Recidivism: Causes and Solutions

Bailie Walker

Lewis-Clark State College

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Abstract

This research is based on an extensive literature review that identified and discussed issues parolees face while trying to reintegrate into society. This study also examined some promising solutions to address the challenges faced by this population to help lower the recidivism rate.

Recidivism: Causes and Solutions

In the most comprehensive study to date on recidivism, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that "5 in 6 state prisoners released in 2005 across 30 states were arrested at least once during the 9 years following their release" (2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism, p. 1). About 45% of those were arrested within the first year of being released (2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism, p. 1). Seeing that almost half of those released from prison are arrested again within a year, shows that harsh punishment and a lack of re-entry programs for prisoners needs to be re-evaluated in the United States. Solutions can be found by studying incarceration rates, policies, and environments around the world. One country that will be influential on the subject is Norway. In 2005, within 2 years of release in Norway, only 20% of prisoners were reconvicted. Within two years of release in the United States, 36% of prisoners were reconvicted (Fazel, Wolf & Hernandez Montoya, 2015, p. 4).

The high recidivism rates in America causes many other issues such as prison overcrowding, and limited funds going to incarceration rather than rehabilitation. Society is also directly affected because the majority of prison inmates will be released back into society at some point. Without participating in effective re-entry services, they are likely to continue to commit crimes.

Recidivism is "a broad term that refers to relapse of criminal behaviour, which can include a range of outcomes, including rearrest, reconviction, and reimprisonment" (Fazel & Wolf, 2015, p. 1). In this study, Fazel and Wolf sought to review recidivism rates from multiple countries in order to make comparisons. The researchers found data from MEDLINE, Google Web, and Google Scholar; they did not ask for data directly from each country. The studies analyzed in the article were based on prisoners only. Data regarding "suspended or non-custodial

sentences, or heterogeneous samples where rates in prison subgroups were not provided" was not included in the study (Fazel & Wolf, 2015, p. 2). After narrowing down all the data, Fazel and Wolf ended up with 18 countries in their study sample. The countries included had various follow-up timeframes with prisoners, varying from less than one year, up to nine years. The studies that were analyzed only included reconviction and reimprisonment rates, not rearrests.

The most astounding result found in this study was that there is no uniform, international crime reporting system currently in use and some countries do not even report recidivism rates. Out of the 20 countries with the largest recidivism rates in the world, only two of them reported these rates (United States and England/Whales), so most of the countries that would have had the most data could not be included in the study. Regarding reconviction rates, it was found that the longer the follow-up period after incarceration, the higher the rate of reconviction (e.g., 1-year post-release reconviction rate 23-46%; 5+ year post-release reconviction rate, 74-78%). This means there is a positive correlation between reconviction rates and the amount of time out of prison. On top of this correlation, it was found that the more countries included in a specified follow-up time period, the more the reconviction rates varied in that same time period. This could indicate differing availability and effectiveness of incarceration and post-incarceration support services for inmates.

These conclusions are based on the data collected in this study, with a few caveats: each country defines recidivism differently, which means some include fines, rearrests, and reconvictions, while others only include one or two of those variables. For example, "Sweden reported a 2-year reconviction rate amongst prisoners of 43%, which on the surface compares favourably to 59% in England and Wales. However, the latter includes fines in the reconviction measure, whereas the former does not. In a separate report including fines, the Swedish rate rises

to 66%" (Fazel & Wolf, 2015, p. 6).

Like the reconviction rates, reimprisonment rates also showed a positive correlation between recidivism rates and the amount of time out of prison (e.g., 6-month post-release reconviction rate, 10-18%; 5-year post-release reconviction rate, 43-52%). As with the reconviction rate data, the more countries included in a specified time period, the bigger the variability in the reimprisonment rates. It is noteworthy that a longitudinal comparison between New Zealand and the United States' reimprisonment rates showed New Zealand has consistently higher rates (7-9%) in every period studied.

Due to the lack of global reporting standards on recidivism, researchers were unable to make persuasive inter-country comparisons of incarceration rates and recidivism rates. As a result, researchers did develop guidelines "covering relevant aspects of repeat offending including inclusion and exclusion criteria, follow-up, definition of recidivism, and other minimum information to allow international comparisons to be made" in the future (Fazel & Wolf, 2015, p. 5).

Benjamin Monnery (2014) used data from a survey conducted by the French correctional administration of 2,204 convicted ex-prisoners released between May 1, 1996 and April 30, 1997. Ninety-six percent of the sample population were men and the average age was 32 years old at the time of release (p. 42). Allowing a five-year follow-up period, this study examined whether there was "any new conviction registered in one's criminal record by June 2002" (p. 41). Within this population, 58% of releasees were re-convicted before June of 2002 and 44% went back to prison (p. 42). Researchers then grouped these individuals based on different demographics to see the connections between individuals that recidivated.

The results showed that immediately after release, men were less likely to recidivate than

women, however, over time (approximately 2 months), women adjust better to reentry and move away from crime while men have a harder time desisting from criminal activity.

Individuals that qualified for early release and put on parole showed that "at release, parolees experience a four time lower likelihood of recidivism compared to those who did not benefit from this sentence reduction, however, this gap lessens slowly over time" following the same pattern as gender statistics (Monnery, 2014, p. 49). Meaning, the 4-time lower hazard number is only valid at release and decreases from there as time passes. The initial offense committed also effects reoffending rates: "recidivism decreases faster among those convicted for drug-related and other offenses, compared to property and violent crimes" (p. 50). While marital status, education level, and homelessness were not "associated with a significant change in the instantaneous probability of recidivism" at the time of entry into prison, those who declared a job directly after being released showed a 12% lower likelihood to recidivate (pp. 47 & 49).

Majekodunmi, Obadeji, Oluwole, & Oyelami (2017) examined "the prevalence of major depressive disorder and its sociodemographic and clinical predictors among inmates of a prison population in Nigeria" (p. 2). The sample population consisted of 196 male inmates in a federal prison ranging in age from 15 to 70 years old. Of the 196 inmates, 136 of them were awaiting trial (short-term) and 60 of them were convicted (long-term).

The first stage of the study was diagnosing the severity of the depression among the inmates. The researchers found 30.1% of inmates awaiting trial were depressed while 35% of convicted inmates were depressed. The researchers then broke down those rates into categories of mild, moderate, and severe depression. As illustrated in Table 1 below, most inmates, both awaiting trial and convicted, fell into the "moderate depression" category. Researchers concluded that there was not a significant difference between prisoners awaiting trial and

convicted inmates when diagnosing depression.

Table 1 – Depression Severity		
Depression Level	**Awaiting Trial**	**Convicted**
Mild	14.6%	19.0%
Moderate	78.0%	71.4%
Severe	7.3%	9.5%

The researchers examined the relationship between clinical history and depression in inmates. The clinical variables included were whether an inmate had a physical complaint, a chronic medical illness, past psychiatric illness, or family history of psychiatric illness. As shown in Table 2, over half (52.2%) of inmates awaiting trial who had at least one chronic illness, also had depression, compared with about 25% of those without any chronic illness, and this was found to be statistically significant. Further, inmates awaiting trial who had a family history of psychiatric illness were almost twice as likely to develop depression as those without a history. Convicted inmates with a family history of psychiatric illness had the highest rate of depression which was statistically significant (Majekodunmi, Obadeji, Oluwole, & Oyelami, 2017, p. 3).

Table 2 Clinical History and Depression				
	Has Depression & Clinical History		**Has Depression Without Clinical History**	
	Convicted	Awaiting Trial	Convicted	Awaiting Trial
Physical Complaint	43.5%	36.5%	26.7%	15%
Chronic Medical Illness	60%	52.2%	30%	25.7%
Past Psychiatric Illness	50%	37.5%	33.9%	29.7%
Family History of Psychiatric Illness	80%	53.9%	30.9%	27.6%

As shown in Table 2 above, inmates with the highest depression rates were those that

reported a clinical variable, ranging from 36.5% to 80%, while inmates without any clinical history had the lowest depression rates ranging from 15% to 33.9%. (Majekodunmi, Obadeji, Oluwole, & Oyelami, 2017, p. 3). Overall, about one-third of the inmates had major depression, which is higher than "what was reported among people with chronic disorders such as HIV/AIDS, cancers, or diabetes" outside of prison (p. 5).

The prevalence of depression was slightly higher among convicted inmates than those awaiting trial (Majekodunmi, Obadeji, Oluwole, & Oyelami, 2017, p. 5). The reasoning for this could be due to the length of exposure to a hostile prison environment, isolation, no privacy or intimacy, and repeated frustration in a cell that does not have space for exercise, movement, proper sleep, or most other activities that allow for high control. These individuals have also lost purpose and a sense of their identity, social importance, and have gained stigma and social discrimination due to their criminal context. While researchers analyzed the relationship between depression and sociodemographic characteristics including: age, religion, marital status, education level, and employment, they did not find a statistically significant relationship; nor did they find that the type of offense committed predicted depression in either group (Majekodunmi, Obadeji, Oluwole, & Oyelami, 2017, p. 3).

Domino, Gertner, Grabert, Cuddeback, Childers & Morrissey (2019) hypothesized that "the receipt of timely mental health services is associated with changes in criminal justice interactions", including lowering the recidivism rate in the United States (p. 592). Timely treatment in the study was defined as "getting a referral to expedited Medicaid within 31 days of release" (p. 600). The study included 3,086 offenders within 12-months of release, who were released "during the first 2 years… of an expedited Medicaid policy for prisoners in Washington with severe mental illness" in 2006 or 2007 (p. 594). Severe mental illness was defined as being

diagnosed with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder by the prison or by the Department of Social and Health Services. Researchers gathered data from Medicaid, mental health records, and Washington State criminal justice settings and records.

The results of the study showed that timely mental health services did not lower the recidivism rate of inmates, but in fact, increased the likelihood of recidivating. Within 12 months of release, "over half of releasees were re-arrested", "over 40 percent of the sample had prison stays for technical violations related to previous charges" and "just over 12 percent of the sample had one or more prison stays for new charges" (Domino, et al., 2019, p. 595). Technical violations "typically include failure of offenders to comply with mental health treatment plans, to pass alcohol and drug urinalysis screens, or to attend meetings with probation officers" (p. 594). The pattern researchers found was that offenders who received timely mental health services and still recidivated within a year of release, often failed to fulfill their mental health treatment plans. These prisoners were getting regular mental health check-ups and services while incarcerated. However, when they were released, "results suggest insurance coverage alone does not lead to treatment access or utilization" as people that suffer from mental illness or have a criminal history have many barriers to overcome to get treatment (p. 600). This led them back to their old criminal lifestyle or put them in violation of their conditions of release, which lead them back to jail or prison, creating a vicious cycle.

Coercive mobility is the combination of high rates of incarceration and re-entry in certain neighborhoods that has a destabilizing effect on a community. Wallace, Eason & Lindsey (2015) hypothesized "higher rates of coercive mobility… will be associated with both lower numbers of health care organizations and having no health care organizations within neighborhoods, net of neighborhood controls" (p. 2). Some examples of neighborhood control variables in this study

were: concentrated disadvantage, percent population without a high school diploma, percent rural, population density, and percent 65 years or older population. Researchers got their data from "2008 Central Business Pattern data, 2008 prison admissions and release data, and 2010 census data" (p. 1).

The results of the study found that "as levels of coercive mobility increase in a neighborhood, the likelihood that the neighborhood has one or more health care resources also increases" (Wallace, Eason & Lindsey, 2015, p. 8). The definition of health care resources included the total amount of "doctor's offices, hospitals, or mental health care organizations in each zip code" (p. 3).

Besides the percentage of rural areas in neighborhoods, coercive mobility was the largest predictor that health care organizations would be implemented. This is because as a higher percentage of ex-convicts join neighborhood populations, there is a higher need for these services for parolees and probationers to fulfill the conditions of their release. These conditions may include regular AA or NA meetings for recovering addicts, regular mental health services and continuing to take medications. There is also a correlation between health and criminality as healthy people are less likely to commit crime. Previous research has shown that individuals who cycle in and out of prison are less likely to return if they are in good health "for specific types of criminals, like substance users or HIV positive individuals" (Wallace, Eason & Lindsey, 2015, p. 8).

Hall, Harger, and Stansel (2015) compared rates of economic freedom by state to determine which economic institutions and policies coincide with lowered recidivism rates. In this study, recidivism was defined as "the percentage of the released population in a given year which exited parole to return to incarceration that year" (p. 160). Researchers used "data from

the Bureau of Justice Statistics' Annual Parole Survey as well as the *Economic Freedom of North America's* (EFNA) subnational measure of economic freedom" (p. 157). Economic freedom score was based on the size of the government, takings and discriminatory taxation, and labor market freedom. The score is used to explain income inequality, housing prices, service industry growth, entrepreneurship, and female labor force participation and income (p. 159).

The research included parolees and anyone that was incarcerated on a state level between the years of 1994 and 2010. Economic research on prison recidivism rates can be broken down into four categories: 1) what type of crime was committed, 2) deterrence, 3) incentive structures, and 4) institutional factors ex-offenders may return to (Hall, Harger & Stansel, 2015, p. 157). The type of crime committed is important because financially driven crimes may show that ex-offenders may recidivate for financial purposes. Incentive structures include incentives to prisoners while incarcerated to rehabilitate themselves. For example, if there is no option for early release in the prison, then prisoners may see no point to rehabilitating themselves while incarcerated. Institutional differences in communities may include gang interaction and market exchange affecting employment. Market exchange fluctuations could be the unemployment rate and how involved the government is. For example, "states with less government involvement in the economic affairs of citizens might result in an environment where parolees find it easier to not engage in criminal activities" (p. 159).

States that had a more restrictive labor market showed higher recidivism rates. For example, minimum wage laws defined by the EFNA, "reduce the ability of released offenders to make themselves attractive to potential employers" (Hall, Harger & Stansel, 2015, p. 164). Other restrictions may include a lack of support and agencies to help ex-offenders with housing, food, medical care, and many other things that these individuals struggle with after being released.

Simpkins (2015) evaluated the development of the "College Inside" program that provides educational opportunities for inmates while incarcerated. From the early 1990s to 2015, the state of Oregon saw a 32% drop in the state's recidivism rate (Simpkins, 2015, p. 19). In 1991, Chemeketa Community College entered into a contract with the Oregon Department of Corrections to bring GED education to male prisons in the Willamette Valley. From there, the college worked hard to implement more education each year until the creation of the College Inside program in 2007 (pp. 19-20). The program was originally funded by tuition from the prisoners' themselves, but eventually the college partnered with a "local businessman interested in funding a program in an effort to effect more of a change than current prison programs" (p. 25). These quarterly donations allowed the program to flourish.

From 2007 at the opening of the program to 2015, College Inside "has had 108 graduates, 53 of whom have been released… [and] the program has actually awarded 140 degrees because many pursue multiple degrees" (Simpkins, 2015, p. 21). Out of the 53 prisoners that were released 41, or 77.4% of them, are now actively employed or enrolled in school, while only 2 of them have recidivated, which is 3.8%. Most of the graduates reported "that their experience as a college student while incarcerated was the most pivotal change that contributed to the success they now enjoy on the outside" (p. 21). The researcher found that since community colleges are focused on nontraditional students, this was "the most logical and best situated [institution] to provide higher learning in a prison setting" (p. 28).

The creators of College Inside considered any prisoner in their program that left with more knowledge than they came in with to be a success. The sustainability of the program is based upon funds. Because there was limited funding, the college, with the help of prison administrators, donors, and college staff, created criteria in which the prisoners had to meet to be

considered for College Inside. The criteria included: “offense, length of sentence, release date, prison conduct, or financial means” (Simpkins, 2015, p. 23). If a prison has funding for a college program, it is believed that as more opportunities become available, more prisoners would become interested, raising stability in the program, which could also increase funding. Prisons all over the country could implement this type of program to help educate prisoners, giving them a purpose and type of identity if the funds are available. If funds are not available to start out, prisons could also have the inmates pay for their own tuition just as the College Inside program did in the beginning.

Meyer, Harned, Schaad, Sunder, Palmer & Tinch (2016) developed an inmate education program using student teachers. The study was done in only one prison and targeted women serving long-term or life sentences. The warden of this prison chose a life span development class. Researchers and the student teachers then determined, “how much credit will be offered, student teacher responsibilities, and grading protocol” (Meyer, et al., 2016, p. 121). The class lasted for one 14-week semester and enrolled 4-5 student teachers to instruct the class in pairs. Student teachers used older editions of the textbook required to save money. The program also tried to include at least 1 male student teacher in every rotation to help the female inmates “establish a positive relationship with a male” (p. 121).

Student teachers first submitted a knowledge test to the prisoners with “one broad-based item from each chapter of the book” to see what level of learning to begin with (Meyer, et al., 2016, p. 122). Then inmates reported the level of impact the class had on their “knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics” (p. 122). Student teachers analyzed this data and created an objective assessment measure based off the themes found, and rated the inmates’ motivational levels in class. At the end of the class the knowledge test was submitted again, and the scores

were “significantly higher than before the course… [showing that] 59% of women increased their scores, 24% remained the same, and 17% decreased” (p. 123).

When asked how the class affected their sense of purpose on a scale running from 1 (low) to 5 (high), the inmates’ average answer was 4.68. The responses also indicated “that the women believe the course improved their ability to communicate with others more effectively, express themselves in writing, and increased their knowledge of life span development” (Meyer, et al., 2016, p. 124). Feedback from inmates also showed that the class helped them understand what aspects of their life could have led them down this criminal path, helped them take responsibility, and taught them more about prison stereotypes, power, and privilege. The partnership also helped student teachers better understand academic material and prison society. Overall, “education [offered in prison] benefits the prisoner and society… [and] the impact on the prisoner can extend beyond reentry considerations” as well as help establish a sense of identity (p. 120).

Ouellette, Applegate, and Mateja Vuk (2016) used a survey of 165 South Carolina residents to measure their support levels on prisoner reentry. (p. 774). Only the person with the most recent birthday in the household completed the survey to ensure it was one random participant per household.

Researchers focused on policy support and personal acceptance of re-entry of offenders into society. To measure policy support, researchers replicated four scenarios/variables globally from a study done in 2013, which were: community re-integration programs and services, equal support to ex-convicts and non-offenders in the community, ex-convicts are not as deserving as law-abiding citizens, and willingness to increase taxes in order to fund reentry programs (Ouellette et al., 2016, p. 775). To measure policy support on a narrower level, researchers

"assessed views toward employment, housing, health care services, financial assistance, drug treatment services, government assistance, mental health services, educational services, federal grants for education, and transportation" (p. 775). To measure personal level of acceptance, researchers focused on employment.

The results show that community-based programs and services to help individuals recently released from prison re-integrate more easily into society had the largest amount of support at 73.1% (Ouellette et al., 2016, pp. 776-777). Only 32.7% of citizens supported the idea that law-abiding citizens were more deserving of help than ex-offenders, however, 33.7% were willing to pay more taxes in order to make these programs and services happen (pp. 776-778). There was also a strong agreement that ex-prisoners should be earning enough money to make a stable living and that there should be employment assistance and job training upon release (p. 778). However, "roughly half of the respondents believed 'employers should give preference to individuals who have no prison record" over those who do (p. 778).

Iudici, Boccato, and Faccio (2018) used a semi-structured interview process to analyze different viewpoints of reoffending and non-reoffending detainees, to "achieve more effective intervention in terms of treatment and rehabilitation" (p. 63). The study was conducted in 2015 at the Due Palazzi prison facility in Italy. The sample population included 22 reoffending detainees, 22 non-reoffending detainees, 22 prison workers, and 22 ordinary people (p. 63). In this study, reoffending was defined as "having had at least one previous period in detention for a minimum of one month; whilst non-reoffenders are people detained for the first time" (p. 63). The prison workers group included psychology, legal, education, and prison official professionals.

The semi-structured, qualitative interviews provided an outline with different topics in which the interviewer could ask in any order depending on how the conversation was going. The

interview was based on four dimensions: (1) description of the reoffending process, (2) definition of reoffending, (3) relationship between reoffending and reintegration, and (4) survey of theories about the management of reoffending (Iudici, Boccato & Faccio, 2018, p. 64).

Three different perspectives were developed about reoffending. According to "non-offending detainees and some prison workers [some considered] reoffending to be born of necessity or the desire to make quick money" and the behavior is continued because individuals' have then found a shortcut (Iudici, Boccato & Faccio, 2018, p. 65). The second reason given was due to a lack of work or family support. Thirdly, replies from ordinary citizens and some prison officials felt reoffending was "caused by a psychological or psychiatric disturbance which prevents the reoffender from understanding the situation" (p. 65). All detainees and ordinary citizens saw reoffending as a result of an individual's environment while prison officials viewed it as a choice. Generally, researchers concluded that, "non-reoffenders are noted for intentional actions whereas reoffenders are generally perceived as weak, victims of circumstance and dangerous" (p. 67).

Among all detainees, "the reasons given for successful reintegration were almost exclusively external… [meaning] reintegration is attributed to the presence of alternative measures including support from the family and a social network, and getting a job" (Iudici, Boccato & Faccio, 2018, p. 67). On the contrary, ordinary people and some prison officials agreed that no matter how many opportunities for education and psychological treatment were given, it is inevitable that the detainees will return to their old criminal habits. This shows that everyone views reoffending differently even when given the same facts based off of personal experience and knowledge.

Discussion and Implications

Based on the problems identified above, the following are solutions to address some of those issues. Those solutions include an increased access to a higher number of Department of Corrections service providers for parolees, having supportive rapport with his/her parole officer, having increased visits while incarcerated, training a companion animal while incarcerated, and extensive education opportunities while incarcerated.

Headley (2017) tested the rate of recidivism based on community-level variables. For purposes of this study, recidivism was defined as a new arrest, parole revocation, conviction of a new crime, and reincarceration (p. 79). Headley conducted secondary analysis of a Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole dataset of parolees during a three year follow-up period after their release from prison. The dataset specifically measured the success or failure of parolees that were released from prison from 2010-2012 for three years (p. 75). According to Headley, if the parolees finished their parole term and did not recidivate during the follow-up period, they were successful.

Of the different community-level variables tested, only Department of Corrections service providers were found to reduce recidivism, but only for impoverished patients. These correctional service providers "decreased the odds of reincarceration in more disadvantaged neighborhoods" (Headley, 2017, p. 143). These parolees coming from disadvantaged neighborhoods were able to establish this relationship before release, so they were more easily able to sustain that relationship post-release. For technical parole violations, these service providers were successful in lowering the odds of recidivism within the first six months of release as well as after a year and six months post-release. For general crime, it was found that these service providers were most effective during the first six months of release (p. 143).

Chamberlain (2018), interviewed parolees in the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) program to test whether a supportive, healthy parolee-parole officer relationship had a positive impact on reintegration of ex-prisoners. Chamberlain noted that a supportive "rapport between a parolee and parole officer is based on trust, helpfulness, and professionalism; it is not based in the sociability of the relationship" (p. 3595).

Male and female participants were selected from the SVORI program from "12 states between July 2004 and November 2005" (Chamberlain, 2018, p. 3587). Researchers interviewed the chosen parolees upon release and did follow-up interviews at 3, 9, and 15 months post-release to "assess post-release relationships such as those between family and friends, and parole officers (p. 3587). For purposes of this study, recidivism was defined as reincarceration whether it be for a new crime or a technical violation.

The results showed that parolees who had a good working relationship with their parole officer and who met regularly with them were less likely to recidivate than those who did not. A good working relationship was defined as "deemphasizing the supervision aspect of a parole officer's job, enabling the parole officers to focus on providing services to their clients and, as a result, change the underlying behavior of the offender" (Chamberlin, 2018, p. 3596). Those who met with their parole officer at least once a month were 47% less likely to recidivate than their counterparts (p. 3591). These results were similar whether the interaction was face-to-face or a phone call meeting with the officer.

For every 1 unit increase in a positive parole officer relationship, there was a 34% decrease in the likelihood of recidivism (Chamberlin, 2018, p. 3591). A 1 unit increase is determined on several factors including but not limited to how many times a month a parolee meets with his/her parole office in person, talks with them over the phone, and current gang

affiliation (p. 3592).

Mitchell, Spooner, Jia & Zhang (2016) conducted a meta-analysis that included 16 different studies to determine the effect of prison visitation on recidivism (p. 74). The participants were limited to adults released from correctional facilities and experienced in-person visitation while incarcerated (p. 75). In thirteen of the sixteen studies, having more visitations while incarcerated was statistically significant in lowering the recidivism rate. For purposes of this research, recidivism was defined as arrest, conviction, or incarceration (p. 76).

Results showed that "In-person visitation reduced the likelihood of recidivism by 25%, and conjugal and furlough visits had the strongest effect (36% reduction) on recidivism" (Mitchell, Spooner, Jia & Zhang, 2016, p. 79). This may be because having these physical visits with his/her partner helps keep that relationship stable, leaving the prisoner with something to look forward to and work hard to get better for once released. Visitation successfully decreasing the risk of recidivism suggested that visitations may be more effective in preventing serious offending than previously thought (p. 80).

Based on these findings, prison facilities should consider making visitation more accessible to all inmates. Prisons should also encourage people to come in and visit their loved ones while they are incarcerated to keep them in high spirits. The correctional facility could encourage this by posting visiting hours on the building and their websites, minimizing visitors' fees, or by improving amenities to be more family-friendly (Mitchell, Spooner, Jia & Zhang, 2016, p. 81).

Sergeant Burcham (2016) started the program "Cuffs and Collars", beginning with four feral cats in an open block with six inmates in Boone County Jail in Indiana (p. 63). The cats are free to roam the cells with the inmates. These cats come from the humane society, which also

provides all food and supplies for the animals. Inmates are hand-selected by jail staff to be a companion for a cat.

Jail staff has found that introducing the cats into the cell blocks with inmates helps decrease aggression and feelings of anxiety and increase gentle behavior" by the inmates (Burcham, 2016, p. 63). Correctional officials who were originally against this program have grown to support and love it because the effects on the inmates are so significant.

While official statistical outcomes have not been released for this program, other similar programs have shown promising results. For example, one program "Leader Dogs for the Blind", which pairs inmates with dogs to be trained, showed that those inmates only had an 11-13% recidivism rate (Burcham, 2016, p. 62). Another study done on companion dog training out of Washington State found that inmates involved in that program had a recidivism rate of 28% for a three-year follow-up period (p. 63). Both studies resulted in less than half of the recidivism rate of those who were not involved in any program.

Makoele (2016) analyzed current practices on education in prison, one being the Correctional Sentence Plan (CSP) to understand reasoning behind and prevention of reoffending (p. 88). The plan also included training to prevent prisoners from hurting themselves or others and only included prisoners serving sentences over two years. It does this by adding education through the into the prison program in South Africa (p. 88).

The studies reporting a correlation between greater education and lower recidivism outnumber studies reporting negative conclusions (Makoele, 2016, p. 88). Studies that did have a positive outcome unanimously reported that implementing education into the criminal justice system reduced recidivism, reduced crime, and increased the likelihood for employment post-release (p. 88). Statistically, adult prison education programs lowered the odds of reincarceration

by 43% (p. 88). If a prison does not have funding for education, there are also many non-profit organizations that have been known to fund prisoner education programs to lower recidivism. Some of these organizations are Readucate Trust, The Dream Foundation, and many others (p. 88).

Some recommendations regarding education in prisons were forming a good working relationship with a secondary education institution and creating a thorough and transparent intake process (Makoele, 2016, p. 89). It was also recommended that prisons access online education in order to cut spending costs, creating opportunities for more prisoners (p. 89).

Although these articles do present some solutions to lowering recidivism rates, there are still gaps in the research. The issues originally found in the criminal justice system were a lack of:

- Prisoner respect
- Funding towards rehabilitation services
- Mental and physical health organizations post-release
- Social institutions to help provide essential needs (food, job, housing assistance)
- Education opportunities

To find solutions to these specific problems, the following research would need to be conducted.

Method

Purpose

To examine which aspects of post-release services need to be changed to improve inmate reintegration and decrease the recidivism rate in America.

Participants & Sampling Procedures

The sample population will include parolees and parole officers supervising them.

Research Design

Descriptive research to identify prison and post-release conditions as well as the types of programming provided to parolees both while incarcerated and post-release. Applied research could provide suggested improvements to current programming, to address the identified issues leading to recidivism.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used to extrapolate data would be a mixed-method of written questionnaires distributed to parolees and interviews with parole officers. The questionnaires will identify past prison conditions, reincarceration rates, and factors that did and did not hinder recidivism. Interviews with parole officers will reveal institutional policies, goals, and the focus of the institution (rehabilitation or punishment).

Information collected from this research proposal will allow researchers to understand the relationships between prisoner respect, rehabilitation services, health organizations, social institutions, and education opportunities with recidivism. Once discovering these relationships, researchers may be able to create solutions to solve the high recidivism rate in America.

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