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EX-PRISONERS' REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY: A LOOK
AT HOW EMPLOYMENT AFFECTS REINTEGRATION

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Cynthia Beatriz Urrutia

June 2012

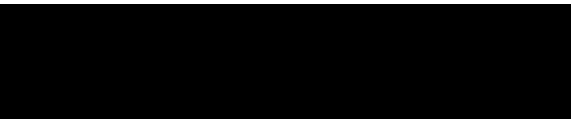
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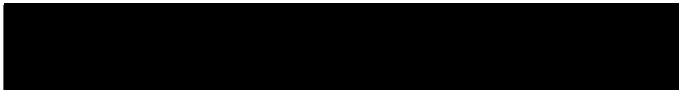
June 2012

Approved by:



Dr. Stanley Taylor, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

6/5/12
Date



Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

The number of adults in the correctional population has been increasing at a fast pace and so have recidivism rates. Employment has been recognized to deter recidivism; therefore, this study's purpose is to find out if having employment deters ex-prisoner's involvement in illegal economic activities. This was accomplished by running an analysis of data that was collected via survey questionnaires from male ex-prisoners age 18 years old and above who reside in Riverside or San Bernardino County. The association between employment status and engagement in illegal economic activities was computed using chi-square tests. Results demonstrated the proportion of those employed involved in illegal economic activities is not significantly different from the proportion of those unemployed involved in illegal economic activities but findings are not significant due to sampling limitations ($n = 23$). It is suggested that a larger sample be used in further research to obtain significant results. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates the daily challenges this population faces such as enduring stigma from society and the inability to find employment to provide for themselves and their families.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family for their support throughout this endeavor. They believed in me when I doubted myself especially you love, for that I'm grateful. They provided love, strength, and hope which helped me throughout the writing process of this thesis. I also appreciate those key friends who allowed me to vent every so often throughout these three years of hard work and provided me with tons of validation when I needed it the most. Last but not least, a special thanks to Dr. Taylor for his assistance and guidance with this project.

DEDICATION

Doy gracias a mis padres que siempre me han ayudado a salir adelante. Gracias a su apoyo, y sacrificios e podido completar mis estudios y metas. Hoy día, no estuviera en el lugar que estoy si no fuera por ustedes. Mil gracias por a ver me guiado a ser la persona que soy. Con gratitud y amor les dedico mi tesis a mis padres, Reginaldo y Esperanza Urrutia.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an overview of the problem that was studied, its importance for society, and its significance for social work practice. In the first section, the problem statement covers the background information of the problem. In the second section, the purpose of the study gives a description of the proposed study in regards to the population that was studied. In the third section, a brief summary is provided of this study's significance for social work practice.

Problem Statement

It is alarming how the number of adults in the correctional population has been increasing. In 2008, over 7.3 million people were under some form of correctional supervision including probation, prison, jail, or parole. This is in comparison to 6.1 million people in 1998 and 1.8 million people in 1980 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009).

Furthermore, it is estimated that at least 95 % of all State prisoners will be released from prison at some point in time. From these ex-prisoners, not all will

receive community supervision; it is estimated that about 80% who exit prison receive supervision services.

In 2008, there was an estimate that about one out of every 45 adults in the United States was under community supervision, either probation or parole. This means there were about five million adults under supervision in the community (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). This number is alarming and does not include ex-prisoners who at the time were not under supervision.

Every prisoner who exits prison will experience reentry and reintegration. Reentry is the process of leaving prison and returning to society. Reintegration is the individual's reconnection process with society. Some ex-prisoners exit prison with knowledge of what awaits them when they rejoin society. Some leave with skills that will help them tackle the process. Yet, others have no clue of what they will be facing. For the most part, ex-prisoners leave prison and return to their communities with little to nothing.

Reintegration is a process that each needs to embark which for most includes rebuilding family and friendship ties, finding housing, and finding employment among other tasks. Throughout this process, each must also deal with

the emotional and psychological effects prison had on them. In large, ex-prisoners return to society without a defined role of who they are and what they are supposed to be doing. This role is defined throughout the continuous reintegration process.

Reintegration is an individual experience for each ex-prisoner due to varying factors such as who they were pre-prison, what they did in prison, and what occurred after exiting prison (Visher & Travis, 2003, p. 89). Pre-prison experiences can have different impacts on reintegration. For example, an individual's work experience, educational attainment, and social supports or lack thereof can bring about a positive or negative reintegration process. In prison experiences such as completing an educational degree or being involved in programs that prepare them for reentry can have positive effects on reintegration. Also, a factor such as maintaining relationships with family and friends while in prison can have positive effects on reintegration.

Furthermore, a concern related to the high numbers of ex-prisoners exiting prison is the high rate of recidivism. Recidivism is when an ex-prisoner returns to prison. In a 15 state study, over two-thirds of released

prisoners were rearrested within three years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). The inability to reintegrate into society's legal and formal norms usually leads ex-prisoners to return to prison. Although there are studies which capture the rates of recidivism and although there is an understanding that recidivism occurs because ex-prisoners commit some wrongdoing, the body of literature lacks research that demonstrates the connection between ex-prisoners' experiences in society and what leads them to fail and break the law.

This study's intent was to develop an understanding of what occurs during ex-prisoners' reintegration into society. As it is known, a lot of factors contribute to each individual's reintegration. Existing literature (Zhang, Robbers, & Callanan, 2006; Uggen, 2000) has demonstrated that employment is a factor associated with recidivism. Yet, other literature (Pager, 2007; Waldfogel, 1993) has demonstrated that having a criminal record makes it difficult for ex-prisoners to obtain a job. This study's objective was to further investigate the relationship between employment and ex-prisoners' choice of involving themselves in illegal economic activity. The difference between this study and existing

literature is that it sought to obtain an understanding from a subjective point-of-view, ex-prisoners' view. It aimed to find out if employment in reality keeps ex-prisoners from committing illegal economic activities. This study proposes that attainment of employment keeps ex-prisoners from committing illegal economic activities.

Purpose of the Study

This problem area of reentry, reintegration, and recidivism is complicated and intricate. However, empirical literature in the area is limited and due to the nature of time constraints imposed on this study, only a particular aspect was the focus. This study intended to answer the question whether ex-prisoner males 18 years and above with employment are less likely to engage in illegal activity for economic reasons than ex-prisoners 18 years old and above without employment.

Additionally, this study sought a better understanding from ex-prisoners' perspectives as to what other aspects influence their choices to or not to carry out illegal economic activities. This was achieved by focusing on the individual experiences of ex-prisoners in their reintegration process by asking through surveys

about their thoughts in regards to reentry services, social supports, educational attainment, and current employment status.

The participants in this study included ex-prisoner males 18 years old and above who live in the County of San Bernardino or County of Riverside in California. The sample was gathered through snowball sampling, since, snowball sampling is a method used for hard to reach populations. First known participants were asked to refer other possible participants. Also, they were asked to spread the word to other possible participants.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

It is important to understand this problem further because so many lives are affected by reintegration and recidivism. Not only are the millions of lives of the ex-prisoners directly affected by the process of reintegration and the possibility of recidivism but the lives of their families are also affected by it. Families are usually financially and emotionally burdened by having a family member in prison or in the process of reintegration. In most cases, when individuals return to jail, spouses are left alone to manage the household,

children are left without parents, and other dependants are left to struggle on their own. Also, on ex-prisoners' return to home, spouses might have moved on with their romantic lives, other spouses have to financially support the ex-prisoner, and/or children must readjust to having the parent back at home. It is also a phenomenon that costs the state large amounts of money. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009), the operating cost per state prisoner is \$22,650 per year.

Concern regarding the issue exists among different professions such as sociology, criminal justice, psychology, and social work. Diverse journals have showed interest in this problem area of reentry, reintegration, and recidivism such as *Annual Review of Sociology*, *The Journal of Human Resources*, *Law and Social Inquiry*, and *Crime and Delinquency*. There are articles that request that the research professions look further into this problem to grasp a better understanding that in turn can guide advocacy strategies for this population, ex-prisoners (Visher & Travis, 2003; Petersilia, 2001).

Studying this problem and grasping a better understanding of the ex-prisoners' realities helps to provide suggestions of what areas in the system need to

be focused on and improved in order to facilitate reintegration for ex-prisoners locally. It informs the assessing phase of the generalist model as it allows for social workers who work with individuals from this population to be better informed of what this population faces; therefore, it will help them to be non-judgmental throughout assessments. He or she will be more apt to listen to their stories and provide them empathic responses.

Furthermore, it is intended to educate social workers and other professionals in regards to this population's realities. Consequently, it hopes to reduce judgment and stigma towards this population. It provides information in regards to what areas need advocacy for services and social policy change that will augment the chances of ex-prisoners to stay out of jail.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As this study sought to understand the relationship between employment and other factors that influence the choice of reengaging or not in illegal economic activity through the lens of ex-prisoners, the following literature review looks at studies that relate to this subject matter. In addition, it highlights what some of the studies are lacking to get a better picture of ex-prisoners' reintegration realities. Nevertheless, it is all relevant information that relates to the problem in hopes to increase knowledge for professionals who work with and advocate for ex-prisoners.

Employment Reduces Recidivism

An intervention that includes employment as a component that reduces recidivism is reviewed. The intervention was created and instituted by the California Department of Correction in the 1990's with the objective to reduce parole crime and return to prison (Zhang, Roberss, & Callanan, 2006). The program, Preventing Parole Crime Program, focused on four life domains:

employment, substance abuse education and recovery, math and literacy skill development, and housing. Participants consisted of all California parolees who were released to parole between July 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002. Results showed that individuals who participated in the treatment by using the service components had a reduced likelihood of reincarceration.

This study provides data regarding a reentry service that was successful; however, the effect of the individual services cannot be assessed. This program was based on a systems theory as it looks at various systems in an individual's life that interrelate throughout reintegration. Although the program aligns with the theoretical framework of choice for this study, the study does not observe the reintegration process through the parolee's lens.

Uggen (2000) attempts to determine if employment affects recidivism. Data were collected in a large-scale experimental employment program, the National Supported Work Demonstration Project. Participants were referred by criminal justice and placed either in the treatment group (given a minimum-wage job) or the control group (no job). Throughout three years, participants reported in

intervals of nine months. Results showed that the job treatment reduced recidivism among offenders over the age of 26. The job treatment had no significant results with the younger participants.

Based on these results it can be inferred that employment helps decrease the chances for some ex-offenders of returning to criminal behavior. However, this is one of those studies that looks at the occurrence from an outside perspective and does not really know what other factors may have kept the participants from returning to criminal behavior. It may be personality, environmental, psychological, or a combination of these factors that diverted them from criminal behavior.

A Criminal Record Affects Employability

Pager's (2007) field experiment demonstrates that there is an association between an ex-offenders criminal record and the depressing effects it has on obtaining employment. In this experiment, there was one pair of testers who were black and a pair who were white. The pairs each applied to the same employers. Extraneous variables were controlled for and testers were matched on relevant characteristics. The only difference was the

criminal record. Among the black applicants, a criminal record reduced callbacks by over 60%. For the white applicants, the callback was reduced by 17%. These results demonstrate that ex-offenders face serious challenges in finding work. Not only have ex-prisoners paid their dues to society by completing their sentence but are suffering due to society's harsh treatment. Society discriminates against this population. Therefore, it is necessary to look beyond just recidivism rates and see what lies behind recidivism rates.

Furthermore, it is found in the literature that conviction effects exist. Conviction effect refers to effects that go beyond the punishment for a crime (Waldfogel, 1993), in other words, something that affects an ex-prisoner beyond the actual legal sanction. In an attempt to measure how ex-offenders' employment and income is affected by a conviction, Waldfogel used data from the Administrative Office of the Courts to assess the effects. He was able to conclude that convictions have significant negative effects on ex-offenders' employment probabilities and income. Furthermore, he was able to find that conviction effects appear to result from a stigmatizing effect more so than an ex-offenders'

stalled experience growth or lack of previous employment. This study reveals how having a criminal record imposes stigma and makes it more difficult for an ex-offender to regain gainful employment, therefore, making reintegration into society more difficult.

Reintegration through the Lens of Former Prisoners

Trimbur (2009) presents a study that looks into former prisoners' perspectives of reentry into society. This study is the most closely related to the study intended to be carried out. Trimbur argues that the differences among the former prisoners' approaches to reentry lie in their different interpretations of how they can act as individuals within their social structural limitations.

Trimbur conducted a four-year ethnographic research study in Brooklyn with males between the ages of 17 and 27 who had recently been released from prison. The majority of her research consisted of participant observations. Additionally, she conducted fifty formal semi-structured interviews that ranged from one and a half to three hours in length, from which she was able to

conclude that the former offenders develop different identities as they reintegrate into society.

She found that some men developed pro-crime identities and undertook crime as soon as they were released. These men anticipate run-ins with the law. There is no other option since in their minds they believe that this is who they are [criminals]. Others were guided by their religious, spiritual, or therapeutic beliefs in order to abstain from criminal activity. Men who believed in "staying straight" due to religious, spiritual, or therapeutic beliefs had a sense of discipline. This discipline is what kept them out of trouble. Yet others developed a desire to find work but failed and reengaged in illegal economic activities when it got tough. These type of men start off optimistic and positive; however, when unable to achieve success and satisfaction look to other avenues such as criminal activities.

The importance of this study is the attempt to look at reentry through the lens of the former offenders. The study gives a human perspective on how and why recidivism occurs. It gives an understanding of the difficulty of reintegration. It presents the idea that different

reentry services are needed to meet the different needs of former offenders. In this study, a deeper understanding is presented as to why former offenders fall back to criminal activity. Various perspectives are presented which are useful and should be considered when policies and programs are created. Basically, it goes beyond literature that utilizes only statistical information regarding recidivism rates to demonstrate the need for more reentry services or changes in policies.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The theoretical framework that guides the overall study is systems theory. This theory views human behavior as a composite of various aspects. It views each individual as a person-in-environment which means that it looks at everything that can possibly affect a person's behavior. It looks at biological, psychological, and sociocultural functioning as an aggregate that defines a person's behavior. Furthermore, a disturbance of any part of the system affects the system as a whole (as cited in Lesser & Pope, 2007). This theory highlights the importance of looking at the participants as individuals in the environment.

The objective of this research design was to look at each participant's individual experience of reintegration; this framework works well. The ultimate goal was to find out whether having or obtaining employment makes a difference in ex-prisoners choice of reengaging in illegal economic activity. More importantly was finding out the reasons why they elect to reengage in illegal economic activity. An aim of this study was to produce results that would show how diverse this population is although in society's eyes, they are all the same.

Summary

In conclusion, this literature review provided knowledge that guides this study. Studies showed that employment is a factor which affects recidivism. Yet, other literature demonstrated that ex-prisoners have a difficult time attaining a job due to their criminal records. Other literature, offered a perspective on ex-prisoners' mind frames that exist behind statistics such as employment affecting recidivism and high recidivism rates. The present study offers an ecological

outlook at employment and other factors influencing
ex-prisoners' choices to walk a straight line or not.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter gives a description of the methods and procedures that were used to gather the data required in order to address the hypotheses set forth by this research study. Furthermore, it provides information on the following areas: the study design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protections of human rights, and data analysis.

Study Design

This research study examined the relationship between adult ex-prisoners with employment and their involvement in illegal economic activities versus adult ex-prisoners without employment and their involvement in illegal economic activities. Group one consists of ex-prisoners who have employment. Group two consists of ex-prisoners who do not have employment. The groups were extracted from the participant questionnaires. This undertaking was accomplished through an analysis of data collected in the Counties of Riverside and San Bernardino.

Previous studies have demonstrated that employment deters recidivism rates. Yet, they do not sought provide findings whether the fact of having employment deters ex-prisoners' involvement in illegal economic activities that if caught may result in recidivism. Furthermore, this research study sought to explore ex-prisoners' reasons for being unemployed as it is assumed that contrary to popular belief not all ex-prisoner's elect to remain unemployed. Society places the blame on individuals for not having a job and having to look at alternative ways of making money. Therefore, in general, solutions are focused on rehabilitating the individual. However, solutions should consider an individual's environment and the opportunities available to him within his society.

It is important to look at why ex-prisoners from the two groups opt to engage or not to engage in illegal economic activities in order to look for solutions. If a better picture of what leads them to engage in such acts is created, then social workers and advocates for this population can work on strategies and services to help them. This research study provides knowledge about ex-prisoners choices based on an ecological model that

helps create a wider lens into this population's daily struggles to stay away from illegal economic activity and keep from becoming a statistic of recidivism.

The research question is the following: Does having employment make a difference in ex-prisoner's choice of engaging in illegal economic activity? Group one consists of ex-prisoners who have employment. Group two consists of ex-prisoners who do not have employment. Following is the hypotheses for the research study:

1. Group one is less likely to engage in illegal economic activity than group two.

The research study is descriptive as it examines the existence of a relationship between employment status (yes or no) and engagement in illegal economic activity by ex-prisoners. The research method that was used is survey research because this study asks participants to provide information about themselves in regards to demographics, attitudes and beliefs, and behaviors. This type of method is useful when trying to study relationships among variables as this study aims to do so.

Data was collected primarily through questionnaires in order to reach larger numbers of participants.

Questionnaires consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The questions extracted information about the participants' demographics, behaviors, and beliefs.

Assumptions

Participants were willing to participate by completing questionnaires. Participants were honest about their responses. A survey tool was created by following the guidelines set forth by professionals. The survey tool was used in a way consistent to its purpose.

Limitations

This study was limited to only analyzing certain factors that affect an ex-prisoner's choice of engaging or not engaging in illegal economic activity. Considering that the theoretical framework used to guide this study was systems theory, this study was limited in that it did not look at every aspect of the individual. Furthermore, it was impossible to isolate the variables to determine how they affect each ex-prisoner. Another limitation that must be taken into account is the fact that the participants may have been hesitant to answer questions that they believed may jeopardize their freedom. There is a risk that answers provided were not completely sincere.

These are factors that may have affected the accuracy of findings.

Sampling

The data was obtained from ex-prisoners who reside in Riverside or San Bernardino County. The snowball sampling technique was utilized. This means that the first known participants were asked to refer other possible participants. The sample consisted of male ex-prisoner over the age of 18 years old. The study included a sample of 23 participants. The sample included ex-prisoners from diverse ethnicity groups, economic levels, educational levels, and employment statuses. The main parameters of inclusion were participants had to be male, over the age of 18, served time in prison and reside in Riverside or San Bernardino County.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data was collected by administering questionnaires to the participants. The data was accumulated from 23 ex-prisoners from Riverside and San Bernardino County. For survey questionnaire please refer to Appendix A.

The survey questionnaire was created by the researcher to assess the relationship between employment status and engagement in illegal economic activities. Furthermore, the survey questionnaire evaluated the relationship between other factors that also affect the choice of engaging in illegal activities. It was created by following the guidelines put forth by Cozby (2004).

Data collected included information about participants' demographics, behaviors, beliefs, and employment status. The independent variables included employment status and criminal history which was measured at a nominal level; educational level, family and/or friend economic support were measured at an ordinal level; age and income were measured at a ratio level.

The dependent variable consisted of whether or not the participant was involved in illegal economic activities. The correlations between the independent and dependent variables were obtained through the use of Chi-Square tests and Pearson's r test.

Procedures

The data was gathered by requesting the participation of ex-prisoners who fit the sample's

identified parameters. The snowball technique was utilized to reach individuals from this population. The method is a method of convenience sampling. Since for the most part, this population is hard to reach these sampling methods were the best. Participants were reached by referral of first known participants. Participants were then asked to refer other subjects who were likely to participate in the study.

Questionnaires along with the informed consent and debriefing statement were physically distributed by the researcher. If participants wanted to take the survey at their leisure, they were given the option to provide an e-mail address and the questionnaire would be e-mailed to them. However, none of the participant asked to complete the survey at another time. The data was gathered between February and March 2012.

Protection of Human Subjects

The participants' were not required to provide identifying information such as name, social security number, or address. Their participation was anonymous. The questionnaires and consent forms did not require

identifying information either. They were asked to sign by making a check mark on the signature line.

An informed consent form was provided to all participants prior to their participation informing them of their rights and of the research study they were solicited to participate in. Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and they may choose to not complete the research study if for whatever reason they change their mind in regards to answering the questionnaire. Also, they were informed that any information they provide would be anonymous including information about illegal economic activity.

The research study took into account that answering some of the questions may stir up certain negative emotions in the participants. However, it was not the intent of the study. This information was included in the informed consent.

The questionnaires were kept locked in a file cabinet. They were only used when entering data into the data analysis software. The data was then stored on a USB that was kept in the same file cabinet as the questionnaires. The questionnaires were destroyed after publication of results.

Data Analysis

In carrying out the proposed research study, data was collected, analyzed, interpreted, and conclusions were made along with recommendations for future research. This study consists of descriptive research as its primary objective is to examine the existence of the relationship between employment status (yes or no) and engagement of illegal economic activity by ex-prisoners.

The hypothesis was examined by using Chi-Square tests as hypothesis consists of nominal level variables. Furthermore, Pearson's r test was used in order to investigate the strength of association between variables. There was no manipulation of the independent variables by the researcher. For the most part, bi-variate analysis was used for each independent variable.

Through this study the relationships between variables was analyzed which was valuable in coming to an understanding of the relationships under examination. The independent variables included employment status. The relationship that was examined consisted of the correlation between the independent variable and the

dependent variable which is the engagement in illegal economic activity or lack thereof.

Summary

This chapter provided a look at the areas that guided this research study. The methods and procedures were analyzed for the proposed study. It provided information in regards to the design, the sample, the questionnaire used to collect data, and how participants were protected throughout their participation in the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study. The respondents' demographics, employment characteristics, and personal perspectives about reintegration are also presented in this chapter. The results of a Chi-square test are also presented demonstrating whether the study's hypothesis was supported or not.

Presentation of the Findings

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. There are a total of 23 male respondents in the study sample. The age range of the sample is 22 to 47 years and the mean age of the respondents is 30.9 years.

The ethnicities of the respondents were African - American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, and other. The majority of the sample (60.9%) consisted of African-American males. The next largest group consisted of Hispanic males (21.8%).

The respondents are from Riverside County and San Bernardino County. The sample included 52.2 % respondents from Riverside County and 47.8' % from San Bernardino

County. The balanced percentages were not intentionally sought.

Almost half of the respondents have a high school or general education diploma (GED). Ten respondents (43.5%) indicated they have a high school or GED, 34.8% responded not having completed high school, 17.4% responded to having completed some college and 4.3% indicated being a college graduate.

Over half (60.9) of the respondents stated they are single. The rest of the sample consisted of respondents who are cohabitating (21.7%), divorced (8.7%), married (4.3%), and separated (4.3%). Overall, 78.3% of the respondents have children and only 21.7% do not have children.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age (N = 23)		
22-29	11	47.80%
30-34	10	43.50%
40-47	2	8.70%

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity (N = 23)		
African-American	14	60.90%
Hispanic	5	21.80%
Caucasian	2	8.70%
Asian	1	4.30%
Other	1	4.30%
County (N = 23)		
Riverside	12	52.20%
San Bernardino	11	47.80%
Education (N = 23)		
Didn't finish H.S.	8	34.8
Diploma or GED	10	43.5
Some College	4	17.4
College Graduate	1	4.3
Marital Status (N = 23)		
Single	14	60.9
Cohabitating	5	21.7
Married	1	4.3
Divorced	2	8.7
Separated	1	4.3
Children (n = 23)		
Yes	18	78.3
No	5	21.7

Table 2 presents information about the respondents' employment status and entries of income. Fifteen out of the twenty-three respondents are not employed that is 65.2% of the respondents. Only 8 are employed (34.8%).

From those employed 21.7% are working full-time and 8.7% are working less than full-time.

Table 2. Employment Characteristics

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Employment (N = 23)		
Yes	8	34.80%
No	15	65.20%
Status (N = 8)		
Full-time	5	62.50%
Part-time	2	25.00%
No answer	1	12.50%

Respondents not employed were asked through which means they receive a monthly income. The sources indicated as alternative means of receiving an income include social security, self-employment, unemployment, financial-aid, and other sources. The other sources provided by respondents include AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), child support, DPSS (Department of Social Services), hustle, and little side jobs.

Table 3 presents information regarding the involvement in illegal economic activities by the respondents. According to the results, 65.2% shared that

they are not involved in any kind of illegal economic activities. The other 34.8% stated that they are involved in illegal economic activities. The type of illegal economic activities they shared that they were involve in included: selling drugs, stolen items, and stealing money or items.

Table 3. Involvement in Illegal Economic Activities

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Illegal Economic Activities (N = 23)		
Yes	8	34.80%
No	15	65.20%

Respondents were asked what influenced their decisions to be or not to be involved in illegal economic activity. From those respondents who stated that after their last release they have not been involved in any illegal economic activities, the majority said they did not get involved because they did not like their experience in prison, they have children and family, and/or now they have positive goals. On the other hand, respondents who admitted being involved in illegal

economic activities shared that they do it to support their families, pay the bills, and basically to make ends meet. The following are some examples of their responses:

"Gotta keep the lights on somehow" (Participant 11, personal communication, February 2012).

"To eat and pay rent on time for a room to live in" (Participant 21, personal communication, February 2012).

"To make money for my family" (Participant 19, personal communication, February 2012).

Table 4 presents information regarding the respondents view on whether the crime they have committed has affected their employment opportunities. Almost 100% (91.3%) of the respondents stated that their crime record has impacted their employment opportunities. The other 8.7% said it has not had any effect on their employment opportunities.

Table 4. Employment Opportunities Affected by Crimes

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Employment opportunities affected (N = 23)		
Yes	21	91.30%
No	2	8.70%

When respondents were asked how they felt it had affected their employment opportunities, the majority stated that they were unable to get a job due to their record. The following are some examples of their responses:

"A lot of interviews and call backs went well until they got to my record" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 2012).

"Hard to keep a job when officer keep calling and bugging" (Participant 1, personal communication, March 2012).

"So I don't get hired even though this is my only crime and I've been out of prison for 5 years now they get scared" (Participant 21, personal communication, February 2012).

"Made it hard to find a good paying job"

(Participant 7, personal communication, March 2012).

Table 5 presents information regarding respondents' view of parole officers as helpful or not. Over half of the sample (65.2%) responded that their parole officers were not helpful and (30.5%) stated that they were helpful.

Table 5. Parole - Helpful or Not?

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Parole Helpful (N = 23)		
Yes	7	30.50%
No	15	65.20%
No Answer	1	4.30%

Following are examples of some of the respondents' reasons as to why their parole officers were not helpful:

"It made it harder due to all the classes I had to take" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 2012).

"They didn't help nor did they care about me and my family" (Participant 19, personal communication, February 2012).

"They didn't help with anything except for monitoring me. They didn't even have funding to give me a bus pass to try to find a job and house"

(Participant 21, personal communication, February 2012).

Table 6 demonstrates the different contributions that have helped respondents from returning to prison. The majority of the respondents (12 out of 23) indicated that their support system has helped them from returning to prison. Other contributors that have helped them are religion, change of environment, and employment.

Table 6. Factors Contributed to Not Returning to Prison

Variables	Yes	Percent
Support System (N = 23)	12	52.20%
Treatment Services (N = 23)	0	0.00%
Employment (N = 23)	2	8.70%
Income (N = 23)	1	4.30%
Religion (N = 23)	3	13.00%
Parole Officer (N = 23)	1	4.30%
Change of Environment (N = 23)	3	13.00%
Other (N = 23)	9	39.10%

Table 7 demonstrates the results to the question whether they were or are familiar with social institutions that could have or can help them with their reintegration process. Over 80% of the respondents indicated that they were or are not aware of any social institutions that can help with the reintegration process.

Table 7. Belief of Social Institutions Available to Help with the Reintegration Process

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Belief (N = 23)		
Yes	4	17.40%
No	19	82.60%

When the respondents were asked to discuss why they believe there are not any social institutions to help them with their reintegration process, they shared the following answers:

"Don't know where to look for help" (Participant 15, personal communication, March 2012).

"I don't know of any with room to help a single parent get on their feet (housing and food)"

(Participant 21, personal communication, February 2012).

"No, due to the fact of how are they going to help me if they never experienced what I've been through" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 2012).

"Everybody just judged me like I could change and wasn't human" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 2012).

Respondents were asked what kind of services they believed would help them stay away from committing illegal criminal activities. The following are some of the answers they provided:

"A social worker maybe someone who doesn't look down on me that really wants to help me" (Participant 19, personal communication, February 2012).

"Church or your higher power" (Participant 2, personal communication, March 2012).

"Do away with parole and let a person live" (Participant 17, personal communication, March 2012).

"Employment service and counselors" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 2012).

"For those successfully completing parole, remove barriers to public benefits (financial assistance, food stamps, and housing). Remove barriers to employment. Help with the basic necessities in life and real jobs that hire ex-felons, felons"

(Participant 21, personal communication, February 2012).

"Services with real criminals that counsel you and have made a good turn around in life" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 2012).

Lastly, respondents were asked to share any they were experiencing due to the last crime for which they served a prison term. The most prominent answer had to do with the inability to obtain employment. The next most prominent answer dealt with broken or severed relationships. The following are some of the answers they provided:

"Can't find a job" (Participant 17, personal communication, March 2012).

"Hard to find a job" (Participant 11, personal communication, February 2012).

"I'm unemployed with 3 kids and looking for somewhere to live" (Participant 23, personal communication, February 2012).

"I have been homeless with my family for 3.5 years because I can't get a job and low-income complexes won't rent to me because of my felony." (Participant 21, personal communication, February 2012)

"Impossible to find a job" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 2012).

"I lost respect from my family and trust too" (Participant 19, personal communication, February 2012).

"My divorce was hard" (Participant 3, personal communication, February 2012).

"Can't hang with my friends" (Participant 11, personal communication, February 2012).

Table 8 demonstrates the results to the data analysis that addresses the hypothesis that ex-prisoners employed are less likely to be involved in illegal economic activity. The data was analyzed using a 2 (Employment: Yes or No) x 2 (Illegal Activities: Yes or No) Chi-Square test (See Table 9). Since the expected count is 5 and there is an expected count of 2.8, this

rule is violated. In order for the results to be significant according to the Yates' Correction for Continuity, there was supposed to be a p-value less than 0.05. However, the p value for the data is 0.795. Therefore, these results are not significant. The proportion of those employed being involved in illegal economic activities is not significantly different from the proportion of those unemployed being involved in illegal economic activities.

Table 8. Employment and Illegal Economic Activities

			Illegal Activities		Total
			Yes	No	
Employment	Yes	Count	2	6	8
		Expected Count	2.8	5.2	8
	No	Count	6	9	15
		Expected Count	5.2	9.8	15
Total		Count	8	15	23
		Expected Count	8	15	23

Table 9. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.518 ^a	1	0.472
Continuity Correction ^b	0.067	1	0.795

a. 1 cell (25.0%) has expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is 2.78.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Summary

In this chapter, the demographics of the respondents were presented. There was almost an equal amount of respondents from Riverside County and San Bernardino County with a mean age of 30.9 years. Also, employment characteristics were provided. Only 8 out of 23 respondents were employed at the time of the study. As expected, 21 out of 23 respondents feel as if their status of ex-prisoner has affected their employment opportunities. However, the 2x2 Chi-square test does not support the study's hypothesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter reviews the findings of the employment and the effect it has on ex-prisoners involvement in illegal economic activities. Also, it discusses some of their needs and struggles from the ex-prisoners perspectives. It also considers limitations on the study and discusses room for improvement on future research. Moreover, it makes recommendations as far as social work practice, policy, and research.

Discussion

The results of the present study do not support the hypothesis that ex-prisoners who are employed are less likely to be involved in illegal economic activities. In fact, the results show that the proportion of employed respondents involved in illegal economic activities is not significantly different from the proportion of those unemployed respondents involved in illegal economic activities. There are various limitations that appear to have constrained the results of this study. These

limitations are discussed in greater detail in the "Limitations" section.

Although the data analysis does not show a relationship between employment and involvement in illegal criminal activity, open-ended responses demonstrate the hardships ex-prisoners have experienced in regards to obtaining employment due to their criminal record. At the time of the study, only 8 out of 23 respondents were employed. Furthermore, 21 out of 23 responded that they felt that their employment opportunities have been affected by the one fact that they are "ex-prisoners." Their responses reflected the difficulty they have had with finding a job. They shared sometimes getting to the interview and feeling good about it, yet, once the background check was performed they would be denied the job.

This study not only aimed to confirm a relationship between employment and the involvement in illegal economic activities by ex-prisoners but also sought to get their perspectives about their reintegration process. The aim of seeking their perspectives was to get a better understanding of who they are as individuals and what struggles they have gone through as they reintegrate into

society. Furthermore, the study sought to get their feedback in regards to the provision and accessibility of social services available to ex-prisoners to help them reintegrate.

An examination of open-ended responses demonstrated that they did not receive much guidance by their parole officers as to where to obtain housing, employment, or any other services. In fact, the majority of them felt that their parole officers did not help them at all. They expressed that parole officers were there to simply monitor them. The primary resource that has helped the majority of the ex-prisoners from returning to prison has been their families.

Furthermore, the respondents shared that they did not believe there were services out in their communities for them. Their answers demonstrated that they were not informed of where they could find any help as many of them stated that they did not know where to go. Others respondents shared that they felt "misunderstood" and "judged" by society.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the present study that should be considered. Due to the following limitations, results of this study cannot be generalized to the overall population. First, the sample size was too small ($n = 23$) to run the data collected through statistical testing. A problem with running Chi-squares (for nominal data) is that a lot of variability is needed in between groups in order to see if there were any differences. In this study, it was impossible to have the variability due to the small sample size.

Other potential limitations were due the data collection procedure. The primary known ex-felon provided the researcher with contact to other ex-felons. The respondents were provided an informed consent that stated that they would remain anonymous. However, it is possible that the respondents did not feel comfortable answering honestly to some of the questions on the questionnaire. Furthermore, utilizing the snowball technique could have, in this case, limited the diversity of the respondents. These limitations could have skewed results and limit the possibility of generalizing any kind of results.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Despite the limitations of this study, the information gathered from the respondents shows true struggles that ex-prisoners face throughout their reintegration process, a reintegration process that for many is never ending as their status changes forever once they get out of prison. Their status of ex-prisoners is perceived by society to be one of the lowest ones. The stigma follows them and it is as if the words ex-prisoner encapsulates who they are in society.

As far as social work practice, social workers need to educate others that ex-prisoners are also human beings who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Social workers need to become more knowledgeable in regards to individuals who have been in prison and their daily struggles. It is easy to jump to conclusions and judge them; however, it does not make it right. Social workers and other professionals working with individuals who have been in prison must remember the concept of person-in-environment. These individuals are not inherently devious; society plays a part as well.

It is recommended that social workers advocate for the rights of these individuals. The National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics addresses the need for social workers to do what is in their hands to promote social justice: "Social workers should promote the general welfare of society" (1996, 6.01 Social Welfare, Para. 1) and "...seek to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs" (1996, 6.04 Social and Political Action, Para. 1). These values can be promoted in social workers' daily encounters with these individuals by treating them with respect and helping them like any other individual.

In regards to policy, social workers must seek changes to improve the chances for these individuals to find employment and housing. These are two basic needs that are essential for all human beings but the barriers that currently stand make it even harder for this population to acquire. It is not that they do not want to work; it is not that they are lazy; it is that they cannot get a job. Policymakers need to be educated about the struggles this population faces. They must understand that this population needs social services to assist them

with their reintegration process. If prisons are funded to monitor and house these individuals while in prison, wouldn't they think these individuals need funding when they are released. They are no longer provided with housing, they do not have an income, yet, they are expected to re-enter society and become well to do citizens. They need support and only changes in policy and funding will allow for this support to exist.

As far as research, it needs to focus on identifying the needs of ex-prisoners. It is no longer a question whether individuals are inherently bad or not. It is well known that individuals are affected by their environments. It is known that the lack of opportunities in society have to do with individuals' choices. Therefore, research needs to be somewhat like a needs assessment of this population. Research needs to direct its attention on demonstrating that more social services are required to help this population.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study highlights the needs that this population of individuals who have been to prison have. It provides information from their point-of-view;

in their eyes there is a lack of social services available to them. It shows that they have and continue to struggle with their reintegration to society. It demonstrates that one of their biggest struggles is to find employment. There is room for society to create and improve services for this population. Future research needs to continue to highlight these needs and advocates need to demonstrate these needs to policymakers. Change at the systems level is needed in order to address this population's needs.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the contributing factors that affected and continue to affect your transition from prison to society also known as reintegration. First, the researchers would like to ask you some questions about who you are.

I. Demographics

1. What is your age? _____
2. Which best describes your race or ethnicity?
 - (a) African-American
 - (b) Asian
 - (c) Caucasian, White
 - (d) Hispanic, Latino, Mexican
 - (e) Native American, American Indian
 - (f) Pacific Islander
 - (g) Other (please specify): _____
3. Which county do you live in?
 - (a) Riverside County
 - (b) San Bernardino County
 - (c) Other (Please specify): _____
4. What was the highest-grade level you completed?
 - (a) Last grade completed was in high school
 - (b) High school diploma or G.E.D.
 - (c) Some College
 - (d) College Graduate
 - (e) Postgraduate
5. What is your current marital status?
 - (a) Single
 - (b) Co-habitate
 - (c) Married
 - (d) Divorced
 - (e) Separated
6. Do you have children?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
7. If yes, how many and how old are they? _____

II. Employment

8. Are you currently employed?
(a) Yes
(b) No

If yes, please answer questions 9 - 13. If no, please skip to question 14.

9. How long have you been at your current job? _____
10. Are you employed full-time (40 hours or more per week) or part-time (less than 40 hours per week)?
(a) Full-time
(b) Part-time
11. How much do you make per hour:
(a) Minimum: \$8.25
(b) Other (please specify): _____
12. With your current income, are you able to provide for yourself and/or your household?
(a) Yes
(b) No
13. What other sources of income do you have?
(a) Family financial support
(b) Bank loans/ School loans
(c) Financial Aid
(e) Other (Please specify): _____
14. If you are not currently employed, how do you receive your income?
(Please circle all that apply)
(a) Social Security Benefits
(b) Self-employed (Please specify): _____
(c) Unemployment
(d) Family financial support
(e) Bank loans/ School loans
(f) Financial Aid
(g) Other (Please specify): _____

15. If you are not currently employed, why is it?
- (a) Do not want to work
 - (b) Cannot find work
 - (c) Do not know how to apply for a job
 - (d) Have applied but have not been interviewed
 - (e) Have interviewed but have not been called back
 - (f) Other (Please explain): _____
16. Whether employed or not, are you involved in any illegal economic activities?
- (a) Yes
 - (b) No
17. If yes, please circle all that apply:
- (a) Selling drugs
 - (b) Selling stolen items
 - (c) Stealing money or items
 - (d) Other (Please specify): _____
18. If yes, please explain why you do it:
- _____
- _____
- _____
19. If you choose not to engage in criminal economic activities, please explain why you choose not to:
- _____
- _____
- _____

III. Prison History

20. How many prison terms have you served?
- (a) 1-2
 - (b) 3-4
 - (c) Other (Please specify): _____
21. When were you last discharged from prison?
- Month: _____ Year: _____
22. What crime did you commit? _____
23. How long was your term for this crime? _____

IV. After Release

24. Does this crime appear on your criminal history record?
(a) Yes
(b) No
25. If yes, can this crime be expunged from your criminal history record?
(a) Yes
(b) No
(c) Not sure
26. In your experience, has this crime affected your employment opportunities?
(a) Yes
(b) No
27. If yes, please explain how it has affected your employment opportunities:

28. After your last prison release, were you supervised on parole?
(a) Yes
(b) No
29. If yes, did you find it helpful to have a parole officer?
(a) Yes (please specify why): _____

(b) No (please specify why): _____

V. Community Resources

30. After your last release, did anyone offer to connect you with community resources such as food banks, job search training, resume building training, job training, interview skills training, education services, counseling services, etc? If yes, please indicate who and what kind of resources you were connected with.
Who: _____ Services: _____

Who: _____ Services: _____

VI. Social Environment

31. After your last release from prison, did you return to live within the same geographical area where you lived before serving your prison term?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

32. What has contributed to keeping you from returning to prison?

- (a) Support System (ex. family, friends, church)
- (b) Treatment Services
- (c) Employment
- (d) Income
- (e) Religion
- (f) Parole Officer
- (g) Change of Environment
- (h) Other (Please explain): _____

VII. Your Outlook

33. Do you feel that there was or is a social institution to which you can turn to for assistance with your reintegration process (transition from prison to society)?

- (a) Yes (Please explain): _____

- (b) No (Please explain): _____

34. What kind of services do you believe would help you and others like you keep you away from committing illegal criminal activities?

35. Can you share any struggles you are currently experiencing due to your last crime which you served a prison term? (ex. with employment, family, friends, etc.)

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

CONSENT FORM

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the contributing factors that affected and continue to affect your transition from prison to society. Ms. Cynthia Urrutia is a Master of Social Work student at California State University, San Bernardino. The researcher is conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Stanley Taylor.

The Department of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino, has approved this study. In this study you will be asked several questions about your residing county, age, relationship status, roles, arrest history, education, employment, income, income sources, support systems, and community services you may have used or are using.

There is a minimal risk that the questions will make you uncomfortable and/or will cause you to recall past events that are emotionally disturbing; however, such effects are believed to be short-term. Any information you provide will not be able to be traced back to you since you will be participating anonymously by not providing identifying information.

If you are not comfortable answering questions of this nature you do not have to give us your consent and you do not have to participate. There will be no consequences if you elect not to participate. If you elect to participate, be assured that any information you provide will be anonymous. Please understand that your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any concerns or questions before or after this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Stanley Taylor at (909) 537-5584.

My mark below indicates that I have been informed and understand the nature of the study. I voluntarily consent to participate as indicated by my check mark. I acknowledge I am at least 18 years old.

Check Mark

Date

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you very much for sharing your opinions. The questionnaire you just completed was for a study about how employment affects the choices of ex-prisoners to engage or not engage in illegal economic activity and to learn about the different realities each ex-prisoner experiences. This study was conducted by Cynthia Urrutia, an MSW student currently attending CSUSB, under the supervision of Dr. Stanley Taylor.

If you would like to obtain a copy of the findings of this study, please contact the John M. Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after the summer of 2012(909-537-5091). If you have any questions or concerns about this study you may contact Dr. Stanley Taylor (909-537-5584).

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