

PRISON PRERELEASE FACILITIES IN TEXAS: WHAT EFFECT DO
THESE PROGRAMS HAVE ON OFFENDER SUCCESS?

by

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ABSTRACT

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There is sufficient evidence to suggest that inmates who participate in prerelease programs are less likely to recidivate once released from prison than those who do not participate in these programs. Research shows that the impact of education, employment skills, and life skills while incarcerated helps contribute to an offender making positive choices that will prevent them from committing new crimes. Furthermore, researchers posit that these offenders have more opportunities for success than offenders who are released with no added programs. The major hypothesis for this study is that inmates in Texas who are released from a prerelease program have a greater chance for success once released than inmates who do not participate in these programs. Interviews will be conducted with offenders in three parole offices in Fort Worth, Texas. Interviews will be conducted with inmates who did attend these prerelease

facility and those who did not in an attempt to determine what effect these programs may have on ex-offenders. In addition, literature suggests that inmates who keep social ties with the community and with their families are less likely to reoffend or return to prison than those who cannot easily access family. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice clearly states in its guidelines that efforts are not made to incarcerate inmates close to their families due to the size of the state. Interview questions will be constructed in order to determine if this has an impact on parolees after they are released from prison.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Those who devised this system...and those benevolent gentlemen who carry it into execution, do not know what they are doing...they are nothing more than men buried alive, to be dug out in the slow round of years, and in the meantime dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair. Those who have undergone this punishment must pass into society again morally unhealthy and diseased.

Charles Dickens, 1842

The United States has the dubious distinction of holding more people in prison than any other country in the world (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Clear, 2007; Wilson & Petersilia, 2002). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2010 prisons nationwide housed approximately 1.5 million inmates while Texas alone housed 173,649 inmates, or about 9% of all prisoners (<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov>). Scholars have researched a number of factors that have contributed to this growth. This increase in the prison population can be partially attributed to get tough laws, zero tolerance policies, mandatory minimum sentencing, truth in sentencing laws, and three strikes laws (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). Blumstein and Beck (1999), suggest that one would assume that an increase in violent crimes would be a primary factor contributing to the growth. However, during the past few decades, the United States has experienced

an overall decrease in violent crimes and an increase in lesser offenses, such as property and drug crimes. This appears to be a result of changes in social norms (Garland, 1993; Zimring & Hawkins, 1991). Furthermore, many researchers believe that the so-called “War on Drugs” has also contributed to the growth of prison populations (Bushway, et al.). Finally, researchers have suggested that the rapid return of former inmates to prison has contributed significantly to the problem. Baer, et al. (2006) suggests that 20% of all arrests made by police are offenders who had recently been released from prison while almost 40% of inmates incarcerated are there for a parole or probation violation. Continuing to build prisons in order to house the growing number of individuals who are returning to prison for parole violations, is not a policy that this country can continue to sustain.

This research attempts to evaluate the successful reintegration of ex-offenders back into society and the possible impact social bonds may have on this success. The primary focus of this research is to determine if specific factors, introduced prior to release from prison, and the maintenance of social bonds with family members and friends while incarcerated have any effect on offender recidivism. The working principle is that preparing offenders for their return to society will improve their probability of success and as a result slow the growth of the prison population. Social Bond Theory is applied to explore the influence of social ties on ex-offender’s decision to continue to commit crime after

being released from prison (Hirschi, 1969). This theory is applicable to responding to the research questions because research continuously demonstrates that having employment, education, and housing contribute to the success of offenders once they are released from prison. Social Bond Theory explains that it is these bonds to family, community, and society that help to achieve these goals.

Research shows that only a few of the programs utilized in other states have been effective in reducing the recidivism rates while other programs have been ineffective. This study examined 60 respondents who are currently on parole with the Texas Department of Parole Division in Fort Worth, Texas for a nonviolent offense. The respondents of this survey are all male. Currently 90% of inmates are male and therefore, most research conducted is regarding male inmates (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). Half of the offenders chosen to take part in the survey attended one of the five specialized pre-release prison facilities in the state of Texas while the other half were paroled directly from a maximum security facility that did not invite inmates to participate in such programs.

Recidivism refers to inmates who are returned to prison within the first three years of release due to committing a new offense or violating the conditions of parole (technical violations). While the subjects that were interviewed have not been returned to prison (they were interviewed at the parole office), there are other factors that can be used to help determine if they can be considered "successful". Many facilities in Texas provide

opportunities for inmates to complete their GED and obtain vocational licenses while incarcerated. However, the number of these programs is small compared to the overall prison population. One of the goals of the interviews was to determine if the offenders who attended the specialized prerelease programs were given the opportunity to obtain their GED, receive vocational training, learn about resources available to them in their community, receive counseling, and were overall prepared for parole.

1.2 Method

Although this research was conducted through the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Parole Division, only nonviolent offenders were chosen. Nonviolent offenders are more likely to attend prerelease programs than violent offenders or sex offenders. These types of offenders are frequently sent to a facility that specializes in assaultive or sexual behavior. Of the parolees that agreed to participate in this study, half completed one of the few prerelease programs while the other did not complete this type of programming. Thus, the dependent variable in this study was whether or not the subject had attended a prerelease facility. The independent variables included education, housing, employment, and drug use. These were measured through survey questions pertaining to the offenders housing situation since their release from prison, their opportunity to further their education while incarcerated, their drug use

since released from prison, and their employment status at the time of the interview.

This dissertation applied social bond theory by posing questions regarding the offender's perception of their support system as well as questions to determine if their family members received any type of counseling while the offender was incarcerated. Previous research has supported the idea that men who stay in contact with their families while incarcerated are more likely to return to their family once released (Bales & Mears, 2008). Questions were asked pertaining to the subject's marital and family status prior to incarceration and since their release. Other variables that were not included in this research were ethnicity and age. While these variables may play a role in an offender's success after release from prison, the focus of this study was how specific programs may affect this success.

Research has shown that there is a correlation between an individual's education level and employment (Matsuyama, 2010). This is true for those who have been incarcerated as well. Because prisoners miss that time of their lives when they complete their education (late teens) and start working small jobs, they miss out on learning necessary job skills that would further their careers once they are older (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). Therefore, a large number of people released from prison find themselves in low income or dead end jobs. Second, by measuring the ability to maintain stable housing, it can be tested to

determine if there is a correlation between resources obtained in pre-release facilities and the likelihood of being able to maintain stable housing accommodations. Furthermore, offenders who return to strong, family support systems for housing accommodations, decrease their chance of recidivism (Bales & Mears, 2008; Baer et al., 2006; Wilson & Petersilia, 2002).

By using survey methods, the research offers a comparison of the two groups of inmates to determine if those that participated in the pre-release facility were more likely to be given the opportunity to earn a GED or further their education as opposed to those that did not participate in these facilities. Once all information was gathered, a comparison regarding the completion of a GED and the number of offenders who found stable employment upon release was significant. "A three-state study conducted at the Correctional Educational Association in 2001 found that simply attending school behind bars reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration by 23 percent" (Matsuyama & Prell, 2010 p. 1).

1.3 Purpose of Study

As of 2002, the United States had the highest incarceration rate in the world (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Every year approximately 670,000 inmates are released from prisons in the United States (Travis, 2005). Of those released almost half return to prison within three years for committing a new offense or for violating the conditions of parole (Bureau

of Justice Statistics, 2001). In 2008, the Bureau of Justice Statistics projected that 67% of offenders released from prison return within three years. In 2002, approximately 60% of prison inmates were newly sentenced while 40% were incarcerated due to a parole violation. In that same year, the offenders leaving prison were made up of drug offenses at 33%, violent offenses at 25%, property offenses at 21%, and 10% public order offenders (Langon and Levin, 2002). In 2001, nearly half of all state prisoners released were from New York, California, Illinois, Texas, and Florida (Byrne & Taxman, 2004). The majority of inmates come from large urban areas. In Texas, most come from the Dallas- Fort Worth area and Houston (Lawrence and Travis, 2004).

A prison record can ruin a person's image and can also diminish a person's human and social capital (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). Parolees are returning to communities with a disproportionate amount of ex-offenders living in that area. Although many prisoners do not return to the same community in which they came, they tend to move to neighborhoods with many of the same social problems as their last neighborhood (LaVigne & Kachnowski, 2005). "Research also suggests that high rates of incarceration and reentry of community residents through the revolving door of the criminal justice system may further destabilize these communities" (La Vigne & Kachnowski, p.14).

There are several factors that are believed to contribute to the recidivism of offenders. "The probability of recidivism-cycling out of prison

and back in again-varies inversely with an individual's labor-market opportunities, measured by both employment and real wage rates" (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). A critical component of returning to the community is finding, and being able to keep, a job. Full time, stable employment results in lower rates of recidivism (LaVigne, Schollenberger, & Debus, 2009; Visher et al, 2008; Hannon & DeFina, 2003). Hirschi's social bond theory suggests that if people have strong attachments to their family, employment, or positive activity, then they are less likely to commit crimes (Hirschi, 1969). However, due to lower levels of work experience and education, offenders have a difficult time finding and maintaining employment. In part, this is due to offenders severing connections and social contacts once incarcerated that could have led to legal employment. Furthermore, many businesses are reluctant to hire a convicted felon (Baer, et al, 2006). Research conducted by the Urban Institute (2006) concluded that most offenders believe that they would have been more successful once released from prison if they would have had full time employment immediately on release. Unfortunately, only one in five offenders had any type of employment immediately after they were released from prison (Baer, et al).

1.4 Summary

Criminal justice and sociology theories attempt to explain why people behave in a particular way. For example, rational choice theories

suggest that individuals make decisions based on circumstances that will benefit them, even though most law-abiding citizens would not regard these choices as rational (Clarke & Cornish, 2001). Clarke and Cornish contend that while their choices may be ill advised, offenders make these decisions without thinking of future consequences and instead only think of the how it affects them at the time that the offense is being committed. On the other hand, many theorists of the Chicago School contend that it is an individual's environmental factors that help determine why he or she may decide to commit crime (Shaw and McKay, 1942). Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory suggests that some people are driven to commit crime as a result of the social ills of society.

Social Bond Theory by Travis Hirschi does not explain why people commit crimes, but instead it attempts to explain why people do not commit crimes (Akers, 1994; Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi suggests that it is the social bonds formed with others that keep us from violating the law and entering the criminal justice system. The four components of this theory include: attachment; involvement; commitment; and belief. One of the purposes of this research was to examine these concepts and determine if they have any impact on an offender's success. Furthermore, do the programs in the prerelease facilities help strengthen these bonds?

Many prerelease type programs allow for offenders and their families to have more communication prior to release from prison. Inmates who maintain strong family relationships have fewer disciplinary problems

while incarcerated and are less likely to reoffend once released (Bales & Mears, 2008; Lanier, 1993; Kemp et. al, 1992). According to the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, “family based therapies are among the most successful types of intervention to reduce recidivism” (Christ & Bitler, 2010, p.22).

The benefits to offender success result in less community crime, a decrease in the prison population, financial savings for the state, and a more productive member of society. In 2000, Texas increased spending on colleges and universities by 47% while they increased spending on prisons by 346% (Hedges, 2002). Much of the research that has been conducted regarding prerelease facilities is specific to one particular program. This research hopes to determine if the state is giving offenders the opportunities to engage in specific programs at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice prerelease facilities. Moreover, if offenders are participating in these programs, are they benefitting from them or is their success on parole the same as offenders who were released straight from prison with no access to the prerelease facilities? While studies have shown that there is a correlation between an offender’s success and their ties with their family and community are these issues being addressed at either type of facility through family counseling and opportunities for families to spend time with offenders?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Background of Problem

Since 2002, the United States has had the highest incarceration rate in the world (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). As of 2008, there were approximately 1.5 million people incarcerated in the United States (Visher, Yahner, and LaVigne, 2010). Texas ranks third in the number of inmates incarcerated per 100,000 when including federal, state, and local prisons (Travis, 2005). Every year approximately 670,000 inmates in the United States are released from prison and Texas accounts for 10% of these inmates released (Visher, Yahner, & La Vigne; Travis). About 60% of inmates are incarcerated for a new offense while the remaining 40% have already been in prison and are incarcerated due to a parole violation (Byrne and Taxman, 2004). In 1994, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that nearly 2/3 of released prisoners were rearrested within three years. In 2002, two out of every three offenders released from prison returned within three years (Petersilia, 2003; Langdon & Levin, 2002).

Prior to the 1960s, the prison population across the country had been manageable. Between 1960 and 1967, there was actually an 18% decrease in the overall number of people incarcerated (Blumstein and Beck, 1999). Most researchers believe that the substantial growth and

overcrowding of prisons over the past few decades has more to do with changes to sentencing policies as opposed to an increase in crime or arrests (Blumstein and Beck; Travis, 2005). Statistics have consistently shown that over the past few decades the crime rate has decreased and therefore the increase in the prison population cannot be attributed to an increase in crime (Blumstein & Beck; Walker, 2011; Travis, Clear, Cole, & Reisig, 2011; Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007; Sabol & Courture, 2006;). Consistent with prior research, Bushway, et al suggests that this increase can be attributed to the 'get tough' laws and zero tolerance policies that were set in place during the 1980s. One theory suggests that these policies were a result of social and economic changes that were brought about in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Garland, 2001).

The number of people living in inner city, high poverty areas doubled between the 1970s and the 1990s (Bushway, et al, 2007). Research conducted by William Julius Wilson (1987) emphasized spatial-economic changes during this time. He suggested that changes in the manufacturing sector played a significant role in decreasing low skilled workers ability to keep employment. Positive and negative resources were distributed unequally across geographic areas. Wilson argued that this increase in spatial separation between the lower and middle class further weakened the inner cities as the middle class had once served as role models and provided social capital. "Social capital is the ability to secure

benefits through membership in networks and other social structures” (Niemonen, 2002, p. 167).

During the 1970s, liberals and conservatives alike attacked the idea of indeterminate sentencing (Petersilia & Travis, 2005). Through indeterminate sentencing, judges were given discretion to decide how long a defendant could be sentenced for a particular crime (Clear, Cole, & Reisig, 2011; Walker, 2011; Zimring, Hawkins, Kamin, 2001; Tonry, 1999). On the other hand, conservatives believed that rehabilitation was not working due to a perceived increase in crime rates and as a result, they demanded longer prison sentences. Alternatively, liberals argued that there were widespread disparities in sentencing between race and class. “Under attack from the left and right, the philosophy of indeterminate sentencing, once embraced by all 50 states and enshrined in the Model Penal Code, lost its intellectual hold on U.S. sentencing policy” (Petersilia & Travis, p. 5).

By the mid-1980s, almost all states had changed sentencing guidelines and each created their own sentencing policies: truth in sentencing; mandatory minimum sentencing; and the three strikes law (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). “Truth in sentencing” required that inmates serve at least 85% of their sentence if they were convicted of a violent crime (Clear et al., 2011; Walker, 2011). Minimum mandatory sentencing policies required courts to adhere to certain punishments with no regard to mitigating factors (Tonry, 2006). Finally, the three strikes law

required inmates to serve life in prison once they had been convicted a third time for a felony offense (Clear et al.; Walker; Zimring, et al., 2001; Gray, 2001).

In Texas, the state's population doubled from 1970-2000 (Campbell, 2011). An economic decline in the mid-1980s further weakened the state as unemployment rose (Garland, 2001). During this time there was an increase in property crimes and drug crimes (Garland). Because of anxieties related to an increase of minority residents and the changes in political powers, Texas adopted harsher policies regarding punishments for nonviolent crimes (Campbell). After the changes in criminal justice policies during the 1980s, the number of violent crimes actually decreased (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). However, the rates of incarceration for property crimes and drug crimes increased dramatically.

In 1972, inmate David Ruiz sued the Texas Department of Corrections and Warden William J. Estelle in the longest prisoner litigation in United States history (Ruiz v Estelle, 1980). It wasn't until 1980 that Judge William W. Justice delivered a decree against the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and declared that Texas's Penal System was a violation of the 8th Amendment of the Constitution (Marquart & Crouch, 1985). Judge Justice declared that the extreme prison overcrowding, inadequate security, lack of health care to inmates, and unsafe conditions constituted cruel and unusual punishment (Marquart &

Crouch). The Texas Department of Criminal Justice became subject to extreme oversight by the federal government through 2003 (Ruiz v Estelle). As part of Ruiz v Estelle, Texas was required to reduce the prison population to 5% below capacity (Ruiz v Estelle, 1980). Between 1980 and 1990, Texas built 70 prison facilities as the prison population increased by 204% (Bloomberg & Lucken, 2010). Simultaneously, the state began releasing more inmates to parole in order to reduce the prison population (retrieved on May 18, 2013 from www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/tslac/20132/tsl-20132.html). Unfortunately, this failed as new parolees quickly returned to prison due to technical parole violations or for committing new offenses.

By 2000, it was obvious to legislators that the current structure of the criminal justice system was ineffective and that if changes were not made to reduce recidivism, prison overcrowding would continue (Sabol & Courture; Petersilia, 2000). During the 2007 legislative session, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice estimated that the state of Texas would need to build 8 new prisons by 2012 in order to provide housing for the future prison population (Boeri, 2011). However, Republican House Representative Jerry Madden stated that this was not an option as the funding would be more than the state could afford (Lyons, 2012). Moreover, as of 2007, TDCJ could not fill the current staff positions at the 116 existing facilities due to funding issues (Boeri). State Representative Madden suggested that instead of getting “tougher on crime” that the state

should get “smarter on crime”. He suggested that low risk, nonviolent offenders be placed in treatment facilities and not in prison.

In 2008 The Second Chance Act was implemented by the federal government to improve the outcomes for offenders who were transitioning from prison to the community (Reentry Policy, 2008). This act authorized the federal government to provide grants for agencies such as housing, substance abuse, counseling, and employment (Reentry Policy). The issue of offender reentry has become such a priority that federal government, despite the need and pressure to cut funding, will continue to fund reentry programs into 2013. Texas, however, is one of the few states that the state corrections department does not request, nor receive, money from this grant (Reentry Policy). Currently, research regarding offender reentry is ongoing (O’Connell, 2006; Nunez-Neto, 2008; Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007)

Offenders are having more problems returning to communities than ever before (Beck & Harrison, 2001). Approximately 30% of all offenders released from prison each year are arrested within the first six months of release, 44% within the first year of release and 68% are arrested within the first three years of release from prison (Lagan & Levin, 2002). Researchers speculate that some of these transition difficulties may relate to the length of incarceration, more widespread communicable diseases within the prisons, and the overall negative prison culture (Mack, Crocket, & Osiris, 2007; Clear, 2007). Furthermore, because the average inmate

spends approximately 4-½ years incarcerated, the communities to which they are returning may have changed regarding employment opportunities, resources, and social structure (Mack, et al; American Legislative Exchange Council). “This longer time in prison translates into a longer period of detachment from family and other social networks, posing new challenges to the process of integration (Travis & Petersilia, 2001, p.10).

2.2 Social Bond Theory

Social bond theory is part of a group of control theories that do not ask why people commit crimes, but instead asks why people do not commit crimes (Hirschi, 1969; Akers, 1994). “A theory of deviant behavior not only must account for the occurrence of deviant behavior, it must also account for its failure to occur” (Cohen, 1959, p. 463). These theories assume that everyone would commit delinquent acts if they could be assured that they would not get caught or that they have ‘nothing to lose’ (Hirschi; Akers). The focus of control theories is on the social controls of society to explain why individuals do not choose a life of crime. Researcher Albert Reiss contends that when social controls break down or are weakened, crime is almost always a result (1951). According to Hirschi, “delinquent acts result when an individual’s bond to society is weak or broken” (p. 147). When this theoretical framework is applied to

offenders, those who return to the community with strong social bonds are less likely to reoffend and return to prison (Laub & Sampson, 2001).

Travis Hirschi's views of social control and social bonding are built upon the theories of Emile Durkheim and his idea of attachment to social groups (Hirschi, 1969). Both Durkheim and Hirschi posited that people who were involved in social groups, such as family, school, or church, were less likely to commit crimes (Knepper, 2001). The breakdown of social controls in society, according to Durkheim, could be traced to social fragmentation and social conflict (Einstadter & Henry, 2006). "The more weakened the groups in which [the individual] belongs, the less he depends on them, the more he consequently depends on himself and recognizes no other rules of conduct than what are found in his private interests" (Durkheim, 1897, p.209). He further emphasized that crime was a result of "the breakdown of traditional moral structures of the family, kinship networks, the community, and traditional values of deference to authority" (Einstadter & Henry, 162). The stronger bonds to family, parents, teachers, and peers, the more likely a person's behavior can be controlled by conformity while the weaker these bonds, the more likely the person will break the law.

The four components to social bond theory are: attachment; commitment; involvement; and belief. These four elements are highly correlated and the weakening of one may result in the weakening of the others (Bayens & Smykla, 2012). The concept of attachment advocates

that we have close ties to other people, such as family and friends (Akers, 1994). Hirschi suggests that attachment to parents, as well as peers, can control delinquent behavior (1969). Hirschi states that “if a person does not care about the wishes and expectations of other people—that is, if he is insensitive to the opinions of others—then he is that extent not bound by norms. He is free to deviate” (1969, p.18). When inmates are incarcerated far from their home community, many of these social bonds are weakened and as a result, the offender may have a more difficult time adjusting to life once released from prison. However, some empirical research suggests that attachment to friends or families who engage in delinquent behavior does not help prevent crime, but instead supports crime (Krohn & Massey, 1980; Linden & Heckler, 1973). As humans we tend to attach ourselves to people whose ideas mirror our own (Hirschi). Therefore, while incarcerated it is necessary to encourage offenders to build strong relationships with positive family members and those who have more conventional beliefs in society.

One of the most important parts of morality is our attachment to social groups (Knepper, 2001). Again, during incarceration, individuals are cut off from society and they lose these ties to the community and, in a sense, their civic importance. “The inequality in different types of capital, such as human capital, contributes to social inequality, such as socioeconomic achievements and quality of life” (Lin, 2000, p.786).

The second tenet, belief, is the idea that people trust in the norms of society and choose to follow these norms. The more strongly someone identifies with the law, the less likely they are to break the law (Hirschi, 1969). If inmates are released from prison and still do not take responsibility for their actions, or even believe that they have committed a crime against society, the likelihood of them reoffending is great. "The control theory assumes the existence of a common value system within our society or group whose norms are being violated. The deviant rationalizes his behavior so that he can at once violate these rules and maintain his belief in it" (Hirschi, 1969, p. 23). In order for a person to abstain from illegal activities, they have to believe that these activities are wrong and are against the norms of society (Hirschi).

The third tenet is commitment. This concept refers to a person's investment in something, such as family or a job (Akers, 1994). Delinquent acts jeopardize a person's chance for success and therefore the person will not engage in these acts. Hirschi suggests that the more a person is committed to something, the less likely they will engage in criminal behavior for fear of jeopardizing this investment. If a person is not committed to anything, (family, job, spouse) then they are at a greater risk of reoffending once released from prison. While incarcerated, if their bonds are severed with the community, they will have a more difficult time finding stable employment. Difficulty finding work, going through a divorce

and separation from children can result in an offender who lacks commitments.

Finally, the concept of involvement refers to an individual's activity in which he or she spends time. "The assumption widely shared is that a person may be too busy doing conventional things to find time to engage in deviant behavior" (Hirschi, 1969, p. 22). This could be a hobby, sport, education, their children, or religion. By keeping parolees involved in positive activities, they have less time to commit crime. Furthermore, if their involvement in positive activities is strong, they are less likely to commit crimes due to their beliefs, their attachments to people who are important to them, and their commitment to daily activities. In research, Hirschi has shown that the weaker these bonds are the greater probability a person will decide to commit crimes (Hirschi, 1969). These components of social bond theory help explain the difficulties newly paroled prisoners face.

A study by Durkin, Wolfe, and Clark (1999) found that college students who were committed to their education, family, and GPA (grade point average) were less likely to binge drink. When conducting a multivariate study, the researchers used Hirschi's Social Bond Theory to explain how a college student's attachments, beliefs, commitment, and involvement kept them from binge drinking. The theoretical framework surrounding this theory can be applied to not only crime and inmates, but also other areas of society and social issues.

Many people lack the social capital necessary to make the transition from prison to the community successful (Lynch & Sabol, 2004; Western et al, 2001). Parolees are put back into a society that has neglected them and therefore their mental welfare and family support system are a crucial element of success (Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007). “Although historically prisoners’ ties to families and communities have been recognized as important on a theoretical and philosophical level, little attention has been given to the policy implications of those ties for public concerns and policy directives”(Hairston, C., 2001, p. 13). Over 60% of offenders who are parents are incarcerated more than 100 miles from home (Mumola, 2000). Many times it is the explicit policy of the prison system to place inmates far from home (Hairston, 2001). These policies are seldom objected to by the public because many citizens do not wish to have prisons built near neighborhoods (Hairston). Furthermore, in states like Texas with larger geographical areas, prisons are built in remote rural areas. These areas of land are usually less expensive and the prisons are a source of employment for the people within the town (Austin & Irwin, 2011).

If social bonds are necessary in order for offenders to keep from returning to prison, then it is essential these bonds be strengthened, or at least maintained, while offenders are incarcerated. One way to do this is to utilize the resources and the community in which the offender resides. According to Putnam (2000), there has been an overall decline in

community involvement and when you factor in inmates returning from prison, this decline is more noticeable. Uggen et al (2002) contends that offenders are “denied or inhibited access to a variety of roles that bind citizens to conventional society” (p. 14). One of these civic activities is the right to vote (Putnam, 2000). Approximately 4.7 million United States citizens are deprived the right to vote due to being a convicted felon (Reiman, 2005). States have contrasting views and policies regarding a convicted felon’s right to vote. Texas is one of 18 states that allow felons to vote once they have successfully completed parole or their prison term (<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/laws/effects.shtml>). Although federal laws allow for convicted felons to hold public office, Texas law does not give this right to felons. Furthermore, Texas does not allow convicted felons to serve jury duty nor are they allowed their right to bear arms. By disallowing inmates to participate in such activities, ex-offenders are committed to ‘civil death’.

2.3 Current Research

Research has suggested that there are many factors as to why an offender recidivates and returns to prison (Wolff & Drain, 2004; Taxman, 2004; Petersilia, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Although these elements differ based on the resources and characteristics of specific communities, most scholars agree that the following components play a role in an

offender's success: education; employment; health issues; substance abuse; housing; and family.

2.3.1 Education

As of 2007, Texas ranked well below the national average regarding high school graduation rates, with an average of 67% students receiving a diploma (Story, 2007). Individuals who do not have a high school diploma are at a greater risk of facing issues such as health problems, dependency on the state for financial obligations, and most importantly, the risk of being incarcerated (Story). A study by Porter and Porter (1984) suggested that most inmates had a desire to complete their education either while incarcerated or once released.

Prior to the 1960s, the Texas Prison System was one of the few states that had not implanted an education program for incarcerated offenders (Blomberg & Lucken, 2010). In 1961, George Beto became the director of The Texas Department of Criminal Justice and in 1969 established the Windham School District. This was the first prison based school system in the United States (Blomberg & Lucken). The current mission statement of the Windham School District states "The mission of the Windham School District is to provide appropriate educational programming and services to meet the needs of eligible offender population in TDCJ and reduce the recidivism by assisting offenders in becoming responsible, productive members of their communities".

Studies have shown that there is a direct link between education and employment (Bayens & Smykla, 2012; Matsuyama, 2010; Mack & Khali, 2007; Hedges, 2002; Hairstons, 2001). According to a study by the Windham School District, inmates who earn a GED are approximately 11% less likely to recidivate than offenders who do not receive their GED (1994). Furthermore, with an education, offenders experience more ties to the community through commitment and involvement. Offenders who do not have a high school education or GED are less likely to complete reentry programs successfully than those that do have an education (La Vigne, 2005). As of 2002, almost 40% of offenders incarcerated in the state of Texas did not have a high school diploma and 31% of inmates in Texas were functionally illiterate (Visher, 2006). Unfortunately, less than 1% of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's budget goes towards education programs (Visher).

A study by the Correctional Educational Association in 2001 found that attending school while incarcerated could reduce the likelihood of reoffending by as much as 23% (Matsuyama, 2010). Furthermore, attending higher education classes at a college or university once released may help reduce recidivism as offenders may become more committed to improving their lives and increasing their opportunities for job placement. A 2001 study by Ouimet-Burke found that once a post-secondary education system was started in Massachusetts, recidivism

was reduced by nearly 22% and many inmates continued their college education after release from prison.

Wheelock estimated that in 2005 approximately 92,000 students were denied financial aid for college due to drug offenses. Although these offenders had completed their punishment by serving their time behind bars, this denial can further isolate offenders from their goals and from the community by continuing to place a stigma on them.

2.3.2 Employment

Having a legitimate job upon release from prison decreases an offender's likelihood of reoffending (Sampson & Laub, 1997). In 2008, then senator Barack Obama promised that if elected president, one of his objectives would be to work with employers on creating ties with ex-offenders in hopes that this would improve their employment possibilities (Hannon & DeFina, 2010). However, with the high unemployment rate and the recession, this goal has not been on the priority list of the President (Hannon & DeFina). Most research posits that there is a correlation between unemployment and recidivism which means that a high unemployment rate within the community usually means a greater probability of unemployment with offenders (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007; Uggen, 1999). When individuals are incarcerated at a young age, they may not have the opportunity to complete high school. Furthermore, they miss the opportunity to work small jobs and do not acquire necessary

job skills (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). “Prior to their incarceration, these individuals lacked the educational background, work experience, and hence skills to land a good job” (Weiman, 2007, p. 6). It is these skills that would further their careers at an older age. Therefore, many people released from prison find themselves in low income or dead end jobs (Bushway, et al.). In addition, survival in prison means that an inmate must acquire behaviors that are not suitable for the workplace (Bushway, et al.).

Holzer (1996) reported that only 1/3 of employers would consider hiring someone with a criminal record. Furthermore, Pager (2003) found that only 10% of applicants with a criminal record were called back for an entry-level job position compared to the 23% with no record. “Firms are averse to hiring released prisoners for positions where they come into direct contact with children and customers. Moreover, managers may not entrust former offenders with handling cash and other valuable items (Weiman, 2007, p. 11).

In 1985, Project Rio was established in Texas for the purpose of helping offenders find and secure employment (Visher, 2006). This program provided a link between employment, education, and skills training and was part of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Windham School District, and the Texas Workforce Commission. The services provided were pre and post release. In 2009, 74% of inmates released from Texas prisons who participated in Project Rio were able to find employment immediately after release and 65% of those inmates

were still employed 8 months later. In 2010, Project Rio had a \$1.5 million budget cut by the Department of Criminal Justice and lost 155 employees within the state (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011). The following year the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, along with the state legislators, determined that Project Rio would be eliminated in order to reduce the agency's \$40 million expenditures (The Texas Workforce Commission). Instead, the Texas Legislature assigned 60 individuals to oversee employment programs for the 111 prison facilities in Texas. Currently there is no research to determine if this approach has been successful or not (Lords, 2013).

Prior to incarceration, many offenders are already at a disadvantage in the labor market. Unfortunately, because of being a convicted felon, this disadvantage increases once they are released (Sampson & Laub, 1993). John Hagan (1993) suggests that offenders, who are denied legitimate means of employment, become immersed in a criminal network as it may be easier to work within illegal means. In a study conducted by Lawrence and Travis at the Urban Institute (2004), 71% of offenders interviewed in Texas said that they believed their criminal records affected their chances of finding employment while 42% were still unemployed seven months after release from prison. Furthermore, many inmates indicated that their lack of employment skills kept them from finding legitimate employment while research indicates that less than one fourth of prisoners receive any type of marketable

training while incarcerated (Lawrence & Travis). The same study also found that men who worked while in prison or found work immediately prior to release were less likely to reoffend (La Vigne, Schollenberger, and Debus, 2009; Visher et al., 2008).

According to the social bond theory, the more an individual is committed to their job or career, the less likely they are to commit crime (Hirschi, 1969). According to Hirschi, "...attachment to conventional others and commitment to achievement tend to vary together" (1969, p. 28). Moreover, by finding and maintaining stable employment, an offender begins to lose the label of being a criminal. The ideal goal is for an offender to eventually lose the label of criminal so that they begin to feel like a member of society and of a community. This bond or attachment may result in the individual less likely to commit crime (Hirschi, 1969). "A good job not only provides the means for basic survival, but also is a key element in rebuilding self-esteem, attachment to conventional lifestyle, and a sense of belonging in the community" (Visher, et al., 2005).

2.3.3 Mental Health

Another area of concern is behavioral or mental health. Approximately 15-20% of inmates have mental health issues (Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007; Wolff & Draine, 2004). Studies have shown that mentally ill patients do not benefit as well from regular drug treatment programs and that these individuals would benefit more from programs

that are specifically geared towards mentally ill inmates with drug problem (Mack et al.).

Many inmates that receive treatment for a mental health issues while incarcerated find it difficult to continue treatment once release (Baer, et al., 2006). This may be because a lack of resources coupled with the fact that inmates may not be able receive Medicaid or are unaware as how to apply for Social Security or Disability.

Research conducted by the Urban Institute has shown that 30%-40% of inmates have a chronic mental or physical health problem (Visher, 2006). Only 10% of offenders receive referrals for health care once released from prison (Baer et al., 2006). Once individuals stop taking prescribed medications, they are at a greater risk for returning to drug or alcohol use. "A small proportion of mentally ill offenders have a strong, stable support network of family and friends to provide essential needs. Most returning prisoners, however, lack such social supports, and must find housing, food, and a source of income with little formal assistance. These individuals are especially needy of governmental assistance." (Wolff & Draine, 2010, p. 702).

2.3.4 Substance Abuse

Drug use within a community depletes social capital within that community (Lyons & Lurigio, 2010). Individuals who use drugs spend more time attempting to obtain the drugs and less time cultivating

relationships. Many times drug relapse and crime are a result of the lack of social capital that offenders have once they are released from prison (Lyons & Lurigio). These individuals are returned to communities with little collective efficacy and therefore may be surrounded by triggers which encourages relapse.

Almost 80% of offenders admitted to using drugs or alcohol prior to arrest while 16% admitted to committing crimes in order to obtain drugs (Baer et al., 2005; LaVigne, 2005; Mumula, 1999). Of the 80% that admitted to drug use, only 21% actually receive treatment while incarcerated (La Vigne, 2005) and even fewer will continue treatment once released from prison (Baer, et al., 2005). Research suggests that the most effective treatment for drug offenders is a post-prison continuum of treatment (Butzin, et al., 2005). Researchers in Delaware gathered data regarding inmates who had participated in the CREST Program. This program consists of six months of treatment while the inmates are incarcerated and then 12 months of follow up treatment once they are released from prison. The program stresses family involvement and individual counseling (Butzin, et al.). The results showed that inmates who participated in the CREST program had a better chance of remaining drug free and arrest free for one year after release (Butzin, et al.). Moreover, success of the treatment program was related to an overall increase in employment and stable housing (Butzin, et al.).

According to Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM), an average of 65% of people arrested test positive for marijuana, cocaine, opiates, methamphetamines, phencyclidine, and benzodiazepines (Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007). An astonishing 38% are found to be drug dependent based on the DSM IV criteria and therefore in need of treatment (Mack, et al.). Studies show that inmates who participate in treatment programs while incarcerated, and continue treatment programs once released, have a higher rate of success than those who do not participate in both options (Baer et al., 2005). Additionally, it is believed that individuals who attend treatment alone while incarcerated do not fare any better than those who do not receive treatment (Inciardi, Martin, Butzin, & Harrison, 1997). Unfortunately, for those inmates in Texas prisons, about 5% receive treatment if they do not attend a pre-release facility (Baer, et al.). Even fewer of these inmates actually attend aftercare treatment once they are released from prison. Research by Taxman and Byrne (2004) concludes that inmates who use drugs recreationally or who sell drugs are less likely to benefit from substance abuse treatment.

Inmates with mental illnesses are not as successful if their treatment is not specific to their needs. As of 2000, only 45% of state prisons throughout the United States had any type of substance abuse treatment programs (Wexler, 2003). More disturbing, only 22% of these facilities separated inmates with mental illnesses and drug abuse from inmates with only drug abuse (Wexler). Mentally ill inmates are more likely

to be incarcerated for committing violent crimes (Wexler). As a result, these inmates are less likely to be eligible for drug abuse treatment because of the nature of their offenses. This is especially detrimental as these individuals are more likely to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of their offense (Wexler).

Offenders who use drugs do not place a high value on family or employment. Because of this lack of value, their social bonds are weakened and they are more likely to continue to commit crimes. Their belief in the norms and laws of society are weak and therefore does not help support an honest lifestyle. Finally, their commitment and involvement in obtaining drugs overshadows their lives and they are more likely to be rearrested and return to prison.

2.3.5 Housing

Obtaining housing is one of the biggest challenges facing offenders once released (Baer, et al, 2005; Visher & Kachnowski, 2007; Helgott, 1997). This may be due to a number of factors including, but not limited to: available and affordable housing; regulations regarding housing for ex-offenders; prejudices by landlords; and strict eligibility requirements for subsidized housing (Baer et al.). Helgott contends that offenders may be limited by bad credit, a limited rental history, and lack of finances. Furthermore, many landlords are reluctant to rent to offenders (Helgott). If an offender cannot find housing, they many end up homeless or living in

impoverished areas that further limit their ability to find employment (Bradley, Oliver, Richardson, & Slayter, 2003; Rodriguez & Brown, 2003). Many offenders return home to living with their family on a temporary basis. A study at the Urban Institute found that almost 1/3 of all parolees had lived at more than one address within six months after release from prison (Baer et al).

Another issue regarding housing is the area in which offenders are moving back into. A study by the Urban Institute found that most prisoners return to communities with a high proportionate amount of ex-offenders living in one area (Lawrence & Travis, 2004). This not only destabilizes these communities, but also increases the risk for recidivism. In 2001, for example, 25% of all prisoners released in Texas came to Houston. However, some offenders did not return to the communities in which they came as their family moved while they were incarcerated. Unfortunately, many times offenders move to neighborhoods with many of the same socioeconomic problems as their last neighborhood (Lawrence & Travis).

By establishing secure housing, offenders build a social connection to their community and to their neighborhood (Hirschi, 1969). This connection can result in commitment and involvement. When offenders have adequate housing, they have a greater chance for their families and children to live with them. This connection, or bond, establishes the attachment that Hirschi describes as a reason to why people do not commit crime (Hirschi).

2.4 Programs and Factors Reducing Recidivism

The mission statement of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) states that their goals include, "...promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and to assist victims of crime" (<http://tdcj.state.tx.us>, retrieved on November 2, 2012). Most of the prison units in Texas are owned and operated by the government, but a few are maintained by private corporations. The prerelease facilities in the state are managed by The Texas Department of Criminal Justice, with exception of the Mineral Wells Unit operated by the Corrections Corporation of America. This facility is intended for inmates who are chosen by the parole board to complete life skills courses, substance abuse education, and vocational training. However, it should be noted that TDCJ has established a "Private Facility Contract Monitoring/Oversight Division". The purpose of this division is to "...protect the interests of the State of Texas, through ensuring constitutionally safe and sound facilities by means of effective management, an efficient monitoring system, and on-going communications between the Agency and its contracted representatives" (<http://tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/pf/index.html>). The LeBlanc Unit in Beaumont and the Havins Unit in Brownsville focus on substance abuse treatment while the Hamilton Unit in Bryan offers career and technology programs. All of these units provide GED courses and a cognitive intervention program referred to as CHANGES. The Segovia

Unit in Edinburg focuses on GED courses and provides ESL classes (English as a Second Language). In order to attend any of these pre-release facilities, the parole board has to approve the offender for transfer, but much consideration is given to the recommendation by the caseworkers within TDCJ (<http://www.tdcj.tx.us/unit>).

2.4.1 Parole

Not all states have a parole system in place (Clear, Cole, & Reisig, 2011). Currently fifteen states do not have a parole system and inmates are not released from prison until they have completed their time although they do have the opportunity to be released from prison early by earning “good time” while incarcerated (Travis & Lawrence, 2002). In these states, if inmates are released from prison early, they do not complete their sentence on parole. Instead, once they are released, they do not have to report to any institution as they have completed their obligation to the court. The remaining states rely on a parole system which monitors offenders once they are released from prison. Inmates have the opportunity to be released from prison before their time ends. This is decided by the parole board and is based on factors such as the offense in which they are incarcerated, their behavior while incarcerated, if they have completed any programs while incarcerated, and the likelihood of being successful once released (Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007; Travis & Lawrence). Parole board members interview inmates to determine what

has occurred from the moment that they were incarcerated until the time that are eligible for parole (Mack, et al.). Their main concerns are not only that the offender is aware of what he has done, but also that he has a goal for his future. About 80% of all offenders leave prison on parole and must abide by conditions set forth by the parole board (Travis, et al., 2001). These include, but are not limited to, curfews, reporting requirements, and mandated programs. Failure to abide by these conditions can lead offenders to be returned to prison on a technical violation (Hughes, et al., 2003). Currently in Texas, about 55% of offenders are released on parole (Travis, et al.).

One study found that many offenders do better when released without parole as they cannot be sent back to prison on a parole violation (Austin, 2001). Meanwhile, other researchers believe that supervision is needed for the offender to help with the integration process back into the community (Taxman, et al., 2002; Petersilia, 2000). Through the assistance of parole services offenders may have more access to resources regarding housing, employment, and counseling (Taxman, Petersilia). Again, many of the inmates returning to the community are spending more time incarcerated. As such, the communities that they return to are not the same as prior to their incarceration. By working with a parole officer, offenders may be able to establish positive connections within the community in reference to finding employment and staying drug free. According to research by the Urban Institute, "More prisoners

nationwide are returning home having spent longer terms behind bars than in the past, exacerbating the already significant challenges of finding employment and reconnection with family” (Baer, et al., 2006, p. 2).

Similarly, in a 2005 study by Harahan, Gibbs, and Zimmerman, most offenders regarded parole in a positive light as they felt that it would help them stay out of trouble. The majority of offenders in this study indicated that that they wanted to be with their family, find a job, and live a drug and crime free lifestyle (Harahan, et al). Involvement in parole may give offenders the assistance and guidance that is necessary to abstain from a criminal lifestyle.

2.4.2 Family Support

Over half of prisoners have children under the age of 17 and over 2 million children have at least one parent in prison (Mazza, 2002). “Research has found that strengthening the family network and maintaining supportive family contact can improve outcomes for both family members and prisoners. In fact, maintaining family connections....has shown to reduce recidivism rates” (Baer, et al, 2006, p. 12). Furthermore, studies have shown that inmates who maintain strong relationships have fewer disciplinary problems while incarcerated and are less likely to reoffend once released (Bales & Mears, 2008; Kemp et al, 1992; Lanier, 1993). The majority of inmates believe that being separated from their family is the hardest aspect about being incarcerated (Mills,

2005). These inmates felt frustrated knowing that they could not help their spouses and children with any problems that they were experiencing (Mills). This frustration many times led to depression and problems within in the prison facility (Adams, 1992).

Although many men in prison did not live with their children prior to incarceration (about half), many of the fathers still contributed financially to the care of the child (Wacquant, 1998). When the fathers are incarcerated, this puts a financial strain on mothers as they become the sole supporters of children. Many fathers interviewed by Hairston (1998) indicated a desire to strengthen parenting skills while imprisoned so that once released they can have a better relationship with this children. Research, again, indicates that these strong social bonds to family result in a reduction in recidivism (Baer et al., 2006; Hepburn & Griffin, 2004). By incarcerating inmates far from their families, or making it difficult for families to visit, we are inhibiting these bonds from strengthening (Hagan & Coleman, 2001).

The research has consistently suggested that the family is an important component in the reintegration process. Unfortunately, more than half of inmates report never receiving visits from children or family due to transportation costs, visitation requirements, and financial strains (Baer et al.). According to a study by Shollenberger (2009), many family members indicated that although they wanted to visit their family members in prison, they were hindered by distance and transportation. Most family members stated that the number one way to stay connected with

offenders was through letters (Hagan and Coleman, 2001). Children were least likely to see their fathers in prison as many prisons are either too far away or the prison did not provide adequate places for children to sit during visitation (Hagan and Coleman).

In a study conducted by Fisherman (1986), inmates who had satisfying marriages had a more successful transition from prison back to the community than those offenders who were not married or had unsatisfying marriages. In fact, the act of marriage or parenthood helps establish social bonds (Laub, et al., 1998; Li et al., 2000; Warr, 1998). In Oklahoma, the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, was implemented with the purpose of helping offenders by teaching courses related to marital communication and how to maintain healthy relationships (Reentry Policy Council). The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative has partnered with the Department of Corrections to train staff to teach this program to inmates and includes invaluable skills such as communication, problem solving, managing complex family relationships, and building trust (retrieved from <http://www.doc.state.ok.us>). Research of this program indicated that the recidivism rate of offenders decreased after participation in such programs (Reentry Policy Council).

Petersilia (2003) posits that fathers who return from prison are much less likely to reoffend if they return to their family. However, by keeping fathers from their children, the prison system is weakening that chance. Research has suggested that those family relationships that were

strong to begin with, get stronger during the prison process while the weak relationships become even weaker (Laing, 2003).

In Pennsylvania, the Department of Corrections gives inmates and families opportunities to connect with each other (Christ and Bitler, 2010). They provide family support groups and once inmates transfer to a prerelease facility, they can visit their families at home on the weekend. Counseling is available for the offender and for the family (Christ and Bitler). Unfortunately, few facilities across the United States have programs in place that deal with family relations (Einhorn, et al, 2008). On the opposite end of the spectrum are people, especially correctional officers, who believe that the family is actually part of the problem as they tend to enable offenders and do not help hold them accountable for their behavior (Christ & Bitler 2010). In order to correct this, programs involving family counseling may be beneficial to teach the offender and the family how to interact in a healthy manner. According to the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, "family based therapies are among the most successful types of intervention to reduce recidivism (Christ & Bitler, p. 22).

Unfortunately, many family members are fearful of the department of corrections and want little to do with them as possible. In Pennsylvania, families are encouraged to visit throughout incarceration and even as offender's transition to the transition facility so that social bonds are strengthened (Christ and Bitler, 2010). Many of these facilities offer weekly

one-hour courses for families and offenders with topics relating from how incarceration affects children to healthy spousal relationships. In 2011, a study was conducted with the non-offenders who participated in some of these programs and found that 98% of participants reported having a better relationship with their children (Christ and Bitler). Of the inmates surveyed, 89% reported a better relationship with their wife and with their children due to the classes.

Not only do researchers believe that bonds with positive individuals are necessary for offenders to be successful after release from prison, offenders themselves also feel that this is a necessary component for success (Clark, 2001). In a study conducted by Michael Clark, offenders indicated that relationships played an important role in the integration process. Approximately 30% of a successful integration process hinges on the offenders relationship with their parole officer. Most importantly, the perception that the offenders have of their officers pertaining to compassion and their success was most important (Clark). "Corrections counselors and parole agents establish an alliance with offenders that establishes ground rules of expectations, goals, and objectives" (Christ, p. 24).

The ties that bind families together may have an impact on whether offenders are rearrested and returns to prison. A study regarding juveniles conducted by Michael Clark (2001) demonstrates that relationship factors are an important part of the reintegration process. This

has been proven true for adults as well. Travis Hirschi (1969) posits that social bonds are necessary in order for individuals to choose a life free of crime.

2.4.3 The Second Chance Act

In 2005 the Second Chance Act was established for the purpose of strengthening community reentry services for people leaving prisons and state jails (Muhlhausen, 2010; Pogorzeiski, Wolf, Pan, & Blitz, 2005;). These programs emphasize the need to start treatment while offenders are still incarcerated. “The Second Chance Act acknowledges a significant social problem. Since the 1980s, the get tough on crime policies have eliminated many benefits for ex-offenders. This Act recognizes the importance of fostering social inclusion through family and community connections” (Pogorzeiski et al, p. 11).

The funding for the Second Chance Act has continued to increase since 2008, even though funding is being cut in other public agencies. Any nonprofit agency is able to apply for funding to improve offender reentry services. However, it should be noted that in recent years, the Texas Department of Corrections did not apply for federal funding through the Second Chance Act grant.

2.4.4 Other Studies

Texas inmates account for 10% of all inmates released from state and federal prisons each year (La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005). The Urban Institute conducted a research project, which included Maryland, Illinois, Ohio, and Texas called "The Returning Home Study". The study consisted of interviews given to inmates one week prior to release, one on one interview 2-5 months post release, and one on one interviews 9-12 months after release. The purpose of the study was to obtain a better understanding regarding offenders reentry experiences (La Vigne & Kachnowski). Of the offenders interviewed, 676 were from Texas and almost half of them had been incarcerated due to a parole violation and not from committing a new offense (La Vigne & Kachnowski). Although 80% of the Texas offenders admitted to a substance abuse problem, only 21% received treatment while incarcerated. Although most offenders interviewed believed that they could complete parole successfully, about 66% admitted that they needed some sort of help finding employment, financial assistance, housing assistance, or health care (La Vigne & Kachnowski). Of the men interviewed, many did not think that housing would be an issue once they were released. However, at two months out, 16% had lived at more than one location while at seven months out, 65% admitted to have lived at more than one location (La Vigne & Kachnowski).

Research by Taxman and Byrne (2004) posits that the reentry phase should consist of three different phases: The institutional phase, the structured phase, and the community reintegration phase. This reintegration process should begin immediately once an offender is incarcerated and continue until after release from prison (Taxman and Byrne). In most reentry programs, the inmates receive services that are not available to other inmates. There is coordination and collaboration between all individuals who are involved in the offender's release: treatment providers; parole officer; and offender. The main focus is on housing, treatment, employment, and family support (Taxman and Byrne). The decision to accept an inmate into the reentry program usually begins 6-12 months prior to the expected release date.

Researcher Marchese (2007), the former Deputy Director of Criminal Justice and the Director of the NYS Prisoner Reentry Project for the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, goes a step further. He believes that offenders should start a reentry plan during the plea bargaining stage. It is at this time that the offender would show a plan to the judge to explain how he plans to make changes in his life while incarcerated. When offenders are incarcerated, their goal is usually to do the minimum requirements in order to make parole (Marchese). Many times offenders are not concerned with what needs to be accomplished in order for them to be successful once back in the community. According to

Marchese, incarceration should be an opportunity for offenders to make changes, not just as a form of punishment.

2.5 Conclusion

Although much research regarding offender reentry includes testimony from offenders, much of that information is not utilized when implementing programs. In a study by Lyons (2008), former inmates agreed that it was social capital or the bonds that they fostered with mentors while incarcerated that kept them from reoffending. A few facilities allowed ex-offenders to come into the prison system to mentor inmates and show them how their life can be once released. However, most facilities will not allow ex-offenders to take on these roles even though research has shown these bonds to be effective in reducing recidivism.

Research regarding offender reentry is limited. What is available is usually situational and varies from urban to rural communities and person-to-person. Interviews of inmates conclude that many men would like to participate in programs that are unfortunately available only to a select few (La Vigne, 2009). Many programs that are implemented do not include high-risk offenders or violent offenders as evaluations may produce lower success rates (Taxman and Byrne, 2004). "The low-risk/low stakes approach is promoted as a means to build community and stakeholder support for new concepts with the exception that, if the innovation is

successful, then corrections officials will expand the target population” (Taxman and Byrne, p. 56). More disheartening is the fact that Texas only spends an average of \$40 a day per inmate incarcerated while most other states spend about \$54 per inmate.

“For program planners and developers, it is critical to examine state-specific (as well as region specific) information about the characteristics of institutionalized offenders, and to design and implement reentry programs that are appropriate to the particular target population (offense types, offender type, demographic profile) and target area (urban, rural) included in the reentry initiative” (Taxman and Byrne, 2004, p. 58). The office of the inspector general found that reentry programs used with grant money was inadequately audited and that because of this, there are very little ways to determine if recidivism is being reduced with these programs (Muhlhausen, 2010). In order to determine if future programs are successful, Muhlhausen suggests that the government needs to redefine recidivism and to look at other variables such as employment and housing. Furthermore, the expansion of programs and increasing their quality would also be helpful for offenders.

Travis Hirschi (1969) describes a delinquent person as someone who does not have attachment to others, has no aspirations, nor does he have any moral beliefs that bind him to the law and therefore social bonds are necessary. Studies show that programs which start immediately after release are more successful as this is the time when offenders are more

likely to reoffend. By integrating counseling and families into these programs, inmates can address negative aspects of their lives, such as their neighborhood, family, or associates.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Hypothesis

The purpose of this research was to determine if inmates who attend a prerelease facility while incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities are more successful while on parole than those inmates who do not attend a prerelease facility. In Texas, the parole board decides whether an inmate may attend a pre-release facility (<http://tdcj.state.tx.us/>). This is usually a part of the inmates' conditions of parole. Some of the factors used to determine if an offender is ready to be released from prison are: the seriousness of the offense; a prior record of crimes; the risk level of the offender; likelihood of finding employment; appropriate housing upon release; and the risk of returning to substance use (TDCJ; Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007; Travis & Lawrence, 2004). In addition, this study examined whether or not the parole board used specific factors in making decisions as to whether or not to send an inmate to a prerelease facility.

Once inmates are transferred to the prerelease facility, they must complete specific requirements of that facility prior to being paroled from prison. Previous research, which has included Texas as well as other states, has indicated that inmates who participate in programs involving drug education, academic education, job skills training, and family

counseling are more successful once released from prison than those inmates who do not participate in such programs (Christ & Bitler, 2010; Petersilia, 2003; Laing, 2003). The mission statement of the prerelease facilities in Texas indicates that one of their objectives is to prepare inmates for parole through education classes, vocational classes, and substance abuse classes. Therefore, the hypothesis was: Inmates who participate in a prerelease facility will be more successful on parole than an inmate released from a regular facility:

$$H_a: \mu \neq k$$

Prerelease facility is represented by μ and non-prerelease facility is represented by k .

Null Hypothesis: There is no difference between inmates who participate in a pre-release facility and those inmates that do not participate in a pre-release facility.

$$H_o: \mu = k$$

3.2 Sampling

A cross-sectional design was used to collect data from a sample of male parolees. Only males were included in the research because TDCJ currently has no specialized pre-release programs for women. Only non-violent offenders were included because violent offenders are rarely

selected for the pre-release programs and because the motivation of violent crimes is fundamentally different than property crime. Eligible participants had to be on parole for one of the following offenses: Possession of a Controlled Substance; Possession of Marijuana (Felony); Burglary of a Habitation; or Theft (Felony). Approximately 60 parolees were interviewed at the three parole offices in Fort Worth, Texas. Half of the subjects had attended one of the five TDCJ prerelease facilities while the other half were released from a facility that is not considered a prerelease facility.

For the purpose of this research, the term “prison” indicates that a person did not attend a “prerelease” program. The term “prerelease” indicates a facility that TDCJ has designed and labeled a prerelease facility. I approached parolees in the lobby of the parole office waiting to meet with their parole officer. They were informed about the research and invited to participate. This type of sampling is considered volunteer sample. This is a non-probability sampling method as the subjects are people who volunteer to be in the survey. Some advantages of non-probability sampling are the cost and the convenience of the sample. However, with this type of sampling, we cannot estimate the sampling distribution as it is not a normal distribution (Steinberg, 2011)

In order to randomly select parolees, I first had to determine that they had been convicted of a nonviolent offense. Next, the inmate had to be willing to participate in the survey. It was not until the interview had

begun that it was determined which type of facility they had attended. As the interviews were conducted at three different parole offices in Fort Worth, it was still necessary to ensure that of the twenty interviews at each facility, half were with parolees who had attended a prerelease facility while the other half were inmates who did not attend one of these facilities. While interviewing the inmates at the first two facilities I was able to randomly choose subjects and did not inquire about their exit facility until the interview had begun. However, at the last facility, many of the qualified subjects who were willing to participate had been released from a pre-release facility. Because of this, for the last five interviews it was necessary to ask the subject which facility they were released from prior to the interview. Interviews were conducted two days a week for four weeks. The interviews began in the morning and lasted until parolees were no longer reporting for the day.

A total of 60 interviews were conducted and each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes. The interviews did not start until the subject was told the purpose of the research, the anonymity of the interviews, and that they were allowed to end the interview at any time without consequences. All subjects were required to sign a waiver before the interview began. All interviews were recorded and then later transcribed.

3.3 Research Design

Qualitative and quantitative analyses were utilized in analyzing the research collected. After the in depth interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and uploaded into NVIVO, a qualitative research program. Next, the data was separated into separate sections with different topics: visitation during incarceration and overall support; drug education classes and drug use; vocational education classes and current employment status; overall perspective of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and classes completed; education classes and furthering education. Quantitative research was conducted as well using two way crosstabs and Logit Regression. Success has traditionally been measured by the amount of time that passes until an individual recidivates or the rate of recidivism. This study used measures that are more in line with the expected impact of the prerelease facility. The following outcomes were chosen to measure success: living arrangements; employment; and abstaining from drugs.

Previous research indicates that ex-offenders who live with their spouse or their parents are less likely to reoffend once released from prison (Hirschi, 1969). There is a correlation between abstaining from drugs and an increase in employment and stable housing (Butzin, et al, 2005). Ex-offenders have a disadvantage in the labor market as they have been convicted of a felony. Many employers are unwilling to hire an

individual with a felony conviction. Furthermore, state legislation does not allow offenders to obtain certain licenses or hold specific positions of employment. For example, if an offender worked as a bookkeeper prior to incarceration for theft, once he is released he would not be able to continue this type of employment. The same is true for anyone convicted of a drug offense and working in a medical setting or with children. Having a GED or a college degree may increase the chances of an offender finding employment once released from prison (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Parolees who find work immediately after release from prison are less likely to reoffend (Visher, et al., 2008; LaVigne, Schollenberger, & Debus, 2009). By measuring success through living stability, employment, and abstaining from drugs and alcohol, one can possibly predict the likelihood of an ex offender staying out of prison and successfully completing parole.

The independent variable in this research was whether an individual was released from a prerelease facility or a regular prison facility. This was coded as: 0=non-prerelease facility; 1= prerelease facility. It was expected that the individuals who attended a prerelease facility would be more successful upon release as they would have attended more transition programs. The expectation was that the parolees from the prerelease facilities would have stable living arrangements, full time employment, and would have abstained from drugs and alcohol since their release from prison.

Other variables that were measured were whether or not a subject was able to further their education and whether they were able to attend vocational classes or substance abuse treatment while incarcerated. Research has suggested that if an individual has a GED or high school diploma, their chances of obtaining and maintaining stable employment greatly increases (LaVigne, 2005). In addition, research has suggested that inmates who participate in vocational classes have a greater likelihood of finding employment once released from prison (Visher, 2006; Lawrence & Travis, 2004). Finally, abstaining from alcohol and drugs, an ex-offender has a greater chance of being fully employed and from committing new offenses (Baer, et al., 2005).

3.4 Survey Questions

Hirschi's Social Bond Theory explains that individuals are born with the ability to commit crimes but choose not to because of their social bonds (1969). People do this through attachment, involvement, commitment, and beliefs. The more attached people are to others, such as parents, spouses, or family, the less likely they are to commit crimes. When people are committed to positive activities, education, or employment, they increase their social bonds and beliefs. Finally, involvement in these activities or employment leaves very little time or opportunity for individuals to commit crimes. Unfortunately, when people are incarcerated for extended periods of time they lose important social

bonds and these bonds are difficult to rebuild once the offender returns home (Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007; Lynch & Sabol, 2004; Western, et al., 2001; Hirschi, 1969). This can result in housing instability, difficulty finding employment, consuming alcohol or drugs, or committing new crimes.

In order to determine a subject's attachment to their family and spouse, questions were asked regarding their marital status prior to incarceration and since their release from prison. Furthermore, the subjects were asked about support they may have had from their family prior to incarceration, during their incarceration, and since their release. Family support and stability are necessary components for an offender to successfully transition back into the community (Mack, Crockett, & Osiris, 2007). Finally, the subjects were asked about their living conditions prior to incarceration and since their release to determine if they were still living with family, their spouse, or if they were now living with friends, alone, or in a halfway house.

Next, the parolees were asked questions regarding their employment prior to incarceration, after their release from prison, and what, if any, vocational classes they attended while incarcerated. Although half of the subjects attended a prerelease facility, not all of these individuals were granted the opportunity to attend a vocational course. In addition, many of the subjects who did not attend a prerelease facility were able to attend vocational classes in the facility that they were

incarcerated. Questions regarding the subject's educational status prior to incarceration were asked to determine if GED classes would have been necessary while incarcerated. Although more than half of the parolees stated that they had a GED or higher prior to incarceration, many indicated that they were able to further their education while incarcerated by taking college courses. Because of this opportunity to further their education, some stated that they began to place a higher value on education and that they have since enrolled in college courses once they were released from prison. This commitment to further their education helps contribute to their social bonds by keeping them involved in a positive activity that may produce better employment opportunities and help them to associate with more positive individuals.

The subjects were also asked about their drug use prior to incarceration. More than half of the parolees admitted to using drugs during the course of their crime, or that their crime was committed in order to obtain drugs. However, not all parolees were able to attend drug education classes according to the surveys. Finally, many parolees admitted to using drugs and alcohol since their release from prison. According to Lyons & Lurigio (2010), parolees who use drugs are less likely to find employment, and as a result, return to prison.

Lastly, open ended questions were asked to determine the parolee's perception of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the facility that they were released from, and the classes that they were able

to participate in while incarcerated. These questions helped the researcher understand if inmates who did not attend a pre-release facility were still able to complete classes to help with reintegration into the community. While most prison facilities in Texas offer job training courses, substance abuse classes, and GED programs, the spaces for these are limited and not all inmates are able to participate. However, it should be noted that inmates who are referred to programs usually complete such programs or they will not be granted parole. As the subjects were all on parole, it is safe to conclude that these inmates completed all courses in which they were referred. Open ended questions were asked to determine if the inmates believed that their family was given opportunities to be involved in the prison and prerelease process. The subjects were given an opportunity at the end of the interview to add any information that they felt was relevant regarding their time in prison.

3.5 Limitations

Previous research had indicated that the location of a program or prison may play a factor in its success. Larger geographical areas are more likely to have resources available to help inmates transfer from prison to the community. This research was conducted at the three parole offices in Fort Worth, Texas. This is an urban area where the residents are more likely to enjoy resources such as public transportation, job opportunities, public amenities, and treatment programs. This type of

research most likely would have yielded different results if parolees from rural areas had been included in the interviews.

Second, the interviews were conducted inside the parole office building prior to the subjects meeting with their parole officer. All interviews were conducted in a private room with only the researcher and subject. Some of the questions were basic information (what facility were you released from, what crime are you on parole for) while others were more personal (have you used drugs since your release; what is your opinion of the drug treatment program in prison). It is possible that some of the subjects were unwilling to answer questions honestly for fear of reprimand from parole officers. In fact, some of the subjects stated that there were a few questions that they were unwilling to answer during the interview, or that they did not feel comfortable answering a question honestly.

Because of a sample size of only 60, there may have been some problems with statistical power. Although 60 individuals were interviewed, there were some variables in which the sample sizes were too small to compare. For example, there were only 14 individuals who did not have a high school diploma or GED before they were incarcerated. This made it difficult to analyze the likelihood of obtaining a GED while incarcerated as this sample size was extremely small. To counter this, the ability to further education was included in this variable. This included the opportunity to earn hours towards a college degree or an associate's degree.

There are very few studies that compare the prerelease facilities to non-prerelease facilities. In fact, I was unable to identify any previous studies that compared these variables in Texas. Most studies pertaining to programs in prison compare the effects of those inmates attending programs with those that do not attend programs. Many researchers look at the implementation of programs and if they are reaching their intended goals. In this research, not only are the two types of facilities compared, but also the programs within each facility. Therefore, if there were no significant findings regarding the individual facilities, the programs within each type of facility could then be measured to determine if they had any effect on the success of the offender.

By conducting face to face interviews, I was able to ensure that all questions were understood correctly and answered. If a subject did not understand the question, it could be rephrased so that the subject would be able to answer. When interviewing individuals about crime and criminal behavior, research shows that self-reporting is one of the most effective methods (Schmalleger, 2011).

One of the limitations of this study is that the interviews were conducted inside the parole building. This may result in less than honest answers as the subject may have been unwilling to divulge information regarding drug or alcohol use while on parole, or information regarding their employment and living arrangements. The subjects interviewed were parolees who were reporting to their parole officer. This research did not

include parolees who were not reporting as directed; only those who were following this condition of parole.

The parole director allowed for all interviews to be conducted in the parole training room which was located behind closed doors and no other people were present except the subject and researcher. Interviews were recorded and subjects were instructed that they must give consent to the interview as they were asked questions regarding their personal life. Subjects were told that they could end the interview at any time with no consequences.

There were some parolees who wanted to participate in the research but had committed a violent felony and were denied participation. Alternatively, many of the parolees refused to participate as they indicated that they refused to speak negatively about the prison system for fear that it would affect their parole. Two interviews ended early as the parole officer of the interviewee was ready to meet with them for their scheduled meeting. In both instances, the subject refused to answer questions after meeting with their officer (both of these subjects indicated that they had to catch the bus and did not indicate that the meeting with their parole officer had an impact on them deciding not to continue the interview).

As all offenders who attend a prerelease facility do so as a requirement of parole, all inmates in these specific facilities must participate in parole once released. Therefore, the inmates who are not eligible for parole or who do not wish to be released on parole do not have

the opportunity to attend these facilities. This leaves out a group of ex-offenders who may be doing well in society, but are not included in this research as they are not on parole.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Variables

The research questions that framed this work include whether or not attending a prerelease facility has an impact on an offender once they are released from prison. Second, do programs that are conducted in the prerelease facilities have an impact on an offender's success. The next section provides a detailed analysis of the variables used. The conclusion will connect the results to the existing literature to help place the results of this work within the broader literature.

The subjects included in this research are all male parolees who report to the office in Fort Worth, Texas. They have all been incarcerated for a felony offense and are currently on parole. All three offices in Fort Worth are located in urban areas. A total of 60 subjects were interviewed within the 3 parole offices. In order to determine if inmates attending a prerelease facility were more successful than inmates released from a regular facility, a measurement of success needed to be defined. Employment, housing, and substance abuse all can be used to determine if a parolee is doing well on parole and is currently successful in their transition from prison to society.

4.1.1 Education

One way to determine if inmates at the prerelease facilities are given more educational opportunities is to calculate the number of inmates taking the GED while incarcerated. The subjects were divided into categories: those that had less than a high school diploma or GED; those that had a high school diploma or GED; and those that had completed some college or had earned a college degree. Of the 60 subjects studied, 14 had less than a high school diploma or GED prior to incarceration. A total of 35 parolees interviewed had completed a high school diploma or GED prior to incarceration. Finally, 11 of the subjects had some college or a college degree.

Table 4.1: Education level of subjects when they entered prison

			Facility		Total
			non pre release	pre release	
Education Before	Less than H.S.	Count	9	5	14
		% of Total	30%	17%	23%
	H.S. or GED	Count	15	20	35
		% of Total	50%	67%	58%
	Some College or diploma	Count	6	5	11
		% of Total	20%	17%	18%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square=1.948; P-value=.378

Table 4.1 indicates that of the 14 parolees who had not completed high school or earned a GED, only 5 attended a prerelease facility while 9

did not. However, of the 35 subjects who had already earned a high school diploma or GED, 20 attended a prerelease facility while 15 did not. Finally, 5 of the 11 parolees who had completed some type of college courses attended a prerelease facility while six did not attend a prerelease facility. The null hypothesis of no relationship between initial educational program assignments is tested using the information in Table 4.1. The Chi-square statistic of 1.949 (P-value=.378) is not significant to allow a rejection of the null hypothesis. Inmates were not systematically assigned to the two different types of programs based on their initial education level. Those who had previously earned education credentials, and revealed a predisposition to earn more, were no more likely to be assigned to a prerelease program than to be assigned to a non-prerelease one.

Table 4.2: Subjects that earned a GED while incarcerated

			Facility		Total
			Non pre release	Pre release	
No GED in prison	Count		8	4	12
	% of Total		27%	13%	20%
GED in prison	Count	GED in prison	3	4	7
	% of Total		10%	13%	12%
N/A	Count		19	22	41
	% of Total		63%	73%	68%
Total	Count		30	30	60
	% of Total		100%	100%	100%

Of the seven subjects that were able to earn a GED while incarcerated, 3 were released from a non-prerelease facility while 4 were

released from a prerelease facility. In table 4.2, Chi-square was not accounted for as there were not enough subjects and therefore it was not statistically reliable. This table was included in the research to show that, although there were very few inmates who entered prison without a GED, this factor did not have an impact on whether an inmate was placed in a prerelease facility or not. Furthermore, the number of subjects who earned a GED did not change drastically from a prerelease facility to a non-prerelease facility. In fact, there were 4 inmates who were not able to earn a GED while incarcerated but were still released from a prerelease facility. Research consistently demonstrates the correlation between education and employment and that employment is a major factor in preventing recidivism.

Even though a relatively small number of subjects did not have a GED or high school diploma when they entered prison, there were many subjects who were able to further their education while incarcerated. Some subjects indicated that they were able to obtain an Associates or a Bachelor's Degree during their stay in prison. Furthermore, of those that indicated that they were able to take college courses, a number of those said that they have continued with their college education even after release from prison.

Table 4.3: Subjects who were able to further education while incarcerated

		Facility		Total	
		Non pre release	Pre release		
Education	No	Count	16	20	36
		% of Total	53%	67%	60%
	Yes	Count	14	10	24
		% of Total	47%	33%	40%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square=1.111; P-value=.292

Table 4.3 illustrates that of the 30 subjects that did not attend a prerelease facility, 14 were able to further their education while only 10 of subjects who did attend a prerelease facility were able to continue with classes. These include GED courses, as well as college courses. Overall, 36 of the 60 subjects interviewed were not able to continue their education while incarcerated. The Chi Square in Table 4.3 is 1.111 and the P-value is .292 which indicates that there is no relationship between the subjects' furthering their education and the facility that they were released. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

The subjects were asked if they felt that they were given enough opportunities to further their education while incarcerated. Some subjects indicated that they had wanted to take more college courses but were not able. Others said that they had signed up for a GED course but they were moved around to different facilities and were never able to take any

courses. When asked specifically about being able to obtain a GED or further their education while incarcerated, David stated that although he had his GED when he was sent to prison, he was interested in taking some college courses while incarcerated. David did not attend a pre-release facility.

While I was in yes, there is a lot of loopholes and stuff you had to go through but I eventually got to take some courses through LSU Independent Distance Learning but now that I am out its difficult. I mean there is a lot of red tape that you have to go through and I really want to go back to school and try and do something with myself. It's just that there's a lot of red tape.

Mark did not earn a GED while incarcerated. He indicated that he had a desire to earn his GED during his prison sentence but was not able to do so. He did not attend a prerelease facility. He explained, "Yes .I wanted to get my GED. I guess the wait was too long so I never got to take any classes at a pre-release facility." John did not have a GED prior to incarceration. He was able to complete a GED while at a pre-release facility. However, when asked about his perception of the facility and if he thought he was given plenty of opportunities to further his education he had this to say: "No. I mean, I earned my GED but I really wanted to take college courses too and they wouldn't let me."

Overall, it appeared that most of the inmates entered prison with a GED, high school diploma, or some college. While incarcerated, many individuals were able to further their education and earn college credits. Some of the individuals interviewed expressed a desire to complete college so that they could obtain better employment. They indicated that the main component holding them back with being denied financial aid due to having a felony conviction on their record (drug offense). Of the offenders who had not earned a GED prior to incarceration, about half were able to complete this task during their stay in prison. However, the facility in which they were located had little effect as to if they were given this opportunity.

4.1.2 Marriage

Much of the research conducted on inmates and their success while incarcerated and after release, indicates that being married plays an important factor (Christ & Bitler, 2010; Clark, 2001; Fisherman, 1986). When inmates remain married while incarcerated, they are strengthening these social bonds and this in turn helps their transition back into the community (Baer, et al., 2010; Laub, et al., 2008 ;).

Table 4.4: Marital status prior to incarceration

		Facility		Total	
		non pre release	pre release		
Married before	No	Count	16	11	27
		% of Total	53%	37%	45%
	Yes	Count	14	19	33
		% of Total	23%	63%	55%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square= 1.684; P-value=.194

Prior to incarceration, 27 of the 60 subjects were married. Of those married, 16 were placed at a non-prerelease facility while 11 went to a prerelease facility. The Chi Square in Table 4.4 is 1.684 (P-value=.194) indicates that there is no significant relationship between whether a subject was married and if they were sent to a prerelease facility.

Table 4.5: Marital status after release from prison

		Facility		Total	
		non pre release	pre release		
Married after	No	Count	12	8	20
		% of Total	40%	27%	33%
	Yes	Count	18	22	40
		% of Total	60%	73%	67%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square=1.200; P-Value=.273

After the inmates were released from prison, a majority were still married to the same person. In fact, only 4 of the inmates from non-prerelease

facilities and 3 of the inmates in the prerelease facility were not married when they were released from prison. The Chi-Square in table 4.5 is 1.200 (P-value=.273). The results from Table 4.5 indicate that there is no difference in the marital status when an individual goes into prison and then when they are released. Therefore, attending a prerelease facility has no effect on marriage status.

Research suggests that inmates whose spouses and children visit them while incarcerated are more likely to stay married. Those parolees who are married are less likely to recidivate than those parolees who lose their family while incarcerated (Crutchfield, 1997). Steve, who was incarcerated for driving while intoxicated (felony), was released from one of the prerelease facilities. He indicated that there were opportunities for his family and common law wife to visit while he was incarcerated: "Yes, of course I have to say really they do put guys really way, way, way far from their families and stuff such and it is hard for a lot of family members and to be honest with you my girlfriend at the time caught rides with other peoples family and friends just so she could come see me. It is difficult really."

Matt, who was incarcerated for possession of a controlled substance and was released from a non-prerelease facility, indicated that his family could visit but that the visitation was too short: "No, they could visit but they don't spend a lot of time with me. Visitation was not that long." James, who is married with children, felt that although he was far

from his family, he was eventually able to move to a facility closer to his hometown thanks to the help of the warden. James was released from a non-prerelease facility. He stated:

Yeah but to give them a fair shake the warden that I had when I was across almost in the Panhandle to give them a fair shake he did listen to my mom's concerns and got me as close as they could but still it was a distance. I mean it was about a 3 hour trip for them both ways but they did their best to try.

The majority of inmates who were married prior to incarceration were still married after release. Furthermore, the facility in which a person was released had little effect on if they remained married. All but one offender indicated that there were no counseling programs in place for their spouse or family. According to literature, providing counseling for spouses of those incarcerated may help the transition from prison back to community.

4.1.3 Housing

Another measure of success is housing stability. The ability to obtain stable housing is one of the hardest tasks that offenders face once released from prison (Baer, et al., 2005; Helgott, 1997). There is a direct

correlation between stable housing and employment (Bradley, Oliver, Richardson, & Slayter, 2003; Rodriguez & Brown, 2003). The parolees were asked where they currently live. While some subjects had been on parole for a few years, others had only been on parole for a few months.

Table 4.6: Living arrangement after release

		Facility		Total	
		non pre release	pre release		
Live	Wife	Count	9	7	16
		% of Total	30%	23%	27%
	parents	Count	7	7	14
		% of Total	23%	23%	23%
	Friends	Count	1	4	5
		% of Total	3%	13%	8%
	homeless	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	3%	0%	2%
	children	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	3%	0%	2%
	Other	Count	11	12	23
		% of Total	37%	40%	38%
	Total	Count	30	30	60
		% of Total	100%	100%	100%

Of the 16 subjects who lived with their wife, 7 were released from a pre-release facility and 9 from a regular facility. There was an even number of subjects who lived at home with their parents: 7 from each type of facility. Only 1 subject from a non-prerelease facility lived with friends while 4 from a prerelease facility lived with friends. Of all subjects interviewed, only 1 was homeless and only 1 lived with their grown children. Both of these

subjects were released from a non-prerelease facility. Finally, 11 parolees from a non-prerelease facility and 12 from a prerelease facility had other living arrangements. These included halfway houses and treatment centers. Of all the interviews conducted, few inmates indicated housing as a problem once released from prison. All subjects indicated that they had someone to live with prior to release from prison.

Housing and family relations contribute to the likelihood of an ex-offender recidivating (Langdon & Levin, 2002; Petersilia, 2003; Byrne & Taxman, 2004; Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). Over half of all inmates report that they never received a visit from their family while incarcerated (Baer, et al., 2006). Many other states have prison programs in place that allow families to not only visit their loved ones in prison, but encourage family counseling (Christ & Bitler, 2010). This allows the family to heal and has shown positive results when the offender is placed back into the community (Petersilia).

By establishing secure housing, offenders likely build a social connection to their community (Hirschi, 1969). This in turn increases the chance that an offender will be able to find employment and abstain from committing crimes. The goal of the TDCJ prerelease facilities are to help the offender transition to society so that they may be successful and not return to prison. By strengthening the bonds with an offender and his family and by helping the offender establish stable housing, the chances that offenders will not recidivate increase.

Table 4.7 : Living stability after release

		Facility		Total	
		Non pre release	Pre release		
Stability	Unstable	Count	10	13	23
		% of Total	33%	43%	38%
	Stable	Count	20	17	37
		% of Total	67%	57%	62%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

Chi-Square=.635; P-Value=.426

Table 4.7 consists of stable and unstable living environments. Parolees who live with their spouse, parents, or alone are more stable and have a higher rate of success than ones who live with friends or are homeless (Fisherman, 1986; Petersilia, 2003; and Clark, 2001). The subjects who lived with a spouse, parent, or alone were grouped into the “stable” category, while those who live with friends, homeless, or live in a halfway house are labeled as “unstable”. The subjects in the “other” category were parolees who were in a halfway house or in undergoing substance abuse counseling in a treatment center. These environments are not considered stable as these facilities are for individuals that have violated their parole in some way, such as testing positive for drugs or failing to report as directed. Of the 23 parolees who lived in an unstable environment, 13 were released from a prerelease facility while only 10 were released from a non-prerelease facility. Of the 37 parolees who lived in a stable environment, 20 were released from a non-prerelease facility while only 17

were from a prerelease facility. Although the prerelease facilities do not directly claim to help offenders find stable living environments, one of the factors that determine if an inmate is transferred to a prerelease facility is having a stable living environment upon release. In table 4.7 the Chi Square was .635 and the P-value is .426, therefore there is no significance between the facility that a parolee was released from and their living stability while on parole.

4.1.4 Employment

Employment plays a large role in the success of an individual once they are released from prison. "Finding employment after release is one of the most important reintegration challenges facing ex-offenders, and is one that can have a significant impact on their chances of remaining crime free" (Visher & Kachnowski, 2007, p. 80). Parolees consistently complained that their biggest barrier to moving on with their life was not only finding employment, but also being able to find a job in which they could support themselves. Many subjects indicated that even though they had a good job before they were incarcerated, most employers do not want to hire someone with a felony conviction on their record.

Table 4.8: Subjects employed prior to incarceration

		Non pre release	Pre release		
Job before	No	Count	9	10	19
		% of Total	30%	33%	32%
	Yes	Count	21	20	41
		% of Total	70%	67%	68%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square=.077 ; P-value: .781

Table 4.8 indicates that employment prior to incarceration has little effect on whether an inmate is transferred to a prerelease facility. There were 41 subjects who were employed prior to incarceration and 21 were placed in a non-prerelease facility while 20 attend a prerelease facility. Of the 19 of subjects who were unemployed prior to incarceration, 9 were sent to a non-prerelease facility while 10 went to a prerelease facility. Full time employment does not include manufacturing and delivering drugs, or theft.

Table 4.9: Subjects employed at the time of interview

		Facility		Total	
		Non pre release	Pre release		
Job after	No	Count	17	9	26
		% of Total	57%	30%	43%
	Yes	Count	13	21	34
		% of Total	43%	70%	57%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square= 4.344; P-Value= .037

After release from prison, 34 of the 60 subjects were able to find employment while 26 could not due to various reasons. Of those subjects

that were employed, 13 were released from a non-prerelease facility while 21 were released from a prerelease facility. Of the unemployed subjects, 17 came from a non-prerelease facility while 9 were released from a prerelease facility. Table 4.9 has a Chi Square value of 4.344 and a P-value of .037. This indicates that the relationship between the facilities in which a subject was released and their ability to find employment is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.10 : Employment classes and employment after release

		Job classes		Total	
		No	Yes		
Job after	No	Count	18	8	26
		% of Total	30%	13%	43%
Yes	Count	20	14	34	
	% of Total	33%	23%	57%	
Total	Count	38	22	60	
	% of Total	63%	37%	100%	

*Chi-Square= .687, P-Value=.407

Not taking into account which facility an inmate was released from, Table 4.10 establishes a connection between attending employment classes and the ability to find employment once released. Of the 22 individuals who attended employment classes while incarcerated, 14 found legitimate employment after release from prison while 8 did not. Of the 38 individuals who did not take any classes, 20 still found employment while 18 did not. The Chi-square was .687 (P-Value=.407). Therefore, taking the employment class does not have a significant effect on finding a job once

released. However, when interviewed, many subjects felt that they would have a better chance of finding employment if they had been given proper vocational skills. Some indicated that they would have liked computer classes or courses that were relevant to finding a job in today's workforce.

A few of the subjects said that the job they had prior to incarceration was no longer relevant or they could no longer be employed in that line of work. Once a person is incarcerated, they have a felony conviction on their record. There are a number of jobs that people with certain arrests can no longer obtain. During the course of the interviews, the area of employment appeared to be the biggest concern of most subjects. Some of the subjects stated that although they had a full time job, it did not pay enough to support them and their family. When asked about opportunities for vocational courses, the responses varied. Jesse, who did not attend a prerelease facility said:

They have life skills class and they go over all that stuff with you and how to complete resumes because some people don't know how to do that stuff. So yeah if you're I believe you have to take life skills its mandatory, yeah it's mandatory. So yeah they offer that.

Jose, who was released from a prerelease facility, indicated that he had signed up for a vocational course but was not able to take it:

They were offering some trades but they had me on a waiting list and I was released before I got a chance to take advantage of it. I was at the unit for 10 months and there are like 2000 people at that unit so I guess it was to be expected. I took a carpentry trade the first time I was locked up and it was beneficial so I wanted to follow through with the same thing.

Other subjects indicated that there were plenty of opportunities for advancement while incarcerated if you sought them out. Tim, who was released from a prerelease facility, had a more positive perspective of his time incarcerated. Tim was incarcerated for Manufacturing of a Controlled Substance and indicated that this was his “employment” prior to incarceration:

Well they used to have an animal called “Project RIO” and they dismantled it for some reason. On the Unit I was on they had college, they had all this type of stuff when I got there and over the years the budget started pulling back of course me with the time that I had to pay for all of my college, but I took college there and furthered my education. Now the reentry was pretty dominant on the LeBlanc Unity

because everybody was going home in 6 months but as far as job training I took a construction carpentry class. There was some things available, but if you wanted help you had to go find it.

Many parolees felt that the classes and vocational skills offered to them were irrelevant once they were released into society. Adam, who was released from a prerelease facility said: "Instead of offering like bookkeeping classes I think maybe they should probably offer welding classes, automotive classes, more down to earth stuff for a felon to get more out there." Overall, the facility in which a person was released proved to be statistically significant with offenders released from a prerelease facility having a better chance at finding employment than offenders released from a non-prerelease facility. However, taking a vocational course while incarcerated, no matter the facility in which it occurred, did not appear to have an effect on whether or not an offender was able to find employment.

4.1.5 Substance Use

Another factor that is used to measure success is abstinence from drug and alcohol use once released. Although the interviews were conducted in the parole building, many of the subjects admitted to me that they had used alcohol or drugs since their release. The majority of

inmates incarcerated have a drug or alcohol dependence (Mumula, 1999). Even in nonviolent offenses, such as possession of a controlled substance or theft, drugs and alcohol play a significant factor in why that individual decides to commit crimes. Many times offenders who commit theft or property crimes are under the influence of drugs or alcohol while committing that crime or are committing the crime in order to obtain drugs or alcohol.

Table 4.11: Subjects who admitted to drug or alcohol abuse prior to incarceration

		Facility		Total
		non pre release	pre release	
No	Count	4	3	7
	% of Total	13%	10%	12%
Yes	Count	26	27	53
	% of Total	87%	90%	88%
Total	Count	30	30	60
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%

*Chi Square= .162; P-value-.688

Of the 60 parolees interviewed, 53 admitted to drug or alcohol use while committing their crime or that they had committed their crime in order to obtain drugs or alcohol. Only 7 said that they had not used drugs or alcohol prior to their arrest. Of the 53 subjects who had admitted to drug use prior to incarceration, 26 did not attend a prerelease facility while 27 did attend a prerelease facility. As for the individuals who did not admit to drug use, there was little difference between those who did attend a prerelease facility and those who did not with 4 not attending a prerelease

facility while 3 did attend a prerelease facility. The Chi square in table 4.11 is .162 and the P-value is .688 which reveals that there is no relationship between an offender's drug use and which facility he is placed in.

Table 4.12: Subjects who admitted to using drugs or alcohol since release from prison

		Facility		Total	
		Non pre release	Pre release		
Drugs after	No	Count	23	21	44
		% of Total	77%	70%	73%
Yes		Count	7	9	16
		% of Total	23%	30%	27%
Total		Count	30	30	60
		% of Total	100%	100%	100%

*Chi Square= .341 ; P-value= .559

Table 4.12 reveals that the number of subjects who used drugs or alcohol after release from prison dropped significantly from 53 to 16. Of these that admitted to drug or alcohol use, 7 did not attend a prerelease facility while 9 were released from a prerelease facility. Of the subjects interviewed, 44 denied any alcohol or drug use since their release from prison. It should be noted that all interviews, in all 3 facilities, were conducted behind closed doors. However, they were all conducted within the parole building. It is possible that there were subjects who denied drug or alcohol use but had actually used since release from prison. The subjects were interviewed prior to meeting with their parole officer and although they were told the interviews were anonymous, they may have felt the need to be dishonest regarding this question. The Chi square is .341 and the p-

value is .559. Therefore, there is no statistical significance between the facilities in which an inmate was released and if they have used drugs or alcohol since release from prison.

Table 4.13: Subjects who attended drug classes and denied use of drug and alcohol use since release from prison

		Drug classes		Total
		no	yes	
No	Count	28	16	44
	% of Total	46.7%	26.7%	73.3%
yes	Count	11	5	16
	% of Total	18.3%	8.3%	26.7%
Total	Count	39	21	60
	% of Total	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%

*Chi square= .135 ; P-value= .713

Table 4.13 was designed to determine if there was any significance between the parolees who had abstained from drug and alcohol use and if they had attended any drug education classes. If an individual attends a prerelease facility, it does not necessarily mean that they will receive any drug and alcohol counseling. Of the 44 subjects that denied using drugs since their release from prison, 28 attended some type of drug classes while incarcerated while 16 did not attend any substance abuse classes. Of the 16 subjects who admitted to drug use after their release from prison, 11 attended substance abuse counseling while 5 did not attend any counseling. The Chi square is .135 while the p-value is .713 which indicates that there is no significance between abstaining from substance use and attending a substance abuse class while incarcerated.

The subjects were asked about their perception of the substance abuse classes and whether they felt that they were helpful in staying drug and alcohol free once they were released on parole. Some subjects were in treatment programs at the time of the interview because of drug use while on parole. Others said that the classes were effective while some indicated that it was up to the individual as to whether they stopped abusing drugs and alcohol. Bob, who was incarcerated for burglary of a habitation and was released from a prerelease facility, admitted to using drugs prior to incarceration. At the time of the interview, Bob indicated that he has not used since his release but did not contribute this success to the substance abuse course he took at the facility:

No absolutely not. Too many people, too small a staff. No absolutely zero one on one, the counselors are just, I mean if you had a drug problem and you went there the counselors, I think the ratio is probably 90 to 1, 100 to 1, something like that. So you spend your time in a room, everybody sitting there and like counselor may be outside the room and you just fake it. Fake like you are doing something until the day is over. It's totally pointless; it's a waste of money and time.

Many other parolees interviewed agreed with Bob and his feeling that the substance abuse programs were ineffective. Justin said:

Just they...., they don't have real counseling. They have just really like; you might as well say it's just like a seminar you know because they are not helping you they are just telling you about different things you know instead of one on one counseling. Were you know like once I get my degree I will be doing, because I want to do it and not for the check. And you can tell the difference from a person that doing it cause their heart then the check.

Cade, who was released from a different facility than both Bob and Justin agreed with the lack of effectiveness of the substance abuse classes offered:

It was an alcohol class, I don't know what they called it, it was a DWI class I think is what they called it. It wasn't really helpful. It was not very informative, not very didn't it give you avenues to pursue help or counseling or anything like that. It was more just watch videos about people.

Not only did most parolees dislike the substance abuse courses offered, Jaden indicated that in order to attend a class in the facility he was incarcerated at, the inmates had to put it together.

I went to an AA class we had but that wasn't nothing that they specifically had it was the inmates came up with this and they give us one classroom and we went like 3 days a week and it go to be overcrowded cause people was just like coming in their to do other things go to other dorms then the cut that completely out. But I mean I did, we did our own NA and AA, know what I am saying it was just the inmates

Todd was the one subject interviewed who was disabled and released from a separate facility then everyone else. He indicated throughout his interview that to be handicap in TDCJ meant that you did not have access to any education classes, substance abuse class, or vocational classes. He stated early in the interview that he was not able to attend a prerelease facility because he was in a wheelchair. He indicated that all inmates with serious handicaps were sent to the Jester Unit.

Where I was at all they had was AA as far as drug and alcohol they didn't have anything else. As far as the a training if your handicapped they won't let you do anything.

They won't let you go to any of the units that have the training, the units they do the training on so if you are handicapped you're pretty much screwed.

Brandon did not attend a prerelease facility and did not feel as if the drug classes he attended were helpful. He admitted to using drugs prior to incarceration but indicated that he has not used since. However, he did not believe that his success is a result of the classes he took while incarcerated:

It was a joke there was like 4 counselor on the entire unit. There were like fourteen hundred (1,400) inmates on the unit. There was supposed to be a counselor I think it was like for every 28 inmates and there were like 4, I mean it was a joke.

On the other hand, some subjects suggested that the success of the drug programs had little to do with staff and more to do with an individual's desire to stay clean. Sam, who did not attend a prerelease facility had this to say:

I will say this they are only helpful for the people that want to be helped. I will say this for my situation I have been

down before and I know that if I go down again I won't be coming home. I have lost 2 uncles that way.

Sean, who was incarcerated for delivery of a controlled substance and did not attend a prerelease facility, admitted to using drugs prior to incarceration. He said that he has not used drugs or sold drugs since his release from prison. Sean agreed with Sam:

No I feel like they done the best they could but it's really up to the person themself to want to change and if they accept the fact that you know things get hard and you just have to try to go through. You have to go through to get where you're going and I will tell you it's not easy and the I think the worst thing for me is I would always talk to my step-son and to my son, you guys are young your healthy men just take what you can get because just sitting around the house can lead you to getting in trouble and you just all of a sudden you get in trouble. Just hanging around the house, going with you friends that don't want to do nothing either fall into that trap and you won't even know it until it is too late.

Dustin, also not released from a prerelease facility, felt that the decision to change had more to do with the individual and not with the

programs: “Really, I believe you’ve got to do it yourself. I believe if you want to quit you’ve got to do it yourself. They can tell you how, but if you ain’t putting your own effort in it nothing will work.” Shane, who was released from a prerelease facility, stated:

That is a good question because I really believe that a man has to want it to really stay sober. You have to truly want it, you have to be tired of the lifestyle, you have to be sick and tired of it and that the point I finally got to after several DWI’s. I don’t know if there is a whole lot more that could be improve to be honest with you. I think it’s more a man just has to get tired of it.

More than half of the subjects interviewed agreed that the classes were not a significant factor in abstaining from drug use since release from prison. However, about 1/3 of the subjects offered the suggestion that it was up to the individual and not the courses as to whether a person abstained from drugs.

4.1.6 Subjects overall perspective

The subjects interviewed were asked about their perspective on TDCJ and the classes that were offered while they were incarcerated. During the interviews the perspectives of the subjects changed dramatically from one

to another. Some individuals felt that the prison system had been a positive experience in their lives and that they would be successful as a result of being there. Others felt as if the prison system did not care about their future and if they were prepared to go back out into the world and be successful. The questions regarding perspective pertained to their overall attitude about TDCJ.

Table 4.14: Subjects Perspective of Opportunity for Drug Education Classes

			Facility		Total
			Non pre release	Pre release	
Perspective of opportunity for drug classes	Strongly agree	Count	18	19	37
		% of Total	60%	63%	62%
	Neutral	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	3%	0%	2%
	Strongly disagree	Count	11	11	22
		% of Total	37%	37%	37%
	Total	Count	30	30	60
		% of Total	100%	100%	100%

*Chi-Square= 1.027 P-Value=.598

Of the 30 parolees from a non-prerelease facility, 19 either strongly agreed or agreed that they had plenty of opportunities to take drug counseling classes, 10 disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 1 had no opinion. Of the 30 subjects who were released from a prerelease facility, 17 strongly agreed or agreed that they had plenty of opportunities for drug counseling and 13 disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Chi-Square was 1.027 (P-Value=.598). There was no significance in which facility the

offender was released from and there overall perspective of being able to attend substance abuse education classes.

Table 4.15: Subjects perspective of opportunities for education classes while incarcerated

			Facility		Total
			Non pre release	Pre release	
Perspective of opportunity for education	Strongly agree	Count	14	10	24
		% of Total	47%	33%	40%
	Neutral	Count	7	9	16
		% of Total	23%	30%	27%
	Strongly disagree	Count	9	11	20
		% of Total	30%	37%	33%
	Total	Count	30	30	60
		% of Total	100%	100%	100%

*Chi-Square= 1.117; P-value=.572

According to Table 4.15, 14 of the 30 parolees who attend a non-prerelease facility strongly agreed or agreed that they were given opportunities to further their education, 7 had no opinion, and 9 strongly disagreed. Of the 30 parolees who attended a prerelease facility, 10 strongly agreed or agreed that they were given opportunities to further their education, 9 had no opinion, and 11 strongly disagreed. The Chi-Square was 1.117 (P-Value=.572). There was no significance in the facility that an offender attended and their perspective as to whether or not they believed they could further their education.

Table 4.16: Subjects perspective of opportunity for Vocational Classes

			Facility		Total
			Non pre release	Pre release	
Perspective of opportunity on vocational classes	Strongly agree	Count	19	17	36
		% of Total	34%	57%	60%
	Neutral	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	3%	0%	2%
	Strongly disagree	Count	10	13	23
		% of Total	33%	43%	38%
Total	Count	30	30	60	
	% of Total	100%	100%	100%	

*Chi Square= 1.502; P-Value=.472

Of the 30 subjects who attended a prerelease facility, 17 strongly agreed or agreed that they had an opportunity to attend vocational classes, while 13 disagreed or strongly disagreed. 19 offenders who did not attend a prerelease facility strongly agreed or agreed that they had the opportunity to attend vocational classes while 10 disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Chi-Square was 1.502 (P-Value=.472). The facility that one attended and the perspective that that subject had on vocational classes was not significant.

Subjects were asked their overall opinion of their time in TDCJ and if there was anything that could have been done differently to improve their chances of success while on parole. Jeff did not attend a pre-release facility and suggested that he was having difficulty getting back on his feet. He admitted to selling drugs in the past and believed that it was the job of

the prison system to help him find employment that was legal and that he could support himself with.

Like me, even like drug dealers, they look at us a whole lot differently than murderers and robbers cause murderers and robbers can come out here and here and get food stamps and drug dealer's cant. So I feel, I guess they feel like we make some, cause like all the money we make then we come out and then we got nothing to go to that can at least help take our mind off the, something close to the, if they can put in the... Like drug dealers we doing it for the money, we are addicted to money so if they can bring us that and put us in position. We ain't got to make all that money we was making just put us somewhat comfortable where we won't want to go back then we will be alright I believe. That's how I feel about myself. If they can put me in something comfortable, a reliable job that I can stay on then I will be pretty much OK.

Even though Moby attended a prerelease facility he did not feel as if he was prepared for release in regards to employment:

Preparation for job placement like they used to have with Project RIO something similar to that would have been ok. Preparations on maybe being able to go ahead and apply for say social security card and driver's license and maybe so kind of... I have surcharges and that's very common and makes it hard to get your license coming right out so if maybe they would have had some way to contact the surcharge company to make arraignments for the indigent program and have that waiting instead of waiting when you get out, do that make sense?

Robert, who spent 4 ½ years incarcerated and who did not attend a prerelease facility, said that he would have liked a substance abuse class. He was incarcerated for possession of a controlled substance with intent to deliver:

Maybe they could have you know offered me some rehabilitative drug and alcohol classes instead of just having it something I had to ask for you know. Maybe if they came up and offered it me or came up and offered it to my group of people, know what I mean.

When asked what the biggest barriers were for ex-offenders “getting on with their life”, the overwhelming response from parolees from either facility was having a felony record. A felony conviction results in a loss in job opportunities as many employers are not willing to hire felons. Aiden, who was released from a prerelease facility said, “Having a felony on my background apparently this world don’t believe in second chances.” James, also from a prerelease facility said, “Being a felon; it’s like they can smell it on me”. Matt, from a non-prerelease facility said:

Well they don’t know how, they don’t for people that’s on parole they come up or there’s nothing, they give all these old like outdated you know contacts to you know get in contact with but they are outdated. I mean you know when they give us those stuff its outdated so there’s no telling if the place is still there now you know it’s not never, it’s not never not about right now you know like you know we got these we got this one going on y’all can get with us right now and get hooked-up, it’s always these outdated things they give us.

Jacob, who was released from a prerelease facility, also agreed that finding employment has kept him from establishing a better life since being released from prison.

The biggest barrier to getting on with my life, finding employment, finding a steady job with the recession and with the felony on my record and the fact that I don't have a very good work history at all. That's probably the biggest barrier between myself and my future but if I get my FAFSA and my education I think I will be successful and cut out recidivism.

Tom, who was released from a prerelease facility, agreed that there was more that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice could have done more to prepare inmates for parole.

I wouldn't even know where to start. There is so much that they could do but they just don't. They really they just don't care straight out, there may be small pocket throughout the system were people get to do things but the majority don't get the opportunities to do it.

David was not released from a prerelease facility but agreed that having a felony conviction has made it difficult to find stable employment since his release from prison. He said, "Two felonies, every time I go to fill out a job, I ask them off the top you know are y'all felon friendly do y'all hire felons. It's either yes or no." And Sam, who attended a prerelease facility, agreed with the other subjects that finding employment has been a barrier to moving on with his life.

The biggest barrier, having a felony conviction, you know you go apply for jobs and everything is fine until they find out. I mean they don't even inquire about what type of felony it is, it's just as soon as they see a felony it's like see you have a good day, see you later and that's ridiculous.

Contrary to what other parolees said about prison and parole, Steve had a positive outlook on his experience and was ready to move on with his life. Steve was released from a prerelease facility and said:

Absolutely none, I just looked forward to getting out and while I was in prison preparing myself I studied all kinds of books. I am a builder that's what I do, I love building, I own a company and all I could do every day of my life in there was think of how to build new buildings, construction and stuff just put new ways in to thought and put it all on paper.

Consistently throughout the interviews the subjects indicated that finding and keeping stable employment was the most difficult thing that they face when they are released from prison and as they finish parole. Almost all indicated that even if they find a job, many times it is not for long or it does not cover all their bills. John, who was released from a prerelease facility, indicated that finding work was going to be difficult for him. He was incarcerated for 2 years for Possession of a Firearm by a

Felon. Prior to that he was on parole for Burglary of a Habitation. John had been out of prison for 2 months but still could not find work:

Finding work, I am real nervous about finding work. I have never had problems with it in the past, the first time I got out I jumped on pretty quickly but that's about it. Just getting re-established that's it and starting to change my people, places and playthings.

On the other hand, Tony, who was not released from a prerelease facility, did not think that finding a job was difficult but did indicate that other offenders have this problem. He stated, "Not for me but I know for other cats it's going to be because you asked me a while ago was my offense violent or non-violent. You got some cats that is non-violent but that felony jacket that you wear is a big thing."

4.2 Logit Analysis

The three variables used to measure success were living stability, abstaining from drugs and alcohol, and having legitimate employment. The independent variable is whether or not a person attended a prerelease facility prior to release from prison. One of the goals of the prerelease facilities in Texas is to help an inmate transition from prison to the community by providing drug education counseling, vocational classes, and GED courses, if needed. Through the course of interviews it

was discovered that not all parolees who attended a prerelease facility were given the opportunity to attend these classes. Alternatively, some of these classes were available to inmates who did not attend a prerelease facility. Because of this discrepancy, it cannot be assumed that because a person is currently successful on parole it is due to the facility in which they were released. Logit Analysis was utilized to control for other variables that prove to be important in the probability of success of these individuals.

4.2.1 Outcome Employment

One of the measures of success is employment. Research consistently demonstrates that if an offender has stable, legitimate employment, they are less likely to reoffend. During the interview process most parolees indicated that they had full time employment prior to incarceration. However, many agreed that finding stable employment after their release was the biggest barrier they have faced. Research indicates that ex-offenders have difficulties finding employment for various reasons. A study by Holtzer (1996) concluded that 1/3 of employers were not willing to hire an individual with a felony conviction. Furthermore, when an offender is incarcerated for an extended period of time, they lose out on job skills that are relevant with the current market.

Table 4.17: Logit Analysis-Outcome Employment

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Married after	2.076	.849	5.984	1	.014	7.974
Facility	1.154	.874	1.743	1	.187	3.170
Job classes	.808	.806	1.004	1	.316	2.243
Drugs after	-1.312	.731	3.221	1	.073	.269
Drug classes	-.750	.965	.605	1	.437	.472
Step 1 ^a Living stability	1.120	.731	2.350	1	.125	3.065
Job class and prerelease	-.797	.941	.717	1	.397	.451
Drug class and prerelease	1.157	1.242	.869	1	.351	3.181
Constant	-1.996	1.078	3.426	1	.064	.136

- a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Married after, facility, job classes, drugs after, drug classes, Living stability, job class and prerelease, drug class and prerelease.
- b. -2 Log likelihood= 64.981; Alpha=.029; Nagelkerke R²=.333

Table 4.17 contains the results of the estimated logit model for employment. It tests the relationship the log odds of being employed after release and assignment to a prerelease program as well as numerous control variables. Attending a prerelease facility did not show to have any significance on being employed. In addition, attending a vocational course and being released from a prerelease facility was not a significant factor in finding employment.

Being married after release from prison had a significant effect on employment at the .05 level. The odds of being successfully employed are seven times greater for married individuals than unmarried. Abstaining from drugs and alcohol also was statistically significant at the .01 level. Although this is represented in Table 4.17 as a negative effect, it is

actually positive. The coding for drug use was 0= abstaining from drugs while the 1=has used drugs since release from prison. Since 0 is the positive result, the signs are read in the reverse. Abstaining from drugs and alcohol increases the odds of successful employment by 73%.

The Phi coefficient is a measure of association for two binary variables. For marital status and employment, the phi is:

$$\Phi = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{n}}$$

The Phi coefficient is .268 where 0 is no association and 1 is a perfect association. Therefore the association between marriage and employment, although significant, is weak. The Phi coefficient for drug use and employment is .169 which indicates that this is also a weak association.

4.2.2. Outcome Living Stability

A subject's living stability is the second measure of success in this research. During the interview subjects were asked about their living arrangements prior to incarceration and since their release. Although some had indicated they were still legally married, they may not have continued to live with their wife or were in the process of getting divorced. Previous research has indicated that parolees who live with their spouse or their parents are less likely to recidivate. By establishing secure housing, offenders build a social connection to their community and to

their neighborhood (Hirschi, 1969). Individuals who lived with their spouse, parents, or by themselves were labeled as having a stable living arrangement while those that lived with friends, in a halfway house, or with other family members were considered to have an unstable living arrangement.

Many states offer counseling for families and inmates so that they may connect and build solid relationships while they are apart (Christ & Bitler, 2010). Maintaining family relationships helps reduce recidivism over a period of time (Baer, et al, 2006). Because part of the goal of the prerelease facility is to help the offender transition from prison to the community, this should include some sort of family involvement. Table 4.18 represents the variables that may have an effect on an offender's living stability.

Table 4.18: Logit Analysis-Living Stability

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Facility	-.660	.678	.948	1	.330	.517
Job after	.901	.655	1.895	1	.169	2.463
Drugs after	.841	.699	1.447	1	.229	2.319
Step 1 ^a Opportunity for family visit	.264	.193	1.874	1	.171	1.302
Drug classes	1.531	1.000	2.343	1	.126	4.621
Drug class and prerelease	-.350	1.269	.076	1	.783	.705
Constant	-.960	.855	1.262	1	.261	.383

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: facility, job after, drugs after, opportunity for family visit, drug classes, drug class and prerelease.

b. -2 Log likelihood=72.287; Alpha=.269; Nagelkerke R²=.162

Table 4.18 contains the results of the estimated logit model for living stability. It tests the relationship between the log odds of having a stable

living environment after release from prison and assignment to a prerelease program as well as numerous control variables. The variable “opportunity for family visit” was included since research shows that the stronger that family bond is while a husband/father is incarcerated, the greater chance of the marriage lasting after release from prison. However, there are no variables that have a significant effect on the subject and his living arrangement once released from prison.

4.2.3 Outcome Substance Abuse

The third measure of success is the subject’s ability to abstain from drugs and alcohol since release from prison. Individuals who use drugs spend more time attempting to obtain drugs and less time finding employment or strengthening positive ties in the community. These offenders place less value on family and success and are more likely to return to prison.

Table 4.19: Logit Analysis-Outcome Substance Use

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Married after	1.189	.874	1.850	1	.174	3.283
Facility	.512	.882	.338	1	.561	1.669
Job classes	.092	.769	.014	1	.904	1.097
Drug classes	-.317	1.002	.100	1	.752	.728
Job class and	-.047	.917	.003	1	.959	.954
Step 1 ^a prerelease						
Drug class and	.462	1.295	.128	1	.721	1.588
prerelease						
Job after	-1.318	.716	3.383	1	.066	.268
Living stability	.999	.743	1.806	1	.179	2.716
Constant	-2.035	1.121	3.296	1	.069	.131

- a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Married after, facility, job classes, drug classes, job class and prerelease, drug class and prerelease, job after, Living stability.
- b. -2 Log likelihood=63.782; Alpha=.669; Nagelkerke=.134

Although many offenders were able to attend some sort of drug counseling, this is not a significant impact on abstaining from drugs once released from prison. Table 4.19 results illustrate that whether a person was released from a prerelease facility or not had little effect on if they used drugs after release. Furthermore, taking substance abuse classes, coupled with facility, also had no effect on drug use. Table 4.19 indicates that being employed is statistically significant at the .01 level. Individuals who were fully employed after release from prison were 73% less likely to use drugs. This information coincides with much of the qualitative part of this research. Many subjects believed that the drug classes at the prerelease and the non-prerelease facilities were ineffective. They indicated that an individual has to personally want to quit using drugs in order to be successful. The Phi coefficient for employment and drug use is .170 which indicates that it is a weak association.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine if the prerelease facilities in the state of Texas had a significant impact on the success of parolees. Currently there are five facilities in Texas that are considered prerelease facilities. The main objective of these prison units is to help the offender transition smoothly from prison to the community. This is usually a requirement of the parole board and it is the decision of the parole board as to who attends these facilities. As most research measures success on how long someone has remained out of prison with little problems, this research measures success through living stability, employment, and abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory emphasizes that people are born with the ability to commit crimes. Instead of focusing on why people commit crime, this theory focuses on why people do not commit crimes. The four components of social bond theory are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Previous research in the field of offender reentry consistently finds that being employed has a positive effect on remaining in the community. Furthermore, having a stable living environment and remaining drug free result in a decrease in the likelihood that an offender

will return to prison. Hirschi's theory emphasizes that individuals who have a positive attachment are less likely to commit crimes. This attachment can be family members, a spouse, children, or employment. He further contends that being involved in a positive activity lessens that likelihood that an individual will continue to commit crimes as they will have less time to focus on delinquent behavior. By becoming committed to something (employment, being a husband and father, education), this will dissuade them from doing anything that would interfere with this commitment. Finally, by incorporating a positive belief in the norms of society they are less likely to go against this conformity.

5.2 Results

This research attempted to determine if the parolees who were released from a prerelease facility were more successful than those who were released from a non-prerelease facility. Not only did the prerelease facilities offer education courses, vocational courses, and substance abuse counseling, the non-prerelease facilities offered the same courses. However, it was discovered through the interviews that not all the individuals who attended a prerelease facility were privy to such programs. In fact, many of the parolees who did not attend a prerelease program were able to take the same classes. For example, a total of 24 subjects were able to further their education while incarcerated. This included not only the GED students but also those that participated in college courses.

What was surprising was that 14 of these 24 subjects did not attend a prerelease facility, while only 10 did. Similarly, the number of subjects who were able to take vocational classes varied very little (2 more were from a prerelease facility) from the prerelease facility to the non-prerelease facility. Finally, the number of subjects who were able to take the substance abuse classes was almost the same between the non-prerelease facility and the prerelease facility (11 in the non-prerelease and 10 in the prerelease). So, the next question was: Were the programs in the prerelease facility any better than the ones in the non-prerelease facilities?

When calculating for the variable 'employment', someone attending a vocational class within a prerelease facility had no effect on whether that person was employed once they were released. This was also true for abstaining from drugs or alcohol. The substance abuse classes taken at the prerelease facility had no statistical significance on whether a person abstained from drugs once released.

Other factors were considered as to what makes some people more successful after they are released from prison. Hirschi's social bond theory explains that it is the break in social bonds that result in a person submitting to criminal behavior. The variables that were measured that effect social bonds were: having stable employment; living in a stable environment; and abstaining from drugs and alcohol. Previous research has consistently suggested that there is a correlation between abstaining

from drugs and finding employment; having a being successful home environment and abstaining from drugs; and having stable employment and being successful while on parole. The influence of these variables was estimated through logit regression.

In regards to employment, the only variable that proved significant was marriage after release from prison. Facility and vocational classes had little effect on whether or not a person was employed. The subjects were asked what their biggest barrier was in “getting on with their life” since their release from prison and they consistently indicated that it was finding a stable job. Some felt that having a felony on their record decreased their chances of finding employment while others thought that it was because they did not have marketable skills. However, if the individuals were married, their chances of finding employment increased. By remaining married throughout their incarceration, these social bonds strengthened and the inmate’s ties to the community were not dramatically reduced. According to social bond theory, it is these ties that aid people in finding employment in their community.

When measuring for abstinence from drugs, the only significant factor was being employed. Again, research indicates that having full time employment at the time of release will result in the offender being less likely to return to prison. When looking through the theoretical framework of social bond theory, having full time employment helps offenders refrain from returning to prison.

Finally, when addressing living stability, there were no factors that had a significant effect on whether or not a person had a stable living environment. There could be different reasons for this. A stable environment has been defined by previous researchers as living with a spouse, family, parents, or by one's self. However, taking specific classes while incarcerated, furthering one's education, or finding a full time job may not have an effect on one's living situation once they are released back into the community.

5.3 Policy Implications

So, what does this mean for policy makers? If a prerelease facility has no impact on an offender's release from prison, why do we continue to fund these facilities? The classes that inmates are participating in do not appear to have an effect on an offender's overall success.

What we do see is that offenders who remain married while incarcerated, who are able to find employment once released, and who abstain from drugs and alcohol appear to be more successful. This information supports Travis Hirschi's social bond theory. Research has been conducted on different programs throughout the United States that consistently show that breaking social ties to the community jeopardizes not only the offender, but also the offender's family, and the community in general. When looking at the success of other countries, we see that those with rehabilitative programs and family counseling have higher rates

of success. For example, one of the leading countries in offender rehabilitation is Germany. Germany has several prisons but none of them are currently at capacity. They place their prisons in the middle of their cities and encourage family involvement throughout the prison process. Once an inmate reaches a specific level, they are released to community during the weekday to work and return to the prison at night. The purpose of this is to establish and maintain social bonds with family and community. Therefore, once the inmate is released from prison, they already have employment established and are more likely to have a stable living arrangement.

Instead of focusing on vocational classes that are out of touch with the employment market, or drug classes that tell offenders that drugs are bad, more focus should be placed on the family. These are the individuals who are going to help aid the offender in transitioning from prison back into the community. In Texas, inmates should be incarcerated close to their home and family. Visitation by spouses and children should be encouraged. Classes need to be offered to families so that they can learn how to live with their husband/father once he is released from prison. By giving family members the proper tools, they may be more successful in helping the offender transition from prison back into society.

Ultimately, discourse regarding policies for nonviolent offenders needs to change as the current programs in Texas may not be productive. Rehabilitation should start the moment a person is incarcerated. Focus

needs to shift from a punitive system to a more rehabilitative system. This not only includes drug and alcohol counseling, but also counseling regarding family dynamics. Relevant vocational skills should be taught to all inmates so that they are better prepared once they return to the community. This research indicated that being married, having a full time job, and abstaining from drugs and alcohol resulted in more successful parolees. There was not a significant difference in the two types of facilities in which inmates were released.

5.4 Future Research

Almost all states indicate that they have a wide range of programs to help offenders during their incarceration. Research in these states, or in other parts of Texas, could be beneficial to determine if these programs work elsewhere or if problems are consistent over time and space. Smaller states may yield different results as inmates may have more opportunities to visit with family. In fact, some states already have counseling in place for the families of inmates. In Texas, further research should be conducted in both urban areas and rural areas. The needs of the parolees in rural areas would be different as they may not have access to transportation or the job opportunities compared with someone from an urban area. Furthermore, research focusing on only the programs that are available in each facility would offer insight into whether these programs need to be changed or ended altogether. If research proves programs to

be invaluable, tax payer's money would be well spent on more successful alternatives.

5.5 Conclusion

Prison education and vocational programs, although at best an imperfect substitute, have in any case been significantly scaled back because of skepticism over their value and also because of budget constraints in the face of rapidly expanding prison populations
Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007, p. 3

This research demonstrates that the facility in which a person is released in Texas no effect on whether they are successful on parole. Furthermore, the individual classes have little effect as well. Some offenders, but not all were able to participate in drug education classes, vocational classes, and education classes, no matter what facility they were released from.

Based on previous research, and the findings of this research, family visitation and social ties are the main components that help offenders succeed during the transition from prison to the community. Offenders who remain married throughout their incarceration, who abstain from drugs and alcohol, and are able to find stable employment, fare better than those who do not fit these characteristics. Although vocational, educational, and substance abuse classes may play a part in offender reentry, this research did not indicate that these classes resulted in offender success. Furthermore, the subjects interviewed suggested that abstaining from drugs was a personal decision and that the classes they participated in while incarcerated were ineffective. They indicated that the

substance abuse classes were too large and that the number of counselors was too small compared to the number of subjects. Some subjects claimed that the classes were just Alcoholics Anonymous meetings that were run by the inmates as opposed to real classes that included counseling.

Many subjects advised that offering vocation courses that were relevant to the community in which they were to be released would be more invaluable than the courses that they took. Subjects complained that once they were released, they could not use the skills they had learned as they were a convicted felon. Others said that they wanted to participate in job skills courses but were never able to do so.

Finally, some subjects indicated that they would have liked further their education while incarcerated but were unable. Although more than half of the individuals in this research already had a high school diploma or GED prior to incarceration, they said that they would have liked to take college courses. The ones that did take college classes said that they had intended to continue their college experience once released from prison but were unable after they were denied financial aid because of their arrest record.

This research concluded that offenders, who maintain social ties with their family and community, are more likely to be successful while on parole. The foremost focus prison reentry programs should be establishing and maintaining family ties while inmates are incarcerated so that the

transition back into the community is more successful. Programs that are implemented should be evaluated regularly to ensure that they are effective in helping offenders during their transition back to the community and during their future in society.

APPENDIX A
INDIVIUDAL STUDY SURVEY

Individual Study Instrument

Study Number: _____

Offense and Incarceration

1. What was the most recent arrest in which you were incarcerated?

2. Which prison facility were you released from? _____

a. If you attended a pre-release facility, did you choose to attend? Or was it a

requirement? _____

3. What date were you released from prison? _____

Demographics:

4. With which racial/ethnic group do you identify?

a. African American

b. Hispanic

c. Caucasian

d. Native American

e. Asian

f. Other

5. What was the highest level of education you completed BEFORE you were incarcerated?
 - a. Less than a high school diploma or GED
 - b. GED
 - c. High School Diploma
 - d. Some college
 - e. Bachelor's Degree

6. While you were incarcerated, did you earn a GED?
 - a. Yes
 - b. no

7. What was your financial status prior to incarceration?
 - a. Under \$500 a month
 - b. \$501-1000 a month
 - c. \$1001-\$2000 a month
 - d. Over \$2000 a month
 - e. Don't know

8. Were you legally married or common law married prior to incarceration?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

9. Are you legally married or common law married now?

a. Yes

b. No

10. Did you have children prior to incarceration?

a. Yes

b. No

11. If you answered yes to number 10, how old are your children?

12. If you answered yes to number 10, did your children live with you prior to incarceration?

a. Yes

b. No

13. If you answered yes to number 10, do your children currently live with you?

a. Yes

b. No

14. Prior to incarceration, did you live with family?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. Prior to incarceration, with whom did you live?

- a. Wife/girlfriend
- b. Parents
- c. Friends
- d. Co-workers
- e. Homeless
- f. Children
- g. Other: please explain_____

16. Since your release, with whom do you live?

- a. Wife/girlfriend (same)
- b. Wife/girlfriend (different)
- c. Parents
- d. Friends
- e. Co-workers
- f. Homeless
- g. Children
- h. Other: Please explain_____

17. Prior to incarceration, did you work at a legitimate job?

- a. Yes
- b. No

18. Since your release, do you work at a legitimate job?

- a. Yes
- b. No

19. Since your release, how much time have you worked?

- a. The whole time
- b. More than half of the time
- c. Less than half of the time
- d. None; I cannot find work

20. While incarcerated, did you attend any classes to help you find employment once you were released?

- a. Yes
- b. No

21. Prior to incarceration, did you use drugs or alcohol?

- a. Yes
- b. No

22. Did you use alcohol or drugs while committing your most current offense? Or did you commit the crime in order to obtain alcohol or drugs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. Since your release from prison, have you used drugs or alcohol?

- a. Yes
- b. No

24. While you were incarcerated, did you attend any substance abuse classes?

- a. Yes
- b. No

25. Before you were incarcerated, did you have support from your family?

- a. Yes
- b. No

26. Since your release from prison, have you had any family support?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Perspective: The following questions can be answered as a) strongly agree b) agree c) no opinion d) disagree e) strongly disagree

27. Overall, do you feel like you were given educational opportunities while incarcerated?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. No opinion
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

28. While you were incarcerated, do you feel as if you were given opportunities to learn job skills?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. No opinion
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

29. While you were incarcerated, do you feel like you were given an opportunity for drug and alcohol rehabilitation?

- a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
- c. No opinion
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

30. While you were incarcerated, do you feel like there were plenty of opportunities for your family to visit you and spend time with you?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. No opinion
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

31. While you were incarcerated, was your family offered any support or counseling by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. No opinion
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

32. Did you feel like you were prepared for release while you were incarcerated? (Employment, education, social security card, medication, etc.)

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. No opinion
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Qualitative Questions

33. Were you given a choice to attend a prerelease facility during your incarceration? _____

34. If you did not attend a pre-release facility, what factors do you think kept you from attending one of these facilities?

35. If you did attend a pre-release facility, what factors do you think gave you the opportunity to attend one of these facilities?

36. If you attended GED or higher education courses while incarcerated, were these helpful? _____

37. If you attended job skills courses while incarcerated, were these helpful? _____

38. If you attended drug treatment courses while incarcerated, were these helpful?

39. Do you currently attend aftercare?

40. Was your family able to visit you while incarcerated? Why or why not?

41. Overall, what do you think could have been done to help improve your success once released from prison?

42. In your opinion, what has been the biggest barrier to “getting on with your life”?

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