit general principles" (p. 95). In contrast, Ruddick (1995) conceptualizes concreteness as requiring "inventing alternatives even when there seem to be none, looking closely at what is happening. … to think concretely is to refuse to 'get it,' to accept abstraction's terms" (p. 95). In other words, abstract ethical reasoning as a basis for engagement with others results in categorical assessment, whereas a concrete (grounded in context) ethical basis will allow for reflection that escapes categorical confines. As Noddings (2003) emphasizes, to draw out and attempt to understand these dynamics requires the one caring or, here we argue, the one researching to remain present—to listen without categorical presumptions.

In simpler terms, related to caring and remaining present, empathy serves as one component of encouraging and recognizing respondent reflexivity. For example, offenders may often navigate a qualitative interview in such a way that favorably reflects a self-constructed identity (Presser, 2004). The reflexive interviewer can thus act as both an observer and empathetic participant, engaging in a re-evaluation or re-construction of the respondent identities and offering the respondent an opportunity to reflect on and temporally arrange past experiences and ascribed statuses (e.g., violent offender, prisoner, probationer) in a way that helps facilitate this identity construction, or redemption script (see Maruna, 2001). Maruna (2001) emphasizes that redemption scripts begin by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator who has often engaged in crime and drug use in an effort to gain power over otherwise bleak circumstances (p. 87). Redemption scripts relate to these narrative accounts from interviewees because redemption scripts allow them to take a shameful past and essentially rewrite it in the form of a necessary prelude to a productive life (Maruna, 2001). Maruna also refers to recovery scripts, wherein the narrator (i.e., the interviewee) recalls how they returned to a non-criminal path with the help of someone who "believed in [them]" (p. 87). Maruna and Roy (2007) found in interviews with ex-offenders that these respondents often hope to demonstrate their internal reform through a process of reparation and symbolic generativity (p. 116). To achieve this generativity requires contextualization of one's experiences that escapes the aforementioned categories of abstract ethical labels.

Thus, here we argue that interviews with incarcerated, released, or active offenders require special attention to reflexivity, particularly as it relates to the differing conceptualizations of space and time according to a respondent's current state (e.g., in prison or living under house arrest). Reflexive interviewing helps prevent the interviewer from imposing assumptions about how the respondent constructs her current state, as well as aids the respondent to more holistically assess and recount her own experiences. Also, Maruna and King's (2009) analysis highlights the potential explanatory power of the construct of "belief in redeemability" (p. 19) in understanding punitive attitudes. Maruna and King (2009) note that this belief is often evoked by (ex)offenders in the course of forming scripts, but it also has potential to influence the general public's

assessment of punitiveness versus redemption. A good example can be found in Ferraro and Moe's (2003) study of inmates, in which they discuss what we perceive as a reflexive approach to interviewing:

> We prompted women to elaborate on topics that were not necessarily central to our original research goals but appeared to hold particular significance for them. Because our expectation was that women's accounts of such experiences would be heavily contextualized and detailed, we accorded ourselves and our interviewees much flexibility in the format and order in which topics were discussed. (p. 16)

Ferraro and Moe (2003) allow for a collaborative approach to constructing narrative context and clarity, thus enabling the respondent to account for and acknowledge their present, past, and even anticipated future orientations in space and time.

Examples From the Field

In the following three sections, we will relate our own experiences in the field, paying particular attention to issues we have confronted regarding space and time dynamics as they relate to the interview process with incarcerated, released, and active offenders. In doing so, our aim is to ground the afore-discussed theoretical constructs of space, time, narrative, and reflexivity in discussion of real researcher struggles, failures, and successes, as well as our perceptions of the impact of space and time on those we researched. Given that these experiences are our own (and not necessarily generalizable to all researchers), we encourage readers to use these examples as a framework for exploring their own past and/or anticipated future research as it relates to space and time. That said, a strength of qualitative research is that because of its close proximity to respondents, internal validity is often bolstered (Meyrick, 2006). Thus, the space-time dynamics discussed in our accounts may be somewhat novel to our studies, but they can be compared with other similarly structured projects.

Regardless of our proximity to respondents, it is not our intent to valorize our roles as researchers or to diminish the roles of the respondents but rather to illustrate how both roles interact with respect to the management and conceptualization of space and time. With respect to management, we frequently refer to the researcher's tactics, but the ultimate reality is that researchers are likely unable to swoop into the lives of a group of people with whom they are not intimately familiar and recreate a space and time dynamic that facilitates their own research endeavor (see, for example, Rhodes, 2001, p. 76). Nor should researchers seek to define respondents' space-time through their own (often culturally different) perspectives (see Massey, 2004). This limitation will become precisely our point—that researchers must instead remain present (see Noddings, 2003) and receptive to the lived realities of respondents and that they should seek to give voice to respondents, to whom space and time are central in contextualizing their voices (see, also, Sutton, 2011).

In the three research cases we discuss below, we were careful to avoid adopting what has been termed a "conflict" style narrative (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005; Ezzy, 2010). In other words, we focus on developing research questions or tactics that illustrate disparate views of reality between the interviewer and the interviewee. As Ezzy (2010) explains, "interviewers should aim to perform their interviews in such a way that the interviewee will provide a rich and nuanced account of the events or issues that are the focus of the research" (p. 168). All three of the populations under consideration provide the opportunity for such accounts. Avoiding judgemental research techniques allowed the authors to perhaps better illustrate their experiences.

It should also be noted that each of the following three sections draw on the experiences of an individual co-author: Levan's research with incarcerated offenders, Polzer's with released offenders, and Downing's with active offenders. It is also important to acknowledge the often cyclical nature of offending, incarceration, release, subsequent re-offending, arrest, and so on (i.e., recidivism). As such, while we, the authors, have interviewed separate respondents in distinct stages of this cycle, respondents across our research share similar experiences, often passing through this cycle of offending, arrest, and release. This cycle and its impact on the temporal state of offenders and non-offenders who have served time or expect to do so is duly noted, and it is not our intent to reify the complexities of this relationship (see, for example, Maruna, 2001). We do, in fact, assert that the cyclical, overlapping reality of incarceration, release, and offending, and the subsequent overlap in respondent narratives, is an even further justification for paying close attention to the space and time contexts in which an interview, interviewer, and respondent are framed.

Interviewing Incarcerated Offenders

In this section, I (Levan) will draw on experience from face-to-face research with roughly 25 adult male inmates in a maximum security prison that took place during the mid-2000s. Incarcerated populations have different perspectives on concepts such as space and time than their counterparts residing in the community, either as recently released or active offenders. Unlike these populations, an incarcerated individual's space and time are constrained by the environment of the "total institution," a term coined by Goffman (1961) decades ago, but which seems to still apply. Control is established and maintained within the institution by the correctional staff, as well as institutional policies (such as lockdowns, rules regarding contraband possession, and restriction on visitations) and physical structures (such as fenced perimeters, cell bars, and locked doors). Actual surveillance is routinized, and the perception of surveillance is constant. While surveillance can be accomplished by guardians, some institutions also implement closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems to achieve the perception of constant surveillance. Regardless of whether the surveillance is actually constant or perceived as constant, the mere perception of surveillance serves to alter an inmate's behavior (Foucault, 1975; Sykes, 1958).

The reality for inmates is that they live in a world where individual decision-making is practically nonexistent. Their routines are dictated by the schedules of the facility. Meal times, work shifts, and sleeping times are implemented like a well-oiled machine. Disruption of these routines can have dire consequences for inmates. In my research, I have found inmates are reluctant to participate if it means they will miss the opportunity to participate in work or educational programming for the day. In some cases, this can result in refusal to participate altogether. As such, the day and time in which the inmates are scheduled to engage in research is of utmost importance.

Despite the rigidly controlled environment and often mundane day-to-day living, the prison setting is also "abounding with rumor, suspicion, factionalism, and open conflict" (Jacobs, 1978, p. 215). As such, not only are the space and time factors important when considering research with inmates, but so is the proximal physical distance between the potential research subjects and other inmates. For example, prison researchers generally request inmate participation either individually or in small groups of two to three. Once inmates learn that the research is voluntary, they may choose to not participate, and when potential subjects witness participant departures from the survey, they are likely to engage in groupthink decision making, thereby causing the researcher to lose an entire portion of his or her prospective sample.

The perception is often that inmates will welcome any opportunity to "have the floor," especially when it is allowing them the opportunity to discuss topics that they have a vested interest in discussing. For instance, when I initially attempted to administer a basic survey to inmates as part of my own research, once inmates were invited to ask questions or discuss further issues, they took full advantage of this opportunity. Most of these discussions focussed on issues related to either their guilt or innocence of the crimes for which they were incarcerated or on their treatment by correctional staff or other inmates within the institution. These opportunities operated as and facilitated the beginnings of redemption scripts, which emerged even while offenders were still incarcerated. They are also illustrative of a respondent's process of reflecting on his or her own experiences that are bound in space and time instead of by abstract categories of right and wrong.

The willingness to engage in such discussions often depends on the experiences of the individual inmate. Those who feel the most marginalized within the prison society may be the most forthcoming and eager to disclose information, which suggests that those with the least opportunity to engage in reflexivity *with* others are perhaps the most likely to seek this type of engagement with the researcher. For example, a particular inmate who openly identified himself as homosexual and who had been placed in protective custody was not only willing to disclose his personal experiences with victimization to me but also provided his full name and prison mailing address to encourage additional discussion. His willingness is likely an artifact of outrage of his victimization experiences, combined with feelings of marginalization due to his sexual orientation and his feelings of isolation and loneliness from being housed in protective custody—yet another form of altered space and time.

Further illustrating the connection between imprisonment and the altered passage of time, Rokach and Cripps (1999) explain the link between incarceration and loneliness. Not only are inmates separated from their loved ones, but also from society as a whole. Rhodes (2005) describes this experience in terms of the marginalized prisoners' experience: "here are speakers whose threats cannot be curbed, targets who can neither leave nor change the subject, and an audience that cannot hear" (p. 400). Furthermore, because most prisons are located in remote locations, even those who are allowed the privilege of visitation may have few to no visitors, because of the geographic distance from the visitor's community to the correctional facility. The prisoner is therefore placed in a facility that not only operates within unique space and time constraints but also makes few accommodations for outsiders to penetrate this unique space and time. The lack of accommodations makes it difficult for the inmate as well as the public to engage in a reflective discourse with one another. From the moment the inmate is sentenced until the time they are released from prison, they are taken "out of the temporal life-world, as well as out of a previous fabric of lived spatiality" (Leder, 2004).

This removal is pervasive. As a researcher within the prison environment, I personally felt a consuming feeling of despair among the inmates that was echoed within the self while present in that environment (see Sutton, 2011). Because I was a researcher inside a maximum security facility housing only male inmates, it is reasonable to expect that these experiences and notions of despair may be different in other types of facilities. For instance, those conducting research in institutions that are lower security (either minimum or medium) or in female correctional institutions may experience different types of conversations or openness to engage in discussion.

Interviewing Recently Released Offenders

Leaving prison can be a liberating, elating experience, but for many it also begins a process of difficult and confusing transition. This is especially true of recently released persons who have served multiple prison sentences (see, for example, Richie, 2001). The disruption of space and

time created by imprisonment has ended, but its impacts remain salient and central to the life of the ex-convict. Tunnell (1998) provides an excellent description of the impact of space and time on the recently released. He shares that a respondent

> looks different than when we first met, as he was nearing the end of his second stint in prison for burglary. On that late evening, we had spent two or three hours together in a small office normally used by prison counselors ... Then he seemed small, drawn, and pale with his hair slicked back; but today he seems different, in ways evidently characteristic of recent freedom—well fed, tanned, erect, with his hair stylishly cut. (p. 38)

This description highlights the contrast between incarcerated and free life, but the physical signs of freedom are not necessarily indicative of a complete return to "normal" space and time. Many recently released convicts use support groups as a means of returning to a state of relative normality. In my own research, we used these support groups as a context for recruitment and engagement with parolees and recently released offenders who were not on parole. We (Polzer and colleagues) met these persons at a barbeque restaurant after closing hours, during which they participated in counseling and worship services. This program was not stipulated in any parole requirement or agreement and was completely voluntary. It was offered through a non-profit organization intended to help recently released offenders and took place across three locations. The participants had served time in maximum and medium security prisons across the state, serving from less than a one year sentence to over four years.

During these sessions the participants were served food and encouraged to feel comfortable. The environment was designed to be warm and judgement-free. The leader of our project instructed those present that we would be in the back room and that if they wished to speak to us after the session we would be happy to have them do so. At the end of the research study, we had 29 respondents, mostly male (70%) and African-American (67%). The overwhelming majority (93%) reported they had attended religious services while incarcerated and 90% reported they were currently attending religious services. The purpose of this study was to examine faith-based organizations and the role of community stakeholders on successful reintegration back into society and to get an idea of what recently released offenders think successful re-entry entails. Thus, it was our estimation that while certainly these respondents may have initially entered a faith-based experience as part of potential coercion in prison, they were now able to make decisions about their participation in these groups, especially our study. It was our intent that the respondents be far removed from the control of a prison environment (even if that control took the form of strongly encouraged religious involvement).

The room in which we waited for respondents was quiet and away from the main dining room, where we felt that despite the warm environment respondents may still have felt vulnerable and exposed. This exposure and vulnerability is dissimilar to that found in prison. These respondents were likely not fearful of victimization from those around them (e.g., guards and other inmates), but they nevertheless feared judgement and the exposure of their past wrongdoings—its revealing of both guilt and the pain associated with it. Maruna (2001) paints a similar picture of the recently released: they struggle with the judgements of others as well as their own self-indictments. Knowing this, we calculated that a quiet, private space that was in a familiar environment associated with warmth, worship, and counseling would help ease respondents into a context where sharing their stories would be made easier.

The retelling of past criminality and the potential admission of guilt embedded within it is part of the ex-offender narrative. This narrative is often shaped by the context from which the

respondents are drawn. Maruna (2001) notes that organizations can "provide their members with an overarching language of reform and somewhat pre-packaged narrative interpretations" (p. 177). Embedded within these narrative packages are scripts for understanding one's "journey" from criminality to reform, or the lack thereof, as well as one's "place" in the community, home, workplace, and current moment. These scripts apply equally to the interview, in which foreground and background factors produce latent and manifest artifacts that impact the validity and reliability of the data. In my research this was a particular concern—was interviewing respondents in the back room of the restaurant impacting their narrative scripts and their ability and willingness to reflect on their pasts? At the core of this question is a concern about both space and time—foreground and background.

As Maruna (2001) also notes, financial struggles are common to recently released ex-offenders. In my own experience this has proven no small issue. Despite being told that there would be none, many respondents asked about compensation and even inquired whether or not I could provide help in finding employment. Such requests further highlight the transitional nature of newly gained freedom from incarceration. Probationary terms are often demanding, work difficult to find, and community members unwelcoming. The spiritual and emotional release provided by the counseling and worship session was to some extent mirrored in our interviews, but once the respondents left the safety of our back room they stepped again into the uncertain harshness of a life in limbo. This limbo is demonstrative of the suspended reality of space and time experienced by the recently released inmate. In the interview, the respondent is transported away from the coldness of an un-accepting community, but they are also transported back to their time as a prisoner and as an offender. Asking that a respondent be reflexive is not an insignificant or inconsequential request. Despite being an invitation to share, it may also be perceived as an exercise in power on the part of the researcher. Given this, it is particularly important to consider how the current space and time dynamics of an ex-offender's life may alter narrative reflections on past events.

Interviewing Active Offenders

Interviewing active offenders brings with it a number of methodological benefits as well as challenges. Many of these relate to space and time, but as has been suggested, reflexivity and attention to narrative can help maximize benefits and minimize obstacles in collecting rich, valid data. In this section, I (Downing) will draw on my experiences across three projects involving roughly 30 offenders, including drug dealers, robbers, and "street" pimps. These projects employed snowball sampling and involved in-depth interviews with offenders in locations of their choosing, including their homes, the researcher's car, and some public spaces. Interviews were open-ended but tended to focus on the narrative experiences of the respondents' lives and criminal behavior within disadvantaged urban communities of color, their perceptions of the police, and the rationale behind their offending. In some cases, the offenders rode with the researcher in his car and walked through the process of an offense (e.g., a robbery). Although these interviews did not constitute an ethnography, it was common for the researcher to have contact with the respondents beyond the initial interview.

An inherent strength of interviewing active offenders lies within one of the challenges associated with this type of research. Sampling active offenders often requires the creation of respondent networks through snowball sampling. This approach is generally quite organic and as such may naturally tap into the situational reality of offenders' lives, and thus where and when they are living. An extreme example of this approach is the ethnography of Bourgois (2003), wherein he lived with those he studied for over a year (see, more specifically, p. 12). While general interviews cannot tap into this level of contextualization and depth, researchers can seek to make

respondents feel less removed from their "normal" space and time, and in doing so avoid further abstraction of the respondents' lived experiences and potential ethical judgements surrounding these experiences. An example of this process in my own research with active offenders involved meeting with both respondent referrers and referrals. In some cases, it was necessary to interview a respondent while their contact to the research project sat by, thus building rapport and trust but also helping to provide anchor points through which a respondent may be able to find contextual familiarity. The presence of familiar others, combined with familiar places (e.g., a respondent's home or car) can help alleviate what can otherwise be a clinical, almost alien experience for the respondent. Drawing again on Ruddick's (1995) notion of abstracted ethical categories, I contend that more contextually anchored research allows for the creation of alternative interpretations on the part of the respondent—interpretations achieved through reflexivity.

The surreal (i.e., removed from one's normal understanding of space and time) nature of interviews with active offenders may nevertheless pervade, especially for the interviewer. In many cases, I found myself consciously aware of this. For example, in one case I interviewed Marcus, a robber and self-described fraudster, late at night in a driveway outside of his home. During the interview we would have to quiet our voices as residents of the neighbourhood passed by. In some cases, Marcus even pointed out people he would or would not have robbed. My willingness to meet with Marcus on his own terms and in a space of his choosing created a familiarity for him that enabled a reflexive approach to the interview.

Another example of space and time in my own research involved an interview with an active drug dealer, with whom my field worker and I met at a coffee house on a cold winter evening. The respondent arrived and we greeted him. Realizing that the coffee shop was too noisy and not nearly private enough, we consulted with the respondent regarding the sensitive nature of the interview and suggested that we go someplace more private (e.g., his home). The respondent indicated that he was actually uncomfortable doing the interview in his home, so we instead sat in my field worker's car while the respondent ate doughnuts and drank coffee.

A similar experience occurred when we interviewed a "team" of offenders together in my car. We did so while parked outside of a small park in their neighbourhood. During the interview, they pointed to structures around the park, recalling times they had been confronted by the police in the park and describing what it looked like in the summer when they were dealing drugs. One of the respondents sat in my backseat smoking a joint.

In both of these cases, the interviews occurred in spaces chosen by the respondents—spaces where they were relaxed and comfortable—with time passing in a relatively organic manner. Issues of control and external pressures (e.g., the presence of unfamiliar others) was minimized without removing the respondents from normal space and time through transplantation to a sterile, clinical location, such as an office. These interview spaces also allowed respondents to interact with their environments, pointing out buildings and people and recalling experiences, all of which worked toward creating contextualized, space- and time-sensitive narratives. It also allowed me as the interviewer to reflect with the respondent on what these cues represented. I was free to ask questions of the respondent's accounts, just as they were free to ask questions of my interpretations. In essence, we were engaging in a reflexive discourse.

Interviews with active offenders in neighborhoods where the researcher also either lives or frequently travels (especially on foot) create different space-time variables (see, for example, Jacobs, 1999). In my own research, for example, while walking to a pub in a particular neighborhood where I had conducted interviews, I ran into a respondent by chance. I owed the respondent money for a referral of another respondent, and we went to a cash machine together.

As a researcher, I briefly considered the obvious threat of withdrawing cash while an active offender stood by, but the machine was in a public place and I saw this as an opportunity to build rapport. Beyond this consideration, it later struck me that this chance meeting redefined my own understanding of the space and time within which my research took place. My personal spaces and time where I leisured were now melded on some level with my scholarly spaces and time. While jarring on some level, this connection also provided a personal sense of authenticity to my research. I felt less like an outsider. Although I cannot assume that the respondent in this case felt the same, he did go on to make more referrals, despite his initial reluctance to cooperate beyond the extent he had already done so. It is possible that he too experienced a realization that his personal space and time overlapped his space and time experiences as a participant in a scholarly project about his life and the lives of those engaging in similar behavior.

Though there are obviously many benefits associated with interviewing active offenders, there are some real, practical challenges, especially related to time. For example, for an active drug dealer, time is literally money. In my own research, one respondent shared with me that he made two and a half thousand dollars in the same day I spoke with him. During the interview he was in a hurry, looked frequently at his watch, and told my field worker and me when the interview had reached an hour. It turned out that he was in a hurry because he had to leave to complete another drug sale. Another of my respondents, J-snowy, an "executive manager" [pimp], had to make a delivery of drugs and a "girl" immediately following our interview. Other researchers interviewing active offenders have had similar experiences (see Jacobs & Wright, 2006; Wright & Decker, 1994).

The previous examples highlight the lived reality of many offenders: they experience time under the external pressures of their lifestyles, of which offending is often a central part. Although these pressures can sometimes interfere with the research process, they also create narrative texture that, if a reflexive discourse is achieved, acknowledges and draws on the strengths of the space and time in which respondents live and offend.

Conclusion

Through relaying our own experiences in the field, we have drawn attention to the practical and theoretical issues associated with space, time, and doing qualitative criminological research. Our goal in presenting three different contexts for interviews was to illuminate the distinct, yet in some cases similar, challenges related to interviewing (ex)offenders in different stages and places. It is our hope that these experiences prompt other researchers to examine their interviewing with respect to space and time, and that each of the examples we have provided illustrate that through reflexivity on the part of the researcher and respondent, challenges and limitations can be turned into strengths in the design and implementation of a qualitative research project.

As we have discussed, an appropriate place to begin understanding the connection between space, time, and qualitative interviewing is by distinguishing between foreground and background dynamics. Foreground dynamics involve the physical, practical elements of a research space (e.g., a prison or respondent home) and background components involve the lived realities of respondents (e.g., that they must report to a probation officer or deliver drugs in an hour). Together these dynamics can easily overwhelm the interviewer and skew the project toward disorganization and detachment from the narrative realities of the respondents, but with careful attention to reflexivity they can become a strength of any qualitative design.

More specifically, a vigilant attention to facilitating reflexivity on the part of a respondent may help to disrupt a move toward abstraction on the part of the researcher. As we have discussed,

such abstraction can hinder the reflexive process on the part of the researcher, both in the course of the interview and when data is analyzed.

In spite of the potential power of reflexivity and attentiveness to narrative in drawing out understandings of space-time dynamics, it is important that researchers also recognize cultural bias in their framing of respondent space-time. As Massey (2004) suggests, colonial perspectives of space-time tend to discount and diminish the individuality and vibrancy of "other" cultures. When we as researchers study offenders at various stages of their lives, we often find ourselves peering into a culture quite different from our own. Thus, to engage in a reflexive discourse with respondents includes the recognition and clarification of biases, misinterpretations, and cultural and political contexts, but it also serves as a means of encouraging respondents to "fill in the gaps" of their own narratives beyond merely relaying pieces of information about the past.

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