INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION, FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON CRIME AND RECIDIVISM RATES

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INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION, FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND
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A Project

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Abstract

of

INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION, FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON CRIME AND RECIDIVISM RATES

by

Jennifer Erin Schultz

This project explored the influence education, family involvement and socioeconomic status has on crime and recidivism rates. Successful parolees were interviewed and asked questions regarding their experiences with education, family involvement, socioeconomic status and incarceration. The outcome of these interview heeded seven themes, which were 1) Felt no Connection with School, 2) Feeling of not being a part of their family 3) Growing-up in households that did not express emotions or communicate, 4) Traumatic experiences during adolescent or early teen years, 5) Jail as a break from the streets 6) Vocational classes as crime deterrent while incarcerated, and 7) Terminating criminal behavior because of "being tired."

Committee Chair
Robin Kennedy, Ph. D., M.S.W.

Date
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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

During my undergraduate education, I had a professor who was very passionate about prison reform. She spoke often about the money-driven prison reform that benefited the investors more than the prisoners. I soon found myself becoming more and more interested in our prison system and have since been very interested in working towards establishing an effective rehabilitation system. As I researched prison rehabilitation programs in the United States, I began to see a significant amount of data which focused on education and vocational classes inmates participate in while incarcerated. Although it made sense to me that education would alleviate criminal activity, I began to look for research that focused more on what lead up to criminal behavior. Again, I found a significant amount of data which focused on education prior to incarceration; however there was little data that focused on family involvement and support and even less data which included the factor a person’s socioeconomic status. I began to ask myself if there was a way to explore common early experiences in people’s lives that would assist in determining future criminal behavior. For the purpose of this project, I will be focusing on experiences with education, family involvement and socioeconomic status.

There are many factors that play important roles in our lives and which influence our ability to adapt and navigate successfully through life. Education, family involvement and socioeconomic status, are a few of these factors. Education, family involvement and
socioeconomic status play a significant role in a person’s ability to achieve success or their inclination to not succeed (Arum & Beattie, 1999). The neighborhood a person grows up in can determine the amount of resources that are available to them, while the school they attend can determine the type of education they will receive (Crosnoe, Mistry & Elder, 2002). The type of family involvement a person has can influence the way they communicate and relate to others (Coley, Morris & Hernandez, 2004). The positive manifestation of all of these factors is vital in establishing an environment that cultivates achievement and success. However, when these factors are not provided for a person, the outcome can be criminal. People who engage in criminal and deviant behavior are thought to be lacking in one or more of these areas (Alexander & Parsons, 1973). These factors can also influence a person’s desire to change or rehabilitate, and cease their criminal and deviant behavior. This study focuses on the influence of education, family involvement and socioeconomic status on crime and recidivism rates.

Background of the Problem

When the prison system was first created in the United States during the 17th century, the primary goal was to confine a person while they awaited trial. During the early 1700's, the main purpose of jail was to house wayward people who needed to be taken away from the temptation of committing a crime. It wasn’t until the middle of the 17th century that the system of incarceration as punishment as well as confinement was adopted (Lehman, Phelps & Cengage, 2005). The idea was simple and remains largely unchanged today. A person who is convicted of a crime would earn a term of confinement in a jail-type institution away from society. During this time they would be
left in their cell alone to read the Bible, so that they may ask God for forgiveness while realizing the error of their ways (Lehman, et. al., 2005). The main focus during this time was to punish, with very little thought given to rehabilitation or crime deterrent. Although this regime of incarceration as punishment has been effective for some, it has not proven to be effective on a large scale. The backlash of this regime is high recidivism rates.

Recidivism is the repeated or habitual relapse of committing crime or engaging in criminal activity after being punished by incarceration, probation or parole (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2003). A person who is considered to be a recidivist is one that commits a crime, spends time in jail or is on probation for it, and then after release from incarceration, commits the same crime or a new crime, and goes back into incarceration or probation. A 2007 study reported that of the 272,111 persons released from jail in 15 states during 1994, 67.5% were rearrested for a felony or misdemeanor within 3 years (United States Department of Justice, 2007). Recidivism is not only detrimental to the offender, but represents a real cost to the taxpayers, roughly $24,000 per inmate per year. One can therefore, extrapolate that for every $1.00 allocated towards education from the state of California, $2.00 is allocated towards the cost of incarceration (MTC Institute, 2003). The money being spent on incarceration has been steadily increasing since the 1980’s, while the money being spent on education has continuously been subsidized and downsized.

Crime and recidivism affects all of us, whether or not we or people we know are involved in criminal behavior. It affects our economy and communities, families and
individuals. A parent who is incarcerated leaves behind a single parent, with a single income to raise and adequately provide for the family. When the person being incarcerated is the only parent, the children are then placed in foster care or with other extended family members. During this time the child is effectively being punished by severing the bond of the parent-child relationship. However before the parent is incarcerated, the child is likely to have witnessed criminal behavior or activity (Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997). Identifying factors which influence crime and recidivism would alleviate economic strains and decrease familial stress.

Crime and recidivism rates have been steadily fluctuating since 1990. During this time, the recidivism rate was 31.7%, and by 2000, grew to 33.8%. The number of people incarcerated in the United States during 2000 was 1,391,261 compared to 1,610,584 in 2008 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). During the 1990's, the reaction to increasing crime rates was to build more facilities to house more inmates and to re-examine sentencing guidelines. New laws were created for habitual offenders, such as the Three-Strikes law, and prisoners were often moved across state lines to alleviate overcrowding of prison facilities (MacKenzie, 2000). By the year 2000, these measures proved ineffective and crime rates continued to rise. To combat the increasing crime and recidivism rates, rehabilitation became a renewed focus in the prison system. Classes were introduced to assist prisoners with obtaining their GED and other education certificates, while job skills were being taught to help increase the prisoner's ability to obtain a job once released (Morrison & Epps, 2008). Aside from increasing a person's knowledge and work ability, these rehabilitation programs have shed some light on the
inclination to engage in criminal behavior. Some of these findings have been identified as barriers or influential factors. For the purpose of this paper, the influential factors of education, family support and socioeconomic status will be examined.

These three factors were specifically chosen because they are major influences on a person's upbringing and personality shaping. Education influences our ability to read and write, utilize inductive and deductive reasoning and exposes us to difference aspects of the world. Without education, we do not have the tools to effectively express ourselves, do not have the ability to obtain a career that will afford us a financially secure lifestyle and are not able to effectively explore the world around us (Sanford & Foster, 2006).

Along with an adequate education, a person's family involvement is equally important for success. Family members serve as a support system for the individual and these systems are vital to a person's self confidence, their ability to relate to others, and their resiliency to stresses and barriers. People with strong family support are less likely to engage in criminal behavior and more likely to become high achieving adults (Alexander & Parsons, 1973).

Finally, socioeconomic status was chosen because it directly affects the amount of resources that are available to individuals on a micro, mezzo and macro level. People who were raised in low income neighborhoods are less likely to have family resource centers available to them; are more likely to attend schools in underfunded school districts; and are less likely to have access to or representation from the local government (Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, Miech & Silva, 1999).
Statement of the Problem

By failing to acknowledge the influence education, family involvement and socioeconomic status has on crime and recidivism rates, a decrease of criminal activity will not likely occur in the United States. The role education, family involvement and socioeconomic status plays in a person’s life can determine whether or not they have the tools or resiliency to become successful and law-abiding members of society.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to establish the influence education levels, family involvement and socioeconomic status has on crime and recidivism rates. This connection will be made by interviewing successful parolees who have been released from prison and advantageously completed their parole without reoffending. The primary focus is to identify the influence, if any, education, family involvement and socioeconomic status has on each person’s criminal behavior.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this paper, I will be using the ecological perspective and family systems theory. Both theories examine the effect the environment has on the person and the effect the person has on the environment. Family systems theory examines the dynamics among members of a group and explores the effect they have on each other. Both of these theories examine the influence that education, family involvement and socioeconomic status have on an individual’s criminal behavior.

The ecological perspective will illuminate the ways in which the offenders are impacted by their social and physical environment and how they negotiate within these
systems (Germain, 1988). It will also provide an opportunity to view the life the offender lived before being incarcerated by exposing how they navigated between social, behavioral, personal, psychological and spiritual systems. Identifying the gaps and deficiencies of a person's past can help establish a more solid understanding of their behavior, which can create an avenue for change.

Utilizing the family systems theory allows a look into the familial patchwork that shaped the offenders past. The influence of parental relationships and sibling interactions will be examined which will establish how their definition of family was constructed. Exploring how an individual relates to members of their family can help identify current deficits in regards to communication and attachment with others. The current amount of support given by the family directly affects the offender and is influential in the person's successful release.

Definition of Terms

Education - the knowledge and development resulting from a learning process with regards to being formally educated both in and out of prison.

Family Involvement - Support given to members of a family, from within the family, to increase well being by maintaining constructive involvement in each other's lives.

Incarceration - to confine in a prison or jail

Inmate - a person who is incarcerated

Offender - Person who has been convicted of criminal behavior and is involved in the correctional system

Parolee - A person who is out of jail on conditional release, often who has spent
a majority of their sentence incarcerated.

Recidivism - To relapse back into criminal behavior.

Rehabilitation - A program designed to reform a person's criminal behavior. Rehabilitation can be in the form of educational classes, job skills classes or other types of skill building classes attended while incarcerated and post incarceration.

Socioeconomic Status - A collaboration between a person's economical and sociological influences and exposure, which is based on income, education, and occupation.

Assumptions

It is assumed that education, family involvement and socioeconomic status have a direct influence on crime and recidivism rates. Another assumption is that rehabilitation does currently take place in our prisons and is an effective crime deterrent.

Justification

This research provides insight into the influence education, family support and socioeconomic status has on recidivism and crime rates, and attempts to illuminate the importance of a rehabilitation process that properly addresses and accounts for these influences. Also outlined is the importance of changing current policy to include an assessment of inmates that would focus on inmate deficiencies. It will be shown that by changing the current policy, a more productive rehabilitation program will be the result.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that data will be extracted from a small sample size of eight (8) people. The study will not look at psychological influences or the
current psychological state of the participant. It will also not discuss the impact of substance abuse on the participants past or present.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

– Chinese Proverb

Introduction

To the public, crime seems to be everywhere, from the boardrooms to the bedrooms of the nation, in peoples' homes and on their television screens. Americans worry about criminal victimization, however only a small percentage of the population is actually victims of a crime (Roberts & Stalans, 1995). This widespread public concern over crime in America is accompanied by a highly negative view of the criminal justice response. Historically, public opinion polls about crime and justice have acted as a social barometer, providing important data to policy makers regarding what the public is willing, or is not willing, to accept when it comes to proposed legislation and/or intervention programming (Roberts & Stanans, 1997). With some topics, public opinion can barely make waves, and with others, it can create a phenomenon; as is the case with crime.

“Lock’em up and throw away the key” has been the attitude of many individuals in the past 20 years towards those who commit crimes. The main focus has been on keeping criminals confined and away from the communities. However, what happens when the criminal is released back into society? The “throw away the key” mentality has proven itself ineffective thus far, resulting in a need to find a better solution. As we move away from punishment and further toward rehabilitation, it is important to establish what
influences a person to engage in criminal behavior, as well as recidivate. In order to do that, we must first look at the basic fundamental factors that every person shares. For the purpose of this paper, education, family involvement and socioeconomic status are the three factors that will be discussed.

*Education Prior to Incarceration*

Education plays an important role in everyone's lives, perhaps more than one would immediately assume. The curriculum of Kindergarten through 12th grade education consists of academic and personal developmental programs which are created to establish a foundation of knowledge which then expands as the student advances on to the next grade level (Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Each year a student is required to master facets of language, historical literature, mathematics, and science while creating interpersonal relationships with fellow classmates and teachers. The successful outcome of a well-rounded education is a high-functioning and law-abiding citizen who has gainful employment (Morrison & Epps, 2008). However, if the education system fails to influence and establish a connection with an individual, the outcome is an inadequate education, which can result in a lack of opportunities (Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Often times the lack of opportunities is what drives an individual to crime.

Research has consistently found higher levels of education correlated strongly with lower levels of crime (Florida Department of Education, 2006). Currently, the average level of education for incarcerated males over the age of 18 is 8th grade. This means the average incarcerated male can read, write and do arithmetic at the same level as a 13 year old boy. Of the 41% of prisoners who did continue their education beyond
the 8th grade, 53% of Hispanics, 44% of Black and 27% of White inmates failed to graduate from high school or obtain a GED (Educational Testing Center, 2006). These individuals failed to create a strong academic and personal developmental foundation which has made them more susceptible to criminal behavior. Their ability to utilize logic and reason has been dwarfed by their lack of education, making it difficult for them to formulate informed decisions (Arum & Beattie, 1999).

Aside from the education component, personal experiences that adolescents have during middle and high school are also critical to their development of self (McLellan & Pugh, 1999). During this time adolescents are learning to establish bonds with people outside of their family and are beginning to establish their identity within a group. Friends are now being chosen because of personal preference and connection, rather than being forged by teachers and parents (McLellan & Pugh, 1999). They are also forming an attachment to their school which will later manifest into an attachment with their community. This attachment helps them establish their role within their group and encourages member participation. Attachment to peers and school occurs by participating in occupational course work, engaging in positive peer relationships, and attending small class sizes where the student to teacher ratio is low (Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

Along with establishing their sense of self, adolescents will also face significant challenges in their moral, social and psychological development during this time (Arum & Beattie, 1999). Adolescents are learning to engage confidently with their peers and are learning how to negotiate effectively in order to obtain and fulfill their needs (McLellan & Pugh, 1999). They are also being exposed to course work that will influence their
career choices and create a positive image of maintaining gainful employment. Those who lack these experiences are more likely to seek out devious acquaintances and will have little respect for authority. As an adult, they are more likely to engage in non-conventional activities, such as criminal behavior, and will deviate from standard employment (Arum, et al., 1999).

An adequate education and concrete sense of self is necessary to obtain gainful employment (Vacca, 2004). Schooling increases individual wage rates, thereby increasing the individual’s costs of crime since not only is the individual paying for their due-process, they are also missing out on high rate of wage they were receiving (Lochner & Moretti, 2004). High playing employment is also a crime determent as the individual has more to lose, including wage, position and benefits, if incarcerated. Previous studies estimate that the stigma of a criminal conviction is larger for white collar workers than blue collar workers which implies that the negative effect of a conviction on earnings extend beyond the time spent in prison for more educated workers (Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

However, obtaining adequate education is more challenging for the low-income and minority population. According to Neisser (1986), children of lower-class families perform less well in school because the classroom methods of instruction do not utilize their inherited abilities of skills. Also, children who grow up in lower-class households are raised in environments that are not as stimulating as those environments in high-income homes. This low stimulation environment does not help promote their cognitive and social development and as a result, they are more likely to begin school lagging in
reading, math, and social behavior (Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2009). As the child begins school with an already established deficit, the child may begin to feel frustrated due to the extra attention given to them by the teacher, and the parent may feel frustrated because their child is not performing satisfactorily. Although the teacher and parent are attempting to assist the child with their development, the child may take the attention negatively and begin acting out. Due to the behavior of the student, the teacher and parent are most likely to treat the child negatively, thus a disdain or disinterest in school is formed. The pattern of acting out is oftentimes established early and maintained through the adolescent and teen-age academic career (Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2009).

Attitudes and behaviors can also be a barrier for some when it comes to education. Disadvantaged parents may be less optimistic that their adolescents will be able to pursue higher education (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, Yeung, & Smith, 1998; Elder, 1999; Flanagan, 1990). Such attitudes may influence their parenting behavior by, for example, reducing their motivation to map out pathways of opportunity for their adolescents. Without these pathways, young people may struggle with the demands of making their way to higher education with little guidance. Also, parents' perceived efficacy, or their beliefs that they can overcome obstacles in their lives, is crucial to explaining the connection between parents' disadvantage and their outlooks on the future (Bandura, 1997; Elder, Eccles, Arveld, & Lord, 1995). For example, parents who feel successful may be less overwhelmed by hardship and, therefore, their parenting behavior may be less reactive when faced with stressful circumstances. Therefore, a parents'
perceived efficacy may be a family resource that promotes resilience among disadvantaged youth.

_Education During Incarceration_

Research has shown that inmates exposed to education and educational programs while incarcerated have lower recidivism rates than those with no educational exposure (Educational Testing Center, 2006). Those inmates who participated in education classes while in prison showed a 5% decrease in recidivism rates, as compared to those who did not participate (Aos, Miller, and Drake, 2004). Education is not simply confining a person into a classroom for eight hours a day, five days a week. Education comes in many forms, and needs to be created to benefit the participants. The current types of programs being used in prisons are educational, vocational, and prison industry. These classes are structured to assist the prisoners with their social skills, artistic development and techniques and strategies to help them deal with their emotions (Vacca, 2004). They are intended to educate and inform the inmate while increasing self-esteem and promote positive relationship building skills, with the focus being rehabilitation and crime deterrent.

Along with that, each class puts an emphasis on a specific subject. For example, educational programs typically consist of adult basic education classes, high school or general education degree classes and post-secondary classes. Those participating in these classes want to obtain skills needed in order to posses a high school diploma, GED or a post-secondary degree (Coley & Barton, 2006). Vocational training classes typically consist of skills development in a particular trade or industry, such as carpentry, auto
detailing, electrical servicing or welding. Those participating in these classes are acquiring a specific skill that they can use to find a job once they have finished their sentence (Visher, Debus & Yahner, 2008). Prison industry programs focus particularly on the prison industry itself and on trades within that industry. Those participating in these classes will obtain skills that can be used while incarcerated such as laundry detail, food service, license plate manufacturing, and general maintenance (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2007).

Finally, employment programs typically focus on providing assistance in how to obtain and maintain employment, including job interview skills, resume writing and workplace habits. Participants in these classes generally have a high school education and are serving shorter sentences (Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, and Travis 2002). Each education class has the difficult task of condensing what would normally be conveyed during a four year high school education, into a six to eight week course. Of all the programs offered, current research demonstrates that vocational education programs are the most effective in reducing the recidivism of offenders (Mackenzie 2000). This can be attributed to the high interest by inmates. It could also be a reflection of the inmates' disdain towards education and the negative effect it has had on the inmates during their earlier years. Whatever the reason, this data demonstrates that education has an influence on both crime and recidivism rates (Coley & Barton, 2006). Those who have an adequate academic foundation are less likely to engage in criminal activity and those who participate in these programs while incarcerated have a higher chance of staying out of prison. They have also gained the skills needed to obtain a job which will increase their
self-esteem, create more opportunities and will allow them to be an active member of their community (Vacca, 2004).

Family Involvement Prior to Incarceration

Individuals who engage in criminal activity and become incarcerated often come from an inadequate family system with poor family functioning and processes (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Families such as these often have a difficult time adapting and have low levels of cohesion. Lack of adaptation among a family unit often leads to poor communication which can result in inappropriate assertiveness, lack of problem-solving skills, and decreased use of reasoning. Lack of cohesion among a family unit typically results in family members competing for limited resources, inappropriate emotional responses and social withdrawal (Klein, Bartholomew & Hibbert 2002). Poor family functioning may be attributed to the absence of a parent due to incarceration, addiction, abuse, or mental illness. Children who grow up in families where the father is incarcerated are five to six times more likely to be incarcerated than those whose parents were not incarcerated (Klein et. al., 2002).

Growing up with an absent parent can be extremely devastating to a child, and their feelings of anger and sadness are often internalized and can manifest in delinquent behavior (Turner, 2004). Children and adolescents have trouble expressing themselves with words, so they use actions such as truancy, gang affiliation, criminal activity, drug use, running away and becoming increasingly defiant. This behavior puts these children at a higher risk of experiencing more stranger and non-stranger victimization, such as sexual assault, maltreatment and witnessing family violence (Turner, 2004). The single
parent who is raising the child is often forced to work long hours in order to support the family financially, and is not aware of their child's behavior and cannot advocate or protect them effectively. Also, the child frequently comes home from school to an empty house and is forced to provide for themselves by making their own meals or cleaning their own laundry at an early age, for example. This behavior can give the child a false sense of independence believing they do not need anyone to help them, while also engendering feelings of isolation as they do not have an adequate parental role model to relate to. If the child does not witness healthy parental modeling behavior they will be unable to interact with others appropriately which can lead to establishing poor boundaries with others and an inability to relate positively with others (Canetti, Bachar & Galili-Weisstb, 1997). A lack of attachment between the parent and child can also develop which can result in a child's inability to attach to others. Without an attachment to others, the child is more likely to engage in criminal behavior (Canetti et al., 1997).

Along with attachment to a parent, the interactions of the family as a whole system are equally important. The interaction patterns among family members in a poor-functioning family are developmentally destructive, creating a socially and psychologically damaging climate (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). This climate fosters poor communication skills and inability to establish trust and reliability. The child learns they cannot trust the adults around them and become more and more isolated from family members. These dysfunctional familial relationships are then replicated outside of the family with non-family members such as peers and classmates (Klein, Alexander, & Parsons, 1977). If a person fails to learn to bond with family members, does not learn
effective communication, does not empathize with others or has trouble connecting with family members, they will then create the same types of relationships with others. These relationships are often formed with people of similar backgrounds, forged by unhealthy bonds and resulting in the creation of a new family system that is just as dysfunctional where the focus is on the deficits of the group, instead of the strengths. It is during this time where young people are most vulnerable to criminal activity due to lack of parental supervision, unmet needs and pressure from their peers (McLanhan & Booth, 1989).

Although parents are often blamed for poor parenting, they too have barriers which keep them from establishing a good parental bond with their children. Parents who were surveyed for a head start survey in 2001 were asked to identify what they consider current barriers in their lives (Lamb-Parkera, Piotrkowskib, Bakerc, Kessler-Sklard, Clarke, & Peayf, 2001). Some reported their inability to be involved with their children or find employment because they reported often feeling sad, down, and even depressed. They also stated that they lacked energy or had little interest in things and/or had a major health problem. Many also reported they worked, went to school, and were the only parent in the household. Some also stated that family responsibilities were difficult due to having a baby or toddler at home but not dependable, convenient childcare, and a sizable minority had children with a disability or behavioral problem. Housing difficulties were also reported, including lack of heat, hot water, or electricity. When asked if spending time with their family was a priority, the majority of the participants stated it was a priority, but they had little time to actually spend with their family (Lamb-Parkera et. al., 2001). Concerns of income, child care and housing often create stress for the parents
which can manifest into somatic ailments. These ailments can make it even more difficult to locate and maintain employment, can cause depression and can result in withdraw from their family members and isolation. The child raised in this type of household is more likely to seek out attention from non-family members, therefore increasing their chances of being victimized (Turner, 2004).

Along with positive parenting and strong family ties, children and adolescents also need encouraging role models. Aristotle believed that we learn to be moral (virtuous) by modeling the behavior of moral people. Through continual modeling we become virtuous out of habit. Of course, people can learn both good and bad habits depending on the role models they have. Having one successful relationship will carry over to a youth’s other relationships by helping them to trust others, express anger more productively and generally become better able to relate to others effectively (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). Children who are exposed to positive role models tend to engage in the same activities and share the same opinion as those they look up to. If their role model values education and hard work, then the child will also value education and hard work and seek out opportunities which will expose them to education and hard work. In contrast, children who are exposed to negative role models tend to engage in similar activities and hold values which mimic those of their role model (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). A positive role model is important for children as they need someone to guide them through adolescents and early adulthood. However, oftentimes a child either has a negative role model or none at all. Those who fail to establish role models are more likely to engage in criminal activity at a young age and are more likely to drop out of school.
Family Involvement During Incarceration

Inmates frequently enter prison with their family relationships in distress or rapidly deteriorating. More often, these relationships are characterized by poor communication, lack of empathy and poor ideas of how a family should function (Schneller, 1976). Inmates who learn how to repair and maintain their family ties have been shown to have lower recidivism rates and reduced disciplinary problems while incarcerated. This is achieved by participating in workshops, group therapy and educational classes while incarcerated and after incarceration with and without family members. Family involvement can help reduce the stress and pain caused by the forced separation of incarceration. It can also promote family preservation and reunification and help families meet the needs of their daily lives (Klein et. al., 2002). Inmates with strong family ties are also less likely to behave like, or accept the norms of those who become hardened criminals (Brodsky 1975; Fishman 1983; Fishman 1986; Homer 1979; Howser, Grossman & McDonald 1983; Schneller 1976; Swan 1981). In a study completed in 1975, it was discovered that inmates who learned to exhibit appropriate self-disclosure and genuine concern for others improved family relationships during the course of their incarceration. In a follow-up study of 468 men released from prison, researchers found that those who maintained a healthy lifestyle and steady job were less likely to re-offend or be re-incarcerated (Brodsky 1975; Boudouris, 1984). Literature indicates that family life education programs, designed to teach healthy family functioning, not only help build stronger family units, but also lower the risk of a person re-offending or becoming re-incarcerated. Prisoners who have experienced more family contact, whether through
mail, visits or participation in programs intended to facilitate family contact, experienced lower recidivism rates and greater post release success (Visher & Travis 2003).

**Family Involvement Post Incarceration**

Research has shown that a person is at the highest risk to recidivate during the first 12 months after release. A study by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation found that 25% of released prisoners are rearrested within the first six months and 40% within the first 12 months (Beck and Shipley 1999). This can be attributed to the difficult transition from prison to community, lack of education, drug and/or alcohol addiction, or lack of social support, to name a few. A male leaving prison may come home to a child he has never met, or a spouse he has not lived with in years. This person is expected to act like a parent and/or husband and maintain day-to-day activities, all the while self-governing their behaviors to ensure a successful reentry (Visher & Travis, 2003). For those on parole, maintaining their freedom can be challenging, as the guidelines for parole are very strict. Parolees are left to navigate these guidelines and assimilate to life outside of prison with very little or no guidance (Petersila, 1999).

Along with the stress of assimilation, there are also pressures of obtaining employment, maintaining parole guidelines and abstaining from criminal activity. During this time of reentry into society, a person is at a very high risk of recidivism and the individual's social environment of peers, family and community are a direct influence of a person’s successful reentry or re-incarceration (Visher & Travis 2003). Support of the family for the individual is extremely important as it becomes a source for housing,
emotional support, financial resources and overall stability (Visher, La Vigne & Travis 2004). A study done in New York state followed 49 people during the first 30 days of their release from a state prison or city jail. During the interview, each participant stated that their family had played a crucial role for them, especially in the areas of emotional support and housing assistance (Nelson, Deese & Allen, 2000). Establishing reliable housing can alleviate stress-levels as maintaining a home base is important to create a safe environment and a conventional routine once released. Once housing is established, individuals can then focus on other areas of their life, such as obtaining employment (Naser & Visher, 2006).

As with many who were in prison, employment before incarceration may be spotty or non-existent, which makes obtaining employment that much more difficult. A person being released from prison has far more trouble locating employment due to a lack of job skills and now the stigma of being in jail. Once in the community, not only are many employers reluctant to hire convicted felons, but many former prisoners are legally barred from certain occupations (Visher, Bebus & Yahner, 2008). Manual labor, truck driving and janitorial work are sometimes the only work that they can obtain, however this type of job does not provide a living wage, thus creating more stress for the ex-offender. Most respondents relied on family and friends for income after release, more so than legal employment. More often, individuals obtain employment from family members or connections the family has within the community. The majority of ex-offenders who found work did so by speaking with friends and family; however, the most
successful strategy for long-term employment was returning to a previous employer (Visher et. al., 2008).

Family acceptance and encouragement is also directly related to an individual’s successful re-entry (Nasher & Visher 2006). Oftentimes a person’s incarceration brings their family shame, and it is difficult to overcome that. In society’s opinion, incarceration is considered taboo and seldom elicits sympathy and support from others. This type of reaction not only forces the family to deal with the separation on their own, but also influences their willingness to visit their family members while in jail, or welcome them back into the home after release (Schoenbauer, 1986). Inmates whose families have overcome this stigma, as displayed by jail house visitations, letters, packages and a willingness to accept them back after their time is served, have a greater re-entry success than those who do not.

Those who do not have strong family ties have to locate stability and support elsewhere. Some return to their friends they associated with before incarceration, while others live on the streets and become more and more isolated. For those who have spent a majority of their life behind bars, they may feel the only safe place for them is prison. Others may be rearrested because they do not have the skills needed to successfully function in main stream society (Naser & Visher, 2006).

**Socioeconomic Status**

The risk of engaging in criminal behavior must also be considered on the ecological level as well as the individual. Individuals are influenced by their environment, such as the neighborhood they grew-up in and the school they attended. An individual’s ability to
live in a low or high income neighborhood depends on their socioeconomic status (SES) (Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, Miech & Silva, 1999). A person’s SES depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, and wealth. A person with a high SES will usually have a high school education or higher, have lucrative and full-time employment, and reside in an affluent community. Their community will have adequate housing that affords the residents space and privacy from their neighbors and also has an adequate education system that provides textbooks for each student, a computer lab and reasonably paid faculty. Members of high SES have low crime rates as they tend to commit less crime (Richard & Tittle, 1982). A person with a low SES will usually reside in a low-income neighborhood with sub-par housing, which does not allow for privacy are not structurally sound. They will often attend schools with inadequate education systems where there are not enough books for every student, computes are scarce, and classes are over-crowded (Wright et. al.,1999).

People with low SES usually report more health problems, brought on by financial stress and often feel powerless to change their situation (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1997). Often time’s employment is lost due to frequent illness and poor job performance. Since lack of health care is predominant in families and individuals with low SES, illnesses often go untreated and disorders undiagnosed. A person who suffers from a chronic illness or mental health issue may not have the medical diagnosis needed to receive medication or benefits through the government (Visher & Travis, 2003).

People who are considered to have a low SES are also more vulnerable to legal problems as economically disadvantaged individuals are more easily labeled deviant and
possess fewer resources to draw upon during formal legal procedures, regardless of their propensity for criminal behavior (Arum & Beattie, 1999). Often times crimes are committed in order to meet basic needs, such as food and shelter. Those living in poverty are often criminalized due to the way they are forced to obtain goods. Living in a community characterized by poverty, inequality, and socioeconomic disadvantage can increase the number of negative outcomes, including crime and recidivism rates (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006).

When a person is released from prison or jail, they often go back to the environment they came from, potentially putting them at a significantly higher risk to re-offend. People necessarily rely heavily on their neighborhood to provide adequate resources for them and their families. Low-income neighborhoods lack adequate resources such as education, housing, job opportunities, public play areas and public safety officers for its residence. Unfortunately, these are the neighborhoods that many offenders are being released back into. Ex-offenders rely on neighborhood resources, services and amenities to successfully integrate back into their community and adhere to the many provisions of parole. If these services are lacking or most commonly missing, the individual will not receive the support they need to successfully re-enter the community, and therefore will become a high recidivism risk (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006).
Chapter 3

METHODS

Introduction

The focus of the study is to better understand the early experiences and attitudes participants had with education, family involvement, and socioeconomic status, and how this influenced their criminal behavior. This chapter describes the research methods that were utilized to conduct this study. This chapter is organized into the following sections: design, study subjects, instrument for data collection, data collection, data analysis and protocol for the protection of human subjects.

Research Design

The design of this study is qualitative and utilizes grounded theory. According to Haig (1995) the general goal of grounded theory research is to construct theories in order to understand phenomena. This is done by collecting data and utilizing a problem-oriented extraction process in which theories are extrapolated and generated from strong data patterns, elaborated through the construction of conceivable models, and justified in terms of their explanatory rationality.

This is a qualitative study, in which this researcher used fieldwork as the tool for data collection. According to Smith & Thomas (2003) qualitative data are presented by language, pictures, or other non-mathematical devices. The data cannot be mathematically manipulated or presented on a chart or into a table graph, but they can be useful uncovering knowledge. Therefore qualitative studies are useful for understanding the potential influence that education, family involvement, and socioeconomic have on
crime and recidivism. Although education, family influence and socioeconomic status have been studied to examine its effect on crime rates, the specific understanding of how they influence has not been entirely explored.

The research included eight (8) individuals who successfully completed parole, volunteered to participate and live in Sacramento, CA. The criteria for the subjects studied was as follows: participants must be over the age of 18, have successfully completed parole, have not had any new convictions since completion of parole, and be willing to participate in this study without any compensation. Participants were recruited from a transitional housing program within the city of Sacramento. All participants were contacted during a weekly meeting held at the agency, from announcements made by this researcher. After the announcements, participants were asked to leave their contact information with the researcher and were informed when they would be contacted to set-up a meeting time and location. All of the interviews took place in a private office located at the agency. All subjects were willing to participant and take part in the study to better understand how their experiences education, family involvement and socioeconomic influenced their criminal behavior. None of the study subjects that participated received any inducements for their participation.

Instrumentation for Data Collection

The interview schedule for data collection was a schedule that consisted of 36 open-ended and closed-ended questions which were grouped into four categories of: education, family involvement, socioeconomic status, and incarceration (Please see Appendix A). The schedule was created by this researcher after compiling data found
during the literature review as well as with discussions with other students and faculty. The schedule was created to encourage participants to share their experiences with education, family support, socioeconomic status, pre-incarceration and post-incarceration. There was minimal risk of discomfort or harm associated with the questions being asked.

Prior to the interview this researcher contacted each participant to discuss the reason for the interview and explained to them the details mentioned in the consent form. Once the study subject agreed to participate, the researchers scheduled an interview which would take place at the transitional housing agency. The interview lasted one hour and it was conducted in English.

*Data Collection*

The researcher contacted each participant via phone prior to meeting to discuss in more detail about the interview as well as establish a time and location to meet. The interviews took place in a private office located at the transitional housing agency. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions, regarding the purpose of the research, and/or decline to participate. After reading the consent form, participants signed the consent form and participants were given a copy of the consent for their records as well as a list of referrals for counseling.

During the interview the researcher used the participant’s real name; however a number was used in the written analysis. After the thesis project is completed the recordings will be erased and the data will be destroyed by using a crosscut shredder. The
researcher reminded participants of their right to decline or remove themselves from the study at any time.

The schedules created for the data collection consisted of information regarding their experience and attitudes towards education, family involvement, socioeconomic status, pre-incarceration and post-incarceration. An audio tape recorder was used to record the interviews. The interviews were later transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of gathering and transforming data with the goal of finding useful information, suggesting conclusions, create interventions, and supporting decision making. According to Newman & Kreuger (2003) data analysis is a search for patterns in data. Patterns include recurrent behaviors, objects, or a body of knowledge. While collecting data, the researcher noted all patterns in data and kept a close eye for any commonalities between the participants.

Data was collected to provide an initial understanding of the experiences that each participant had with education, family involvement, and socioeconomic status and its influence on their criminal activity.

Protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects

The Request for Review by the Sacramento State Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects was submitted and approved by the human subjects committee in the Division of Social Work at California State University of Sacramento. The human subject’s approval number is 08-09-120. The study was approved as “minimal risk”. Human subject’s right to privacy and safety was protected by the signed consent forms.
All signed consent forms and completed questionnaires are kept confidential. After data analysis is completed, the researcher will delete all files of the voice recordings and cross shredded any paperwork containing data.
Chapter 4

THE PROJECT

During the interviews, there were seven main themes which emerged. These seven themes illuminate the experiences that each participant shared. The themes are: 1) Felt no Connection with School, 2) Feeling of not being a part of their family 3) Growing-up in households that did not express emotions or communicate, 4) Traumatic experiences during adolescent or early teen years, 5) Jail as a break from the streets 6) Vocational classes as crime deterrent while incarcerated, and 7) Terminating criminal behavior because of "being tired."

Themes

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of Not Being a Part of Their Family</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traumatic Experiences During Adolescents or Early Teen Tears</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail as a Break from the Streets</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Classes as a Crime Deterrent While Incarcerated</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terminating Criminal Behavior Because They Were Tired</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>
Profile of the Participants

The sample in this study represents a diverse population. A total of eight subjects participated in this study. The three female and five male participants have all successfully completed parole and have not been charged with a new crime since their release from parole. The participants ranged in age from 26 to 59.

Respondent number one is a single Caucasian female in her early thirties. She greeted me with a smile, was very bubbly and nervously laughed throughout the interview. She was born and raised in Sacramento, CA, has an extensive criminal history and dropped out of school in the 9th grade.

When I was in Elementary School I was a poor student. I barely did any work and really wasn’t interested in being at school. I ditched school to hang out with my friends and we would drink and smoke pot. I started working at McDonald’s when I was 14. That’s when school officially became unneeded in my life. Looking back, I think I just wasn’t ready to go to school.

Respondent number two is a single Caucasian male in his early forties. He was very enthusiastic about participating in this interview and spoke extensively about his background and criminal past. He grew up in Sacramento, CA and was a self proclaimed normal kid with a normal family until his mother suddenly passed away when he was thirteen years old.

Our household was the stop off spot for the whole family. My house was the core of the family. [My brothers] would drop their kids off and my mom and dad would watch them while they were at work, so I had my nieces and nephews to
play with while I was growing up. We always had family functions, BBQ’s and stuff like that. But my mom died was I was 13, so that’s about were everything shattered. I dropped out of school, my family kind of broke apart and that’s where it all began.

Respondent number three is a Caucasian female in her late twenties. After arriving 20-minutes late for the interview, she sat cross-legged in her chair and continuously yawned and played with her hair throughout the interview. While speaking about her experiences while incarcerated, she disclosed that being incarcerated did not stop her from engaging in criminal activity.

I think it took me a long time in life to get it, because I grew up being a victim, so it took me a long time to realize that I became the perpetrator. I know right from wrong, I always have, but I think that when you grow up living the life that I lived, there takes a lot more learning about the how things are, because I only knew what I knew and I just stayed a victim for a long time. Plus going to jail wasn’t a consequence; it was a time to reflect, so it didn’t stop me from doing what I was already doing.

Respondent number four is an African American female in her late fifties. She was very animated during her interview, laughing and clapping her hands often. She grew up in a very loving family, and is still very close to them now.

My family and I, we still have dinners and family gatherings. Just last week were at the park, having a family reunion. We still do everything together! Even though my mom and dad have passed, we are still pretty close. I love my family.
Respondent five is a Caucasian female in her late thirties. During the interview she was very soft spoken and was very matter of fact with her answers, often reflecting on what she was feeling at the time and quick to identify her perceived faulty thinking. Respondent five grew up with both biological parents and two sisters, yet never felt that she was a part of her family.

I never felt a part of my family, I never felt like I belonged. I always thought I was the outsider, you know the middle child syndrome. I always thought my older sister and younger sister were loved more than I was. I don’t remember ever hearing I love you, or hugs or any of that stuff. I felt like my mom didn’t love me, like I wasn’t good enough, smart enough, pretty enough.

Respondent number six is an African American male in his middle fifties. Upon entering the room, he removed his hat and politely greeted me before having a seat. The rhythm of his speech was soothing as he spoke softly and monotone, and used very few gestures to express himself. While discussing his experiences while incarcerated, he disclosed that attending vocational classes helped him because it got him out of cell, kept him in line and also got him interested in something he had never done before.

I was assigned to take computer courses, so I took a Microsoft class. I loved every minute of it. These classes helped me because it got me out of my cell and it got my brain focused on something good. These classes were my rehabilitation. I also found that I love working on computers. In fact, after I leave here, I’m going to fix a computer for a friend.
Respondent number seven is a Caucasian male in his early fifties. His words were really rushed during the interview, and often interrupted himself to get his point across. He was also very energetic and spoke in a loud, booming voice. He spoke about growing up with a very supportive family and being involved in everything from student government to sports. While discussing his current employment situation, he spoke about turning his criminal history into a positive.

When I got out of prison I knew getting a job was going to be tough, so I thought, ok, where can I work that my criminal and drug past is a positive? So, I started looking into working in the substance abuse field. So, I got a job with a local agency and went to school and got my AA in Human Services and Chemical Dependency. I also got my KDAC and KDAC II in 2006, so now I’m a drug and alcohol counselor and I love it. It’s the best job for me and I get to help people.

Respondent number eight is an African American male in his early forties. During the interview he was very honest about his life and was very animated while he spoke about his experiences. He described his household growing up as strict.

When you got in trouble in my house there was no explaining. Back then, when you would get in trouble, my dad would give us whoopins’, that’s how he disciplined. I don’t think he did it to be mean, but it would have been nice to be asked if we did what we were accused of doing or not. Then again, maybe if he didn’t whoop us, we would have been far worse.
Felt no Connection with School

A common experience which the majority of respondents shared was dropping out of school. Respondents one, two, three, five, six, and eight all disclosed that they dropped out of school during their eighth or ninth grade years. The majority of the respondents spoke about not being interesting in school, or a feeling of wanting to be somewhere else other than school. Respondent two spoke about dropping out of school in the eighth grade because school became less and less interesting.

In the early years of elementary school I was pretty focused. I did what was suggested, I did a little more. I took a ceramics class as part of my elementary; I made ceramics for my parents. I was more like teacher's pet because I always talking to the teachers and trying to get on their good sides. But once I got in junior high I stopped caring what the teachers thought and I started doing what I wanted to do and that was cut school and hang out. School just stopped being interesting to me, so I just stopped going.

Respondent five spoke about dropping out of school because of the amount of trouble she got into from such a young age.

I went to Babcock Elementary, then to Valley Vista Junior High school and I dropped out in the eighth grade and I was incarcerated in juvenile hall for many years. I would just go in and out. They forced you to go to school, but I never really completed any course work. It wasn’t until I went to Valley View Prison that I actually obtained my GED.
Respondent eight also spoke about how getting into trouble at a young age was the reason why he dropped out in the 8th grade.

I was a bad child, always getting in trouble, always fighting and getting suspended in elementary school. I flunked the first grade and got held back and that made me so mad. I was constantly being brought home by the cops and getting locked up. I dropped out in the 8th grade because there didn’t seem to be a point to keep going.

*Feeling of Not Being a Part of Their Family*

One theme that surfaced for five of the respondents during the interviews was the feeling of not being a part of a family. While discussing her neighborhood, respondent one spoke about some neighbors that would take her to church with them. It was during those outings that she finally felt like she belonged to a family.

I remember this one family; they used to take me to church every Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday. She would take me to church and we would do activities, you know like a regular family would do. I don’t remember her name though, anyway, I finally felt like I was part of a real family, because I never had that growing up with my family.

A common theme among respondents was that they didn’t feel a part of a family until someone outside of their family intervened. Respondents three, five and eight also spoke about similar feelings. Respondent number three spoke about her foster family, and it wasn’t until being placed with them, that she learned what a family is and how they act towards each other.
My foster parents showed me that there are people out there who truly love people and that you can trust people. Before them, I didn’t know that families did activities together or really talked to each other without yelling. With my foster family, we would go to Reno a few times a year, and we would have family night once a week and things like that. On family nights we would have dinner and talk about our week and then we would play a board game or something like that.

Respondent six never felt like he belonged in his family; however it was his father who allowed him to realize why he felt this way.

As a child growing up, I always felt out of place, it was me, my brother and my sister. I’m the oldest and I always thought I was treated differently from them two by my father, so when he finally told me I wasn’t his child, all the puzzle pieces feel into place. It made sense what my life was. So, when I look back in my childhood, I can see that I was really acting out because I didn’t feel I belonged.

Growing-up in Households that did not Express Emotions

Another theme that emerged during the interview was growing-up in households that do not express emotions or communicate. Respondents one, three, five, six and eight all spoke about growing-up in households where their parents never told them they loved them, or expressed positive feelings towards them. Respondent 3 discussed what it was like for her growing up in her household.

My house was dysfunctional. Nobody talked, everybody just yelled. I have five brothers, three sisters, an abusive step-father and mother, it was dysfunctional. You weren’t told that you did something wrong, you were just punished and it
didn’t matter if you did it or not. My parents never hugged me, I don’t even remember talking to my mother, like having a conversation with her. It was nuts. Respondent five disclosed that she never felt loved by her mother and never heard her say I love you.

I think my mom did the best she could, I don’t remember ever hearing I love you, or hugs or anything like that, but it didn’t mean she didn’t love me. I didn’t really talk to her about how I felt because I didn’t know how. I got in trouble really young so I was out of the house a lot, and when I got back home at sixteen I could really see the dysfunction and we had to do some counseling, and we talked about some things, but we really only scratched the surface and didn’t do any deep work.

**Traumatic Experience During Adolescent or Early Teen Years**

One of the themes that encompassed all of the respondents was a traumatic experience they had during adolescents or early teen years. Each respondent spoke about their experiences which included the death of a family member, an unexpected teen pregnancy, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Respondent one spoke about being in the house with her brother and being left for days without food or supervision.

My brother and I would play in the house, or we would go outside and play in the fields. We weren’t supervised; in fact my mother was famous for telling us she’d be right back and then not coming home for days. My brother and I would have to find food and stuff. When we were young it was like a game, kind of like go find
food, but as I got older I couldn’t deal with it so I would move to my dad’s but that place was just as unstable, so I basically stayed with one until I couldn’t take it anymore, and would then move back with the other. When I got older, I just got my own place.

Respondent two spoke about how the unexpected death of his mother shattered his family and was the incident that began his deviant and criminal behavior.

Before thirteen, I had a good family and a good life, but after thirteen that all changed. When my mom died, it shattered the family. My dad went back to drinking, and my brothers couldn’t handle my dad drinking so they stopped coming around. I remember being so angry, angry that they all left me, like I didn’t matter. I carried that anger with me for a long time. Anyway, so yeah, after thirteen, that’s when I started ditching school, doing drugs and drinking. I don’t wonder what would have happened if she didn’t die, because it doesn’t matter. I’m where I’m at and that’s that.

Respondent six spoke about how finding out he was not his father’s son helped him make sense of his life.

I didn’t find out that my father was not my biological father until I was in the thirties, but I wish I would have known earlier. Hearing it was like getting hit in the face with a brick, but after I thought about it, it really made sense. I always felt that my father treated me different than my brother and sister. He was always meaner to me and lost his patience easily with me. He was so controlling, just
thinking about how controlling he was makes me angry. To think, I could have not had to go through what I did. Ha, I told you he was controlling.

Respondent four spoke about getting pregnant at the age of fourteen and being forced to give it up for adoption.

I got pregnant at fourteen and had to drop out of school, because back then, girls didn’t get pregnant in high school. They wanted to hide us. So, I got home schooled, and couldn’t go out of the house, you know, because people would talk. I felt like a prisoner. Then when it came time to have the baby, my mom told me they had found a home for it and that was that. I never got to see the baby. After that, I didn’t want to go back to school, so I kept on getting home schooled until I graduated. It’s sad, you know, to think about all that time I missed.

Jail as a Break from the Streets

While discussing their experiences while incarcerated, respondents two, three, four, five and eight commented on how going to jail was a break for them. Respondent eight spoke about going to jail was like taking a rest from the streets.

Getting locked up didn’t bother me, I was like oh well. I took getting locked up as a rest, like when you hear about someone you used to hang with getting killed, you’re happy you got locked up. It also gave me time to think about doing others crimes and how to not get caught for them. That’s the addiction of the street life, you gotta think, how do I beat the man, beat the system without getting caught? You’ve got to perfect your game, and being locked up gave you the time to do it.

Respondent two also spoke about going back to prison was like going home again.
I was locked up since I was 15, so for me, going back to prison was like going home. I would catch up with the guys on the inside and we’d talk about what I did on the outside and what I missed. I’ve known people for years, only because they were my celly when I was younger. I used to think of them as my family on the inside. I don’t speak to them anymore, because I realize now, that even though they were with me when I was down, sometimes 5 years at a time, that they weren’t really my friends and they didn’t have my best interest in mind. Now I know my family, my daughter, my grandchildren, they are my family.

*Vocational Classes as Crime Deterrent while Incarcerated*

Another theme which emerged while discussing experiences while incarcerated were the positive influence vocation classes had. Respondents one, two, three, five, six and seven all spoke of having positive experiences with vocational classes while incarcerated. Respondent seven spoke about how vocational classes helped him stay out of trouble while incarcerated and also helped him realize he had a drug and alcohol problem.

When I was in Folsom, I didn’t attend any classes because that’s prison, not rehabilitation. I did my program there, but I also got caught up in the politics of prison, you know, talking about getting even with this person and what we’re going to do with that person. It wasn’t until I went to the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco that I actually took classes. The classes helped me get out of my cell and gave me something positive to focus on. It was there that I realized I did have a drug and alcohol problem and I did need to deal with it, because up until
then I thought I could control it, but while I was taking classes, that made me look at my life and my choices, I realized that having a drink again was not an option for me.

Respondent one also echoed a similar message, but also spoke of the negative outcome of obtaining certification from a vocational class while incarcerated.

I liked going to classes because it gave me something to be confident about learning a trade and kept me focused so I could do my program. I was hopefully gonna get out and do that trade as a job but it’s kind of hard to do that when you have to list on the application where you received your training. They won’t tell you, but you know once employers see “Valley View State Prison” on an application, they are not going to hire you.

**Terminating Criminal Behavior because they were Tired**

While disusing their lives after prison, each respondent said the reason they stopped engaging in criminal behavior was because they were tired. Respondent number four said after being incarcerated four times, the reason she decided to stop her criminal behavior was because she was simply tired.

I remember the last time I got arrested, I was sitting in the back of the police car and thinking, this is the last time. I am too old and too tired to be running around like this. I mean, just the insanity of it. I was done. So, I did my program and when I got out I realized I finally had the willingness to change and stop the insanity. I am still so willing right now to just stay out and get on with my life. On my way here today, I was waiting for a bus and a lady pulled up and she was a
friend from the old neighborhood and now she’s a parole officer and she asked me if I was staying out of trouble and I said yes girl, I am out of prison, I am done with parole and it felt so good to say that because I’ve never been able to say that. It just feels so good.

Respondent seven also spoke about the moment he decided he was not going to prison anymore.

I was done. I was tired and I was done. I realized that I did not want to do this again. I did not want to go to prison anymore, it wasn’t fun and I’m not going back. You know in AA meetings when they say if you don’t make changes then nothing will change? Well, I had lived my life just expecting that it will change, and it was then that I realized I need to change. So, I started making changes, like not hanging out with the same people, and things just started falling into place. It makes me laugh because I think to myself, “why didn’t I do this earlier.” But then I guess I just wasn’t tired enough before.

Summary

In this chapter, the data from the study was analyzed and discussed by revealing the opinions and attitudes of each respondent in regards to family, incarceration, and past experiences.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the conclusions extracted from this study. This chapter will include a discussion on the themes: dropped out of school, growing-up in households that did not express emotions or communicate, feelings of not belonging in their family, traumatic experience during adolescent or early teen years, jail as a break from the streets, vocational classes as crime deterrent while incarcerated and terminating criminal behavior because of "being tired." In addition, this chapter will discuss future recommendations, explain the limitations of this study, and outline the implications of social work policy and practice.

Summary of Findings

One purpose of conducting this study was to discover a connection between education and its influence on crime and recidivism rates. Research has consistently found higher levels of education correlated strongly with lower levels of crime (Florida Department of Education 2006). When asked to explain their experience with education, six of the participants stated that they dropped out of school during their 8th or 9th grade year. The other two participants completed their high school career with a diploma and went on to attend one semester of college education before their criminal behavior resulted in incarceration. The data collected suggests early academic intervention may assist with deterring criminal behavior, however further research should be done to investigate.
Individuals who engage in criminal activities and become incarcerated often come from an inadequate family system with poor family functioning and processes (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Five of the eight respondents disclosed during the interview that they grew up in households that did not express emotions or communicate. Some respondents felt they did not learn how to communicate because of the household they grew up in, as well as a feeling of not being loved because that was never discussed in their houses. The three respondents that did have good communication remembered being told they were loved and felt they could communicate with their parents if they needed to. The data collected suggests that effective communication and proper emotional responses were important for these respondents and further research should be done to establish a connection with criminal behavior.

While continuing to discuss family dynamics, five of the respondents stated they felt they were not a part of their family. These respondents each shared their experiences of not feeling as though they belonged in their family as if they were on the outside looking in. The two participants who felt that they were a part of their families disclosed that they did family activities often and also ate dinner together every night. The data collected suggests that the ability to connect with family members was an important component for the participants, and further research should be done to fully investigate the connection to criminal behavior.

While discussing past experiences each of the eight respondents disclosed an event or events which they identified as traumatic during their adolescent or early teen
years. The data collected suggests there is a substantial influence of traumatic experiences had during adolescents and early teen years on criminal behavior.

Although prison is meant as a crime deterrent, five of the eight participants disclosed that they thought of going to jail as taking a break from the streets. Of the three who did not think of jail as a crime deterrent, one of them only served time once, a 5-year term in federal prison, and commented that jail was a place they would never go back to. The other two stated that they thought of jail as an inconvenience, but it didn't stop them from continuing their criminal behavior, nor did they feel it was a rest for them. The data collected suggests further research should be done to establish the attitude of inmates regarding how they perceive being in jail and if it is a crime deterrent.

Current research has shown that inmates exposed to education and educational programs while incarcerated have lower recidivism rates than those with no educational exposure (Educational Testing Center, 2006). When asked about classes attended while incarcerated, six of the eight respondents stated that the classes they took helped them stay out of trouble while incarcerated. The two who did not feel the classes were a crime deterrent stated that they were not eligible for vocational or educational classes, rather they were only able to participate in prison authority jobs. The collected data suggests that vocational classes are effective as a crime deterrent, however further research needs to be done to establish their effectiveness on recidivism rates.

Lastly, while discussing their life after incarceration, each participant claimed the reason they terminated their criminal behavior was because they were tired. The data collected suggests the true reason criminal behavior ceases is due to one's personal desire
and exhaustion of their lifestyle, however further research is needed to test the validity of this outcome.

Recommendations

Based on the data collected for this study, future recommendations for social workers, teachers and families should be made in order to decrease criminal activity in adolescents and adults. The following recommendations have been made based on the study findings and understanding of the population:

1. Students should be referred to the school social worker when the teacher notices behavior changes in the child while at school. This way the social worker can begin contact with the student and family and be able to monitor student to ensure they are attending classes.

2. Social Workers should work with parents and students to ensure family communication and ensure the child is adequately provided for. The reason for this is to teach the family proper communication skills which will help them become a more cohesive family.

3. If the parent is not willing or able to be involved in their child's schooling, a cohort group should be created at school to ensure each child is achieving the support and attention they need, as well to ensure they are establishing healthy attachments and a feeling of belonging.

4. Mentoring programs to pair a young person with an adult could also be established to provide the child with a role model and a person to help guide their behavior.
5. Repeat offenders should not be housed in the same jail they previously served time in. This will eliminate the feeling of having a "jail family."

6. Each inmate should be enrolled in vocational classes, regardless of the crime they committed. Enrolling each inmate into a vocational class will get them out of their cell and give them something positive to focus on.

Limitations

The research had limited significant findings due to the sample size. Only eight participants from Quinn Cottages volunteered to contribute to this study; and therefore, only their experiences were captured for this project. Also, since this sample size for this study had only eight participants, this design cannot be generalized to a larger population.

All participants were active clients of Quinn Cottages and therefore all had a history of substance and alcohol abuse. Experiences of people who were incarcerated without a substance or alcohol abuse history may have expressed different opinions regarding their experience with education, family involvement and socioeconomic status.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

This research suggests that it is important for social workers to focus on the strengths of the individual in light of their barriers and limitations that they and their families are faced with. Social workers need to know the various traumas that are experienced not only by their client, but by those who are close to the client. They need to be aware of the influence education, family involvement and socioeconomic status has had on their criminal behavior. Social workers should speak to families who have members incarcerated and focus on the strength of the family and the current barriers
they are facing. By modeling behavior and teaching communication skills, the social worker can help piece the family back together while building a newer and stronger foundation.

On a mezzo level, social workers need to be educated and made aware of the influence that education, family involvement and socioeconomic status may have on crime and recidivism rates. Social workers need to be aware of the many families who are separated due to criminal behavior and incarceration and the reasons why people engage in criminal behavior. The majority of outreach should be done to help maintain strong family systems by promoting community family outings, and educating the community about the possible influence of education, family involvement and socioeconomic status on crime and recidivism rates.

On a macro level, a prison policy should be created with the assistance of social workers and be executed by social workers to ensure a comprehensive plan. The policy should be created to establish an effective rehabilitation strategy, which includes vocational classes and drug prevention classes. It should also assist inmates with creating a plausible release plan which will include reliable housing, general employment opportunities and education options. Ideally, the family would also be encouraged to be involved in this plan, but only if the relationship between the individual and the family is sufficient.

Conclusion

The information obtained from the interviews may benefit both the researcher and the social work profession. The participants involved in this study informed the
researcher about their experiences with education, family involvement and socioeconomic status, as well as incarceration and release. The data found here can help future researchers establish a more profound influence which education, family involvement and socioeconomic states have on crime and recidivism rates. Further research should be done to continue searching for an effective crime prevention and rehabilitation program in order to continue to maintain the safety of our communities and the education for future generations.
APPENDICIES
A & B
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Education

1. Tell me about your formal education.
2. Would you say your teachers would categorize you as a good student, fair student, or poor student?
3. What kind of student do you think you were?
4. Were you involved in any formal or informal activities in school? (i.e. sports, student council, attended dances/pep rallies, etc.)
5. Did you have close friends while in school?
6. What type of activities did you do with them?
7. Did you have a job while you were in school?
8. If yes, what type of job did you have and did you enjoy it?
9. Tell me about your job training.

Family Support

10. Tell me about the composition of your household growing up.
11. Did you have positive role models growing up? Who were they?
12. Can you tell me about the activities you did with family members while growing up?
13. Can you tell me what you enjoyed about these activities?
14. Is there anything you would have liked to do with your family, but never got a chance? If so, what were they?
15. Where did you play most often growing up and were you supervised while playing?
16. Did you receive letters or packages while incarcerated? How often?
17. Did you have visitors while incarcerated? Who were they and how often?

Socioeconomic

18. How would you classify your social class growing up- upper, middle, lower, poor?
19. What was the geographical location of the neighborhood you grew up in?
20. Can you describe the housing and neighborhood you grew up in?
21. Did you play with other children in your neighborhood?
22. Can you tell me about the activities you and the neighborhood children did?

Incarceration and Release

23. Did you understand the consequences of the crime you were committing at the time?
24. When did you get released from prison?
25. Did you have the ability to attend educational or vocational classes while incarcerated?
26. Can you describe to me what you did and did not like about these classes?
27. Did you feel these classes were effective?
28. Prior to your release date, did you have plans for housing, employment, etc.?
29. Who did you make this plan with?
30. How much of this plan actually happened?
31. Can you describe to me the first week you were out?
32. Can you describe to me your housing situation upon release?
33. Did you have your own room, or did you share a room?
34. Did you have chores or scheduled daily activities?
35. What was different this time you were released from prison?
36. Can you describe to me your employment experience after release and your current employment experience?
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

I, ______________________________________________ am giving my informed consent to participate in a face-to-face interview about the influence of education, family involvement and socioeconomic status on crime and recidivism rates. The interview will be administered by Jennifer Schultz, a graduate student of Social Work at the California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of this interview is to collect data to discover a possible connection between education, family involvement and socioeconomic status on crime and recidivism rates.

I understand that I will be asked questions regarding my personal experience of education, family support, socioeconomic status, incarceration and release. I understand that my responses to the questions will be audio taped. These responses will be used to compile data for a thesis project. The interview will be conducted at a time which will be convenient for both parties and may take up to an hour to complete. I understand that the tape recorded data from my interview will be destroyed upon completion of this project.

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and any question(s) may be skipped or not answered if I become uncomfortable. I also understand that I may withdraw from this interview at any time, with no consequences. As these questions pertain to my personal experiences, I understand that there may be some risk involved. If at any time stressful feelings arise due to the interview, the following agencies may be contacted for counseling: La Familia Counseling Center, Sacramento County Mental Health, or Fallcreek Counseling Association. Contact information for each resource is listed on a separate sheet of paper, which I have been given.

By participating in this study, I may gain further knowledge regarding the influence that education, family involvement and socioeconomic status may have on my criminal behavior.

In order to protect my confidentiality, my name will not be used on any information aside from the informed consent. A confidential code will be kept with my interview notes which correspond with the code on this consent form. All consent forms will be kept apart from the interview notes in a locked box in Ms. Schultz's home. After the study is completed and the thesis project is accepted, all notes and consent forms will be destroyed.

I understand that I will not be receiving any compensation for participating in this interview.
I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and my signature below indicates that I have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

__________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Participant                      Date

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this interview concerning crime and recidivism rates. I appreciate your valued time and personal experiences.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Schultz
MSW Student
California State University, Sacramento
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