



THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRE-INCARCERATION  
EXPERIENCES AND PRISON-BASED PROGRAMS TO POST  
RELEASE EMPLOYMENT ACQUISITION, RETENTION AND  
RECIDIVISM

By

Michelle Mickle Foster

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
OF SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to the staff and board of directors of the Kanawha Institute for Social Research & Action, Inc. (KISRA).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank my parents, family, friends, pastor and church family for their unwavering support. Thank you also to the West Virginia Division of Corrections Research and Parole Departments for their willingness to provide the data necessary for the study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Dedication .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Abstract .....	ix
1. Introduction .....	1
The Problem .....	1
Rationale .....	5
Statement of Purpose and Goals .....	10
Central Questions .....	10
Context .....	11
Significance .....	12
Feasibility .....	12
Roadmap .....	12
2. Literature Review .....	15
Relationships to be Studied.....	26
3. Theory .....	27
Governing Dynamics and Organizing Framework .....	35
Research Questions .....	36
Statement of Hypotheses .....	36
Logic Model: Organizing Theory, Research Questions, Hypotheses .....	37
4. Method .....	39
Research Design and Internal Validity .....	39
Procedures .....	40
Instrumentation .....	47

	<b>Page</b>
Sampling and External Validity .....	48
Data Analysis Plan .....	51
Statement of Limitations .....	53
5. Results .....	54
Findings by Research Question .....	78
6. Discussion .....	82
Implications .....	86
Future Research .....	87
References .....	90
Curriculum Vitae .....	102
Appendices.....	109



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Name of Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: 2007 Parolees by Race .....	3
Table 2: Summary of IMIS Program Completion Data .....	50
Table 3: The Study Group .....	52
Table 4: Race and Gender of Study Sample and Prison Population .....	54
Table 5: Age Distribution of Study Sample and Prison Population .....	55
Table 6: Age and Gender of Sample .....	55
Table 7: Highest Grade Completed .....	56
Table 8: High School/GED Completed .....	56
Table 9: Class Completion .....	57
Table 10: Dependent Variable Outcomes for Subjects .....	58
Table 11: Employment Status by Race .....	59
Table 12: Success at Staying out of Prison by Race .....	59
Table 13: Employment Status by Gender .....	60
Table 14: Success at Staying out of Prison by Gender .....	60
Table 15: Employment Status by Age Group .....	61
Table 16: Employment Status by Age Group (smaller age groups) .....	62
Table 17: Success at Staying out of Prison and Age Group Cross Tabulation (Smaller Age Groups) .....	63
Table 18: Employment Status and Highest Grade Completed Cross Tabulation .....	64
Table 19: Employment Status and Highest Grade Completed Cross Tabulation (Smaller Age Groups) .....	65

## LIST OF TABLES (continued)

<b>Name of Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 20: Success at Staying out of Prison and Highest Grade Completed Cross Tabulation (Smaller Age Groups) .....	66
Table 21: Employment Acquisition Logistic Regression: Variables in the Equation.....	67
Table 22: Employment Acquisition Logistic Regression: Variables not in the Equation.....	68
Table 23: Employment Acquisition & Retention Logistic Regression: Variables in the Equation .....	69
Table 24: Employment Acquisition & Retention Logistic Regression: Variables not in the Equation .....	69
Table 25: Success at Staying Out of Prison Logistic Regression: Variables in the Equation .....	70
Table 26: Success at Staying Out of Prison Logistic Regression: Variables not in the Equation .....	71
Table 27: Life Class Completed Cross Tabulation with Employment Status .....	72
Table 28: Non-Life Class Completed Cross Tabulation with Employment Status .....	73
Table 29: Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Employment Status .....	74

**LIST OF TABLES (continued)**

<b>Name of Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 30: Success Staying out of Prison Cross Tabulation with Employment Status .....	75
Table 31: Life Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Success .....	76
Table 32: Non Life Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Success .....	76
Table 33: Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Success .....	77
Table 34: Research Question 1 Analysis Results .....	79
Table 35: Research Question 2 Analysis Results .....	80

**LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>Name of Figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1: Racial Composition of Sample Compared to West Virginia and the US .....	2
Figure 2: Dissertation Road Map .....	14
Figure 3: Relationships to be Studied .....	26
Figure 4: Governing Dynamics and Organizing Framework .....	35
Figure 5: Logic Model.....	37
Figure 6: Sampling Typology .....	49

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRE-INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES AND PRISON-BASED PROGRAMS TO POST RELEASE EMPLOYMENT ACQUISITION, RETENTION AND RECIDIVISM**

Michelle Mickle Foster, Ph.D.  
Southern New Hampshire University, 2010  
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This dissertation examines the contributions of pre-incarceration experiences and prison-based programs to post-release employment success and recidivism. Parolees released from the West Virginia Division of Corrections between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 were studied. The impact of education, life and vocational programs on the employment experiences and recidivism of a sample of these parolees were analyzed using Chi Square tests and logistic regression.

The study found that men have a significantly higher probability than women of acquiring and retaining employment after release from prison. With regards to program completion, the study found that education program completion had no effect on employment acquisition, employment sustainability or near-term recidivism (dependent variables). The study further found that life program completion also had no effect on these dependent variables, neither did vocational program completion. Additionally, there was no difference in outcomes between Whites and African-Americans.

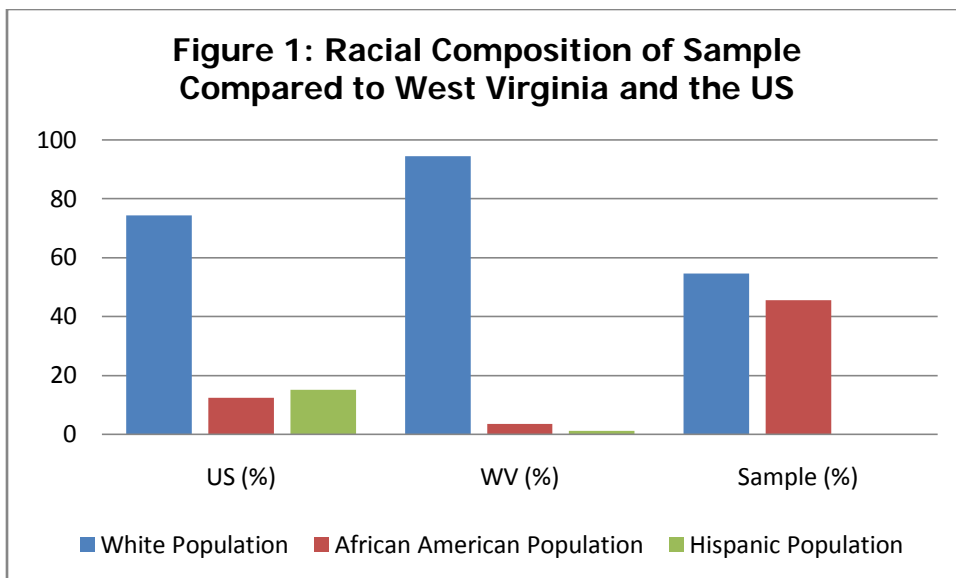
Approved for publication by:  
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For the Doctoral Program, School of Community Economic Development

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **The Problem**

The U.S. prison population is on the rise and accounts for about 500 prisoners per 100,000 residents; up from 411 in 1995 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, December 2006). At midyear 2007 there were 4,618 black male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 black males in the United States, compared to 1,747 Hispanic male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 Hispanic males and 773 white male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 white males (Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, June 2007).

This study was conducted in West Virginia. According to the US Census Bureau, West Virginia has a population of 1,810,358 (2006-08 estimates). The population is 94.4% White, 3.4% African-American and 1.1% Hispanic. The US population is 74.3% White, 12.3% African-American and 15.1% Hispanic. The sample was 54.5% Caucasian and 45.5% African-American. A comparison of the racial demographics of the sample, West Virginia and the United States is shown below in Figure 1.



As Figure 1 shows, the percentage of African Americans in the sample is significantly higher than that of the state and country. This high percentage of African Americans in the sample is intentional as race is one of the factors included in the hypotheses of the study.

The number of inmates in the WV Division of Corrections (WVDOC) institutions is steadily increasing. The WVDOC has 13 facilities around the state including correctional centers and work release centers. In FY 2009, the crime categories with the largest numbers of offenders were sex offenders - forcible (934), burglary/breaking & entering (888), homicide (841), and drug/narcotic offenses (710). The average yearly inmate population obtained from the WVDOC Annual Report FY 2009 was 4,671 in 2003 and steadily increased by 31% to 6,097 in 2008. Additionally, the number of parolees being released to communities in West Virginia is increasing. Moreover, as of June 30, 2009, the parole caseload

for the state was 2,569, a 6% increase from FY 2008. As of June 30, 2009, 88% of parolees were Caucasian, 11% were African-American, 80% were males and 20% were females. A comparison between the parolee demographics of West Virginia, the region and the country are below in Table 1. Given the population demographics of West Virginia, the parole data demonstrates that the national problem of disproportionately high incarceration rates among ethnic minorities is also evident in West Virginia.

Table 1: 2007 Parolees by Race

Parolees	West Virginia	South Region	United States
White	1,924 (89%)	92,272 (38%)	298,230 (41%)
Black	242 (11%)	114,940 (47%)	274,749 (37%)
Total	2,170	243,512	733,424

Sources: WV Division of Corrections, Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice

<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1656>

Recidivism is contributing to this rise in the prison population in the US and in West Virginia. Confronting Confinement, a June 2006 U.S. prison study by the bipartisan Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, reported that within three years of their release, 67% of former prisoners are rearrested and 52% are re-incarcerated. A recidivism study conducted by the WVDOC showed that overall recidivism increased from 19.6% in 2001 to 21.4% in 2002 and



increased even further to 26.4% in 2003. Recidivism among parolees was even greater, increasing from 29.8% in 2001 to 31.1% in 2002 and to 37.8% in 2003.

The costs of incarceration are great for the states, for families and for communities. As reported in a 2009 Pew Research Study, it is estimated that states spent a record \$51.7 billion on corrections in fiscal year 2008 and incarcerating one inmate cost them, on average, \$29,000 a year. During this same year the cost to incarcerate an inmate in the West Virginia Division of Corrections was \$23,264. Many families experience the great costs of incarceration when a parent is incarcerated and one parent is left to manage the household. In fact, single-parent homes are an indicator of family conflict which can lead to children developing problem behaviors like juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school drop-out and violence (Hawkins and Catalano, 1992). Incarceration, as a whole, results in many "collateral effects".

The concept of "collateral effects" refers to the unintended negative consequences that result from an offender's conviction and incarceration. It is based on the concept that the collective costs of imprisonment are paid on many levels, both direct and indirect. Negative effects are directly experienced by offenders, their families, and their children. These effects are persistent and pervasive and can include personal, social, financial, emotional, psychological, and physical concerns. Social and economic structures of communities are

affected as well, especially in areas where many residents are continually entering and exiting the criminal justice system. Concentrated crime and imprisonment, within communities, diminishes human capital (individual skills, knowledge), physical capital (infrastructures, material improvements), and social capital (social good embodied in relations) (Watts & Nightingale, 1996; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Rose, Clear, & Scully, 1999).

Nine out of ten prisoners eventually come home. More than half will return to their communities within two years of being incarcerated (Beck, 1999; Petersilia, 1999), meaning approximately 1,600 inmates exit state and federal prisons every day of the week (Petersilia, 1999; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Once released, they typically return to socially and economically marginalized neighborhoods that offer few legitimate opportunities (Dighton, 2002, Scott, 2004). Limited tangible skills or resources, coupled with the stigma of being an 'ex-con', lead many offenders back to prison.

## **Rationale**

The increasing prison population, disproportionately high incarceration rates of ethnic minorities and high recidivism rates are societal problems that can be addressed with various community economic development strategies implemented in communities where a high percentage of the population are ex-offenders. Community economic development is a process by which social,

political and economic forces generate local community revitalization efforts including business retention, commercial revitalization, business ventures, entrepreneurship, neighborhood capital accumulation, education and training, labor-based development and community organizing/planning (Wiewel, Tietz and Giloth, 1993). Inherent in the goal of community economic development is a notion of empowerment, which encompasses both the concept of decentralized democracy and the increased capacity of citizens to make relevant decisions that affect their own lives (Rubin and Rubin, 1986). To the extent that community economic development is a "process-oriented and experimental response that builds community-wide consensus around community problems and development innovations" (Giloth 1988), there needs to be a cognitive link that recognizes and appreciates the culture of individual communities, nurtures and supports existing social networks, and fosters economic empowerment through self-determination (Daley and Wong, 1994).

The evolution of community economic development theory represents a confluence of three different development paradigms: developing or improving economic systems and infrastructure; developing the economic capacities of groups to undertake community economic development; and developing the economic capacities of individuals (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

The economic systems perspective sees the only difference between economic development and community economic development as one of scale, viewing

community economic development as merely economic development at the community level. In this perspective, economic development is equivalent to economic growth. In this type of development, the main participants are outside experts, making the process exogenous. The initiatives developed usually involve technological improvements and infrastructure development largely with the expectations of attracting investment and industry (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

The group capacity-building perspective sees collective action as an end in itself (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). Collective action enables individuals who lack the resources to independently improve their well-being to work together to achieve this goal. This perspective defines CED as an endogenous process. The main participants are by definition the members of marginalized groups formed to undertake collective action. Examples of these types of initiatives include cooperatives and credit unions (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

The individual capacity-building perspective sees community economic development as the by-product of the economic success of individuals (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). In this case, community usually refers to a target group of economically marginalized individuals, instead of a geographic locality. Economic development solutions are seen to rest with building the capacity of a community's human resources to exploit the potential of under-utilized natural and institutional resources (Diochon, 1997). Collective action may be employed

not as an end in itself, but rather as a vehicle through which the institutional base identifies the problems and develops solutions that create innovation and entrepreneurship, more/better jobs, increased wealth and incomes and increased opportunities for personal fulfillment (Diochon, 1997). From this perspective, the development process can be either exogenous or endogenous. Development can be led by external non-profits or by local organizations established to promote individual capacity building.

Individual capacity building can involve learner-based strategies as in workforce development initiatives. According to Giloth (2000), at its core workforce development is about employment training, but involves deep employer and community involvement in networks that support both integrated human services as well as industry driven education or training. Additionally, workforce development can be seen as the coordination of public and private sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context (Jacobs & Hawley, 2003).

While in prison, inmates in the WVDOC have the opportunity to participate in various workforce development opportunities including GED preparation and college classes, various life programs and vocational training programs. The WVDOC offers these opportunities to inmates with the hope that, when they are released, they will be equipped with skills to be productive members of society.

Providing opportunities for increased job skills and employability for felony offenders is and has been considered a central goal in our correctional system (Albright & Denq, 1996). Vocational and educational training programs are found in virtually every institution. In 2000, 91 percent of all correctional facilities had some form of work program (Stephan & Karberg, 2003). Such programs have been linked to lower recidivism rates, better institutional adjustment, fewer parole revocations and increased post-release employment (Anderson, Schumacker, & Anderson, 1991; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000). Simply put, inmates who participate in prison programming generally do better than those who do not (Carlson, 2004).

Most inmates in state institutions experienced employment difficulties prior to incarceration. According to the US Department of Justice, only 56 percent of inmates were employed full time at the time of their most recent arrest. These problems escalate upon release from prison. A typical inmate leaves prison with little money, an inability to receive immediate unemployment compensation, and poor job prospects (Petersilia, 2003). Ex-offenders generally reenter the work force with low levels of education and limited work experience. Data from the 1997 National Survey of State Prison Inmates indicate that the average offender had only 10.7 years of education, and a recent study found that 60 percent of former inmates were unemployed one year after release (Petersilia, 1999). Job prospects are further limited by employer preference. Surveys of employers

reveal a great reluctance to hire felony offenders (Holzer, 2000). Most examinations have found that less than 50 percent of employers would hire an ex-offender (Albright & Denq, 1996). This number is further reduced by type of crime and multiple incarceration status. New security fears after September 11 have heightened worries about hiring ex-convicts, creating even tougher barriers for ex-offenders searching for employment (Marshall, 2002).

### **Statement of Purpose and Goals**

The study involves a comparative evaluation of learning-based strategies that are considered effective in promoting the likelihood that previously incarcerated persons will acquire and retain employment and reject future criminal behavior. The study also examines whether pre-incarceration conditions like age, race, gender and education level impact these outcome variables.

### **Central Questions**

The core question of this dissertation was whether the GED preparation and college classes, various life programs and vocational training programs completed by inmates did in fact impact their ability to acquire and sustain employment. Another important question is whether pre-incarceration conditions like race, gender and education level impacted these outcome variables. The problem of recidivism within the short term is also evaluated. In this study, short-term recidivism is defined as recidivism on or before December 31, 2009.

Are inmates who complete education, life and vocational training programs less likely to recidivate or do pre-incarceration conditions have a greater effect on recidivism? Do demographics like race, age and sex make a difference?

### **Context**

This study was based on data from the West Virginia Division of Corrections (WVDOC). The general population of the study was inmates who were released on parole between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 from the WV Division of Corrections. There were a total of 1,404 parolees released during this time period. Males comprised 85% of this group and females were 15% of the group. The focus of the study was on the parolees who completed particular life programs (99 Days and a Get Up, Employment Maturity, Job Search and Life Skills), particular education programs (Adult Basic Education GED Prep, GED, Associates degree, Bachelor's degree and college courses) and any vocational program while incarcerated. There were 1,266 parolees who completed at least one of these programs, of whom 1,141 (90%) were men and 125 (10%) women. The employment experiences of a randomly selected sample of 134 parolees were obtained from their respective parole officers. Parole officers reported on whether the parolee was ever employed; whether he/she acquired but did not sustain employment or whether he/she acquired and sustained employment. The employment experiences of 134 parolees were obtained from 53 parole officers. There were a total of 117 (87%) males and 17 (13%) females in the



sample; 54.5% were Caucasian and 45.5% were African-American. Race was an independent variable in the study so the percentage of African-Americans in the sample is not proportionate with respect to the parolee population.

### **Significance**

This study is unique in that it evaluates three types of strategies (education programs, life programs and vocational programs) as well as pre-incarceration conditions to determine the relationship to employment success (acquisition and retention) and recidivism. The results of the study may have significance as they can be used by the WVDOC to guide future programming at its thirteen facilities around the state.

### **Feasibility**

This dissertation was feasible given the fact that the WVDOC was very forthcoming in providing the data necessary. The data came from the Inmate Management Information System (IMIS) and from parole officers.

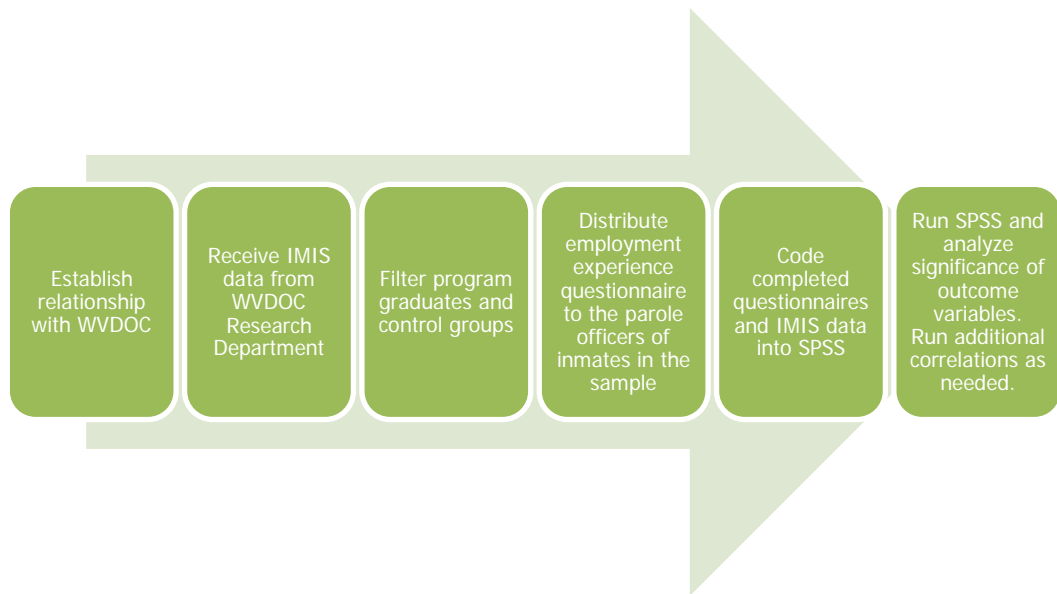
### **Roadmap**

The study began with an analysis of program completion data for inmates who were paroled between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009. Inmates who completed life programs (99 Days and a Get Up, Employment Maturity, Job Search and Life Skills), education programs (ABE GED Prep, GED, Associates degree, Bachelor's

degree and college courses) and any vocational program while incarcerated were filtered out of the spreadsheet and then grouped by race. The inmate numbers of randomly selected samples of White program graduates and African-American program graduates were then sent to WVDOC Research Department. Two control groups of inmates who did not complete education, life or vocational programs – one of White and another of African-American inmates – were also included in the study. Inmates who were paroled out of West Virginia were not included in the study as getting information from out-of-state parole officers would be an almost impossible task. After obtaining approval from the Chairman of the WV State Parole Board, a description of the study and a questionnaire were given to the research department for dissemination to parole officers. The questionnaire was designed to gather employment experience information. A copy of the questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix I. Parole officers returned the completed questionnaires to the research department.

Once the completed questionnaires were received, the data was coded in SPSS along with the other data obtained from the IMIS. The dissertation road map is diagrammed below in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Dissertation Road Map



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Economic Conditions, Work and Crime

Many assume that crime rates are driven by economic conditions. However, the evidence of this relationship has been difficult to identify. This has resulted in a disconnect between theory and empirical evidence (Piehl, 1998). While it is difficult to determine the true effect of secular economic growth, it is a fact that property crime increases during recessions, while homicides either fall or are not responsive to the business cycle (Piehl, 1998). Also, individuals with worse economic prospects are more likely to become engaged in crime and in the criminal justice system. Certain geographical areas have disproportionate levels of crime, so it is evident that crime can be very concentrated.

Freeman (1992) found a relationship between criminal justice system interventions and subsequent legitimate employment at the individual level. He found “massive long-term effects [of having been in jail or on probation] on employment.” Freeman concluded that those who had served time in jail or on probation worked 10 to 30 percent less than they would have otherwise. These results suggest that a criminal record is a substantial hindrance to securing legal work. This may require the restructuring of current criminal justice policies or developing new interventions (e.g. community economic development interventions) to help ex-offenders make the transition to legitimate work in the community.

Grogger (1995) studied the effect of arrest on the economic outcomes for young men. In contrast to Freeman (1992), he concluded that the effects of “arrest are moderate in magnitude and rather short-lived.” Waldfogel (1994), in analyzing federal offenders found very large effects of conviction on earnings and sizable effects on employment rates, which was similar to Freeman (1992). He also found that the economic impacts are especially large for those offenders whose offense “involved a breach of trust on the job.” It therefore appears that the impact of criminal justice sanctions on employment outcomes depends heavily on both the severity of the sanction and the type of crime involved.

There is evidence in the literature that contextual factors such as the availability of good jobs and the educational opportunities to gain the necessary credentials to access such jobs are important considerations in both community crime prevention and reincorporating released ex-offenders. The documented impact of college education, vocational training and GED acquisition on employment success and recidivism is outlined below.

#### College Education Impact

Taylor (1992) reported that a 1983 study of the Folsom State Prison college program revealed a zero percent recidivism rate for inmates earning a bachelor's

degree, while the average recidivism rate for the state's parolees was 23.9 percent for the first year, increasing to 55 percent within three years.

Batiuk (1997) reported that while the overall recidivism rate was 40 percent in Ohio, the recidivism rate for inmates enrolled in a college program was 18 percent. In addition, Ohio statistics show that inmates graduating from the college program reduced the rate of recidivism by 72 percent when compared with inmates not participating in any education program. This study of post-secondary correctional education in Ohio reported on a random sample of 1,195 inmates who had completed their educational programs between June 1989 and July 1992 and who were paroled between June 1990 and July 1992. Parolees had been out at least three years when recidivism into the Ohio system was rechecked in June 1995. The study employed a rigorous definition of recidivism as "return to prison for any cause" and a quasi-experimental design through the use of a control group of prisoners who were paroled in 1992 but who participated in no educational programs while incarcerated. Inmates in the control group had to have tested at between 4.0 and 6.9 grade reading levels. Only individuals who had completed Associate Degrees were included in the college sample since there were too few Bachelor's completers to comprise an adequate sample size.

Harer (1995) found that released offenders who completed at least one course per six months of confinement had a significantly lower rate of recidivism than releases who took no courses. This was especially true for participants who progressed into college-level coursework while in the program. College-level participants had lower recidivism rates than participants who started at the same level of education at intake, but did not progress as far. Additionally, released offenders who were full-time employees or students for at least 6 months during the last two years prior to imprisonment had a 25.4% recidivism rate compared to 60.2% for those who were not so occupied on a full-time basis. This study investigated recidivism among prisoners released from the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Recidivism in this case was defined as return to prison within 3 years of release. Information on demographic characteristics, criminal record, prison education etc. was gathered from inmate files. Data on poverty rates and unemployment rates were from a private data collection firm (CACI, 1988). Criminal follow-up information was obtained from an automated Interstate Identification Index system. The representative sample size was 1,205. Logistic regression was used to test the normalizing effects of social furloughs and prison education programs on recidivism.

Jenkins, Steurer & Pendry (1995) found that college participants were more likely to complete their parole satisfactorily than adult basic education, GED or vocational participants. Completing a program and/or completing higher levels

of training or education appear to improve post-release employment variables. Jenkins et al. (1995) found participants who had completed a GED or college program were more likely to earn a higher wage than inmates who had completed an Adult Basic Education or vocational program. This Maryland study of correctional education program completers, released in 1990-1991, involved a telephone survey of supervisory parole agents. Data was obtained on 120 inmates. Demographic and criminal justice variables were obtained for each completer from his/her automated file.

Educational programs offered inside correctional institutions have been linked to higher self-esteem, family stability and lower recidivism rates (Laub *et al.*, 1998, Saylor & Gaes, 1997).

#### Vocational Training Impact

Anderson (1981) discovered that parolees who completed a vocational certificate were less likely to violate parole (20.4%) than parolees who had low levels or no training (36.4%). He also found that as vocational training increased, the probability of violating parole decreased and that the number of hours and the levels of training were positively related to the number of months employed for vocational participants. This study conducted an in-depth analysis of a sample of parolees from the Vienna Illinois Correctional Center from 1972 to 1976. The research population was comprised of male parolees who had received



vocational training and academic education. This population was compared with parolees who had received neither vocational training nor academic education during the same period. Three sources were involved in the data collection process: a random sample of 400 former Vienna Correctional Center clients; a sample of employers of Vienna parolees who had received vocational training at the institution; and responses from a sample of parolees who had received vocational training at the institution. The case files and parole records of 238 subjects were reviewed and relevant information was coded on a data collection form. Fifty employers of vocationally trained Vienna parolees were randomly selected and twenty five were successfully interviewed. Twenty four out of fifty parolees randomly selected for personal interviews were successfully interviewed. Parolee records were checked at 6 months, 12 months and at the end of the parole period. Parole period ranged from one to twenty-four months.

Shumacker, Anderson & Anderson (1990) found parolees who enrolled in both vocational and academic coursework had the lowest rates of criminal activity among all parolees, followed by parolees enrolled in either vocational training or academic coursework. All three groups had lower rates of criminal activity than the control group, which had neither vocational training nor academic coursework. This study compared adult previously incarcerated persons who had vocational/academic training to a control group of previously incarcerated persons who did not receive vocational training. All 19 adult correctional

institutions in a mid-western state were involved in providing previously incarcerated person information, as was every Parole District. A total of 760 previously incarcerated persons were studied for twelve months. A data collection instrument was designed to gather relevant information on background variables, vocational enrollment and completion, academic background, employment, and violation status over the twelve month period. Personnel at the correctional institutions completed background, vocational, and educational information on inmates selected for the study. A stratified, proportional random sampling procedure was used to select and equate inmate groups. Data collection instruments were then forwarded to the proper parole office, where Parole Officers recorded month by month status of each previously incarcerated person during the time on parole, up to twelve months. The vocational and vocational/academic groups had the highest employment rates and the lowest criminal activity rates after twelve months of tracking. The control group had the highest criminal activity rate. Vocational completers were those who finished a vocational course of instruction. When compared with vocational non-completers, data indicated that vocational completers had a higher employment rate and fewer arrests. The vocational non-completers, however, still had a higher employment rate and fewer arrests than the control group. The academic group had the lowest employment rate and second highest criminal activity rate at twelve months. Those who completed a GED or higher had a higher employment rate and lower criminal activity rate at twelve months than those previously

incarcerated persons who had less than a GED. The completion of a GED or higher credential increased post-release success over those with less than a GED.

Vocational programs offered inside correctional institutions have been linked to higher self-esteem, family stability and lower recidivism rates (Laub *et al.*, 1998, Saylor & Gaes, 1997).

#### GED Acquisition Impact

Schumacker et al., (1990) found participants who completed a GED or higher had significantly lower recidivism than participants who completed less than a GED.

Completing a program and/or completing higher levels of training or education appear to improve post-release employment variables. Jenkins et al. (1995) found participants who had completed a GED or college program were more likely to earn a higher wage than inmates who had completed an ABE or vocational program.

#### Effects of Work

Successful employment has been linked to improved self-esteem, family stability and other correlates of a non-criminal lifestyle (Albright & Denq, 1996). In a

1995 meta-analysis of 400 studies from 1950 to 1990, the single most effective barrier to reoffending was employment (Lipsey, 1995).

According to Uggen (2000), work appears to be a turning point in the life course of criminal offenders over 26 years old. Offenders who are provided even marginal employment opportunities are less likely to re-offend than those not provided such opportunities. Employment in the National Supported Work Demonstration Project—a program critics deemed to be a failure—significantly reduced recidivism among offenders over the age of 26. Primary findings reported here indicate: (1) a differential work effect across age groups, lending support to a life-course rather than an age-invariant model of work and crime; (2) progressively larger effects of assignment, eligibility, and participation, particularly for the arrest outcome; and (3) the varying timing of recidivism as measured by self-reported illegal earnings and arrest. The effect of program assignment within age categories using tests for the equality of survival distributions was examined. Although the program failed to reduce crime across the entire sample, its impact was clearly age-graded: the job treatment significantly reduced recidivism among older participants. In contrast to the stylized cultural image of the "hardened criminal," these results suggest that older offenders are more amenable to employment interventions than younger offenders. These results are important because they show that older offenders given jobs are less likely to reoffend than those *of comparable age who were not*

*provided these opportunities.* In this Uggen study, participants were referred to an experimental employment program by criminal justice, social service and job training agencies and randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions. From March 1975 to July 1977 over 3,000 persons with an official arrest history drawn from nine US cities were randomly assigned to the control or treatment condition and completed baseline interviews. Those in the treatment group were offered minimum-wage jobs. Members of both groups reported work, crime and arrest information at nine-month intervals for up to three years.

Completing a program and/or completing higher levels of training or education appear to improve post-release employment variables. Holloway and Moke (1986) found completers who were employed had lower rates of recidivism than did completers who were not employed. Three hundred residents of Lebanon Correctional Institution in Ohio were studied. A quasi-experimental design was adopted in which a control group was selected from those inmates who expressed an interest in being admitted to college. In order to reduce the impact of the program on the control group, the population selected attended no more than two quarters of college. A time frame was selected so all persons were paroled during approximately the same period of time and all would complete a minimum of one year on parole. There were three comparison groups:

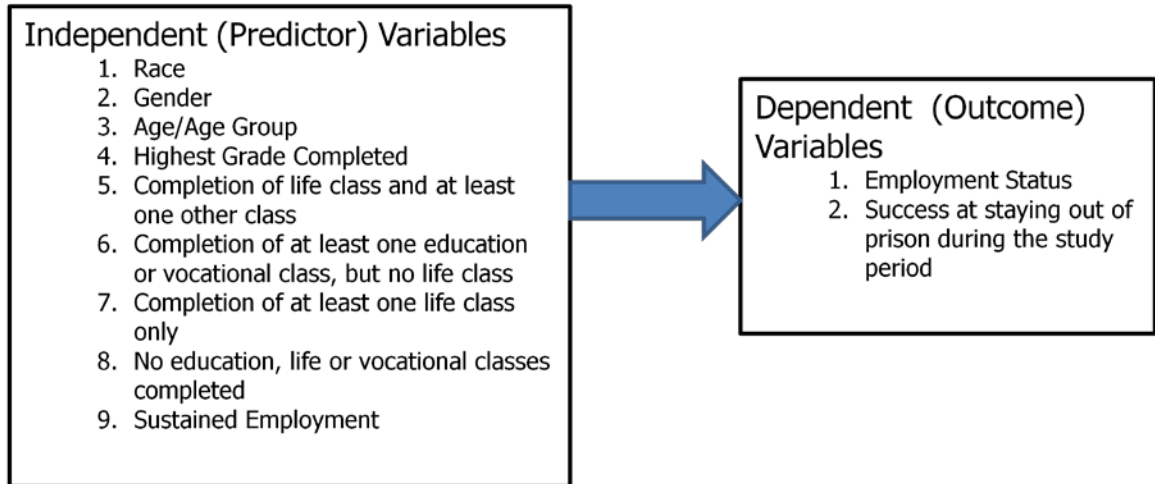
- Group I included inmate-students who graduated from an associate degree prison program and were paroled during 1982 and 1983.
- Group II included inmates who had a high school diploma or a GED certificate and attended no more than two quarters of the associate degree program and were paroled during 1982 and 1983
- Group III included inmates in the general prison population who reported no high school diploma or GED and had no contact with the associate degree program and were paroled between 1982 and 1983.

#### Community Economic Development Connection

According to Temali (2004), community economic development focuses on four pivot points to positively impact families and communities. These pivot points are the community's commercial district, micro-businesses, workforce and job opportunities. Developing the community's workforce is the pivot point that is of interest in this study as many offenders lack the skills to get and keep jobs. According to Temali (2004), for most residents in low-income neighborhoods the best path to economic development is training and placement in jobs with decent pay and opportunities for advancement. Training helps the unemployed to develop soft skills and hard skills. Soft skills refer to effective work habits, dressing for success, life management, motivation and support system building. Vocational training develops hard skills for specific jobs (Temali, 2004).

## Relationships to be Studied

Figure 3: Relationships to be Studied



Employment status is a key dependent variable. It has three categories: Never employed; Acquired but did not sustain employment; Acquired and sustained employment.

### **3. Theory**

Many theoretical perspectives establish the likelihood of finding increased employability and reductions in future offending that are associated with program completion. These theories hypothesize that program completion reduces future offending by increasing skill level and employability. For instance, an education program may increase problem solving skills and thereby have a positive impact on future offending.

The theories that underpin this dissertation are social control theory, social cognitive theory and social reaction/labeling theory. The concept of social capital also underpins this research. The linkages between social capital and crime and between social capital and social control are also keys to understanding causal relationships in the study.

#### **Social Control Theory**

Social control theory refers to a perspective which predicts that when social constraints on antisocial behavior are weakened or absent, delinquent behavior emerges. Rather than stressing causative factors in criminal behavior, control theory asks why people actually obey rules instead of breaking them. This theory stresses the idea that people in a society commit delinquent or criminal acts because of the weakness of the forces restraining them, not because of the strength of forces driving them to do so. It asserts that social controls, like



arrest, imprisonment, loss of income, etc. increase the costs of violent behaviors (psychology-lexicon.com).

Social control theory addresses the control that society has or influences over individual human behavior (Siegel, 2001; Hirschi, 1969). Most people willingly submit to society's laws and norms. Their behavior is held in check by social elements, such as family, career goals, school and community organizations, and ethical standards. Durkheim argued that behavior is controlled by social reaction, such as punishment (Williams & McShane, 1999). He argued that social controls disappear where social norms and relationships breakdown. However, to be effective in maintaining desired behavior, social bonds must be between individuals who are compliant with social norms. The social bonds are weakened with deviants. Moreover, work can be seen as a way of exerting social control. Job stability is a key determinant of criminal involvement, not because of the income but because of the control it exerts over a worker's life (Piehl, 1998).

From the social control theory perspective, reduced future offending results from opportunities for informal social control and not from increased employability. When an offender volunteers to participate in prison programs, the outcome may be the fostering of instructor and employer contact and a commitment to conventional aspects of society.

## **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory, often used in psychology, education, and communication, posits that portions of an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences. So by being exposed to positive individuals and learning opportunities, offenders will be more likely to develop skills to become more employable and less likely to offend in the future. Social cognitive theory explains human psychosocial functioning in terms of the interaction between behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events. These three factors interact as determinants of each other in a process known as triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1986). In addition, social cognitive theory encompasses a number of self-regulatory and self-reflective processes such as self-efficacy and goals. Self-efficacy is a major mechanism of the self-regulatory process of social cognitive theory and plays a central role in the exercise of personal agency. Within social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is the most proximal regulator of human behavior and a strong predictor of thought, affect, motivation, and action (Bandura, 1991). Self-efficacy beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, the amount of effort one exerts in the pursuit of goals, and how long one will persevere in the face of difficulties and setbacks (Bandura, 1991). In social cognitive theory, human behavior is extensively motivated and regulated by the ongoing exercise of self-influence. The major self-regulative mechanism operates through three principal sub-

functions. These include self-monitoring of one's behavior, its determinants, and its effects; judgment of one's behavior in relation to personal standards and environmental circumstances; and affective self-reaction. Self-regulation also encompasses the self-efficacy mechanism, which plays a central role in the exercise of personal agency by its strong impact on thought, affect, motivation, and action. The same self-regulative system is involved in moral conduct. Although compared to the achievement domain, in the moral domain the evaluative standards are more stable, the judgmental factors more varied and complex, and the affective self-reactions more intense. In the interactionist perspective of social cognitive theory, social factors affect the operation of the self-regulative system.

### **Social Reaction or Labeling Theory**

Social reaction or labeling theory emphasizes the negative effect of one's prosocial activities of being perceived (rightly or wrongly) as being involved in criminal activity (Piehl, 1998). The theory explains society's reaction to crime and how the labeled deviant reacts to the new label (Siegel, 2001; Barkan, 2006; Williams & McShane, 1999; and Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). Labeling is a social construction, based upon what society determines is deviant (Liska & Messner, 1999). The individual responds to the image that others have created for him, such as when he is labeled as a *troublemaker*, *ex-con*, *delinquent*, or *thief*.

Whether the offender likes it or not, society has given him a new identity. The offender is highly likely to adopt that identity, internalize it, and live up to the new, lower expectations for himself. It is a stigma that produces low self-image, self-esteem, and self-respect. It leads to secondary deviance, where individuals commit more deviant acts in keeping with their assigned label (Lemert, 1951). Empirical evidence supports that labeling influences offender behavior (Siegel, 2001), but the likelihood of an offender to re-offend could just as much be the result of the limitations put on his life by having a conviction on his record. As a corrective measure, a positive or supportive approach to labeling could be used to reduce the stigma and de-emphasize the criminal element, such as calling a convict an offender (Williams & McShane, 1999). In this sense, labeling theory touches on the humanistic side of the classical theory of criminology.

The theory posits that criminal activity and the imposition of sanctions serve to "label" individuals in such a way that, for example, their employment prospects are reduced. This provides for a feedback mechanism: once one becomes involved in crime, employment opportunities fail and the incentive to commit crime increases. This model has business cycle consequences because when crime increases, the economy suffers. As a result, if crimes go up during a recession, the feedback mechanism will deepen or prolong the economic downturn (Piehl, 1998).

## **Social Capital and Crime**

Social capital, or the “features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1993), is related to an array of social phenomena. Given social capital’s similarity with concepts such as social solidarity, social disorganization, and collective efficacy, it is not surprising that studies suggest it is inversely related to crime. The negative association between social capital and crime holds across levels of analysis, including schools (Lindstrom, 2001), census blocks (Martin, 2002), cities and counties (Messner, Baumer, & Rosenfeld, 2004), county clusters (Rosenfeld, Messner, & Baumer, 2001), states (Kennedy, Kawachi, Prothrow-Stith, Lochner, & Vanita, 1998; Putnam, 2000), and nation-states (Lederman, Loayza, & Mendendez, 2002). The relationship also holds for a variety of crimes, including homicide rates (Galea, Tremblay, & Larocque, 2002; Lederman et al., 2002; Messner et al., 2004; Rosenfeld et al., 2001), other violent acts (Hemenway, Kennedy, Kawachi, & Putnam, 2001; Kennedy et al., 1998), and burglary (Kawachi, Kennedy, & Wilkinson, 1999; Martin, 2002). Thus, the relationship between social capital and crime appears to be robust.

The logic connecting social capital and crime is based on social disorganization theory. According to this perspective, disorganized communities with high rates of residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, family disruption, and poverty have difficulty establishing “a stable and efficient neighborhood for the education and

control of the child and the suppression of lawlessness" (Shaw, 1931). Such neighborhoods struggle to establish effective relational networks and typically have low rates of participation in neighborhood organizations that can perpetuate and protect neighborhood values (Shaw & McKay, 1942/1972). As a result, disorganized communities have difficulty maintaining a cohesive value system and develop competing value systems "with respect to child care, conformity to law, and related matters" (Shaw & McKay, 1942/1972) that negatively influence attempts at social control. Thus, according to social disorganization theory, structural disadvantages weaken families, neighborhood institutions, and informal networks, which in turn weaken the sources of formal and informal social controls and allow crime to flourish (Hawdon & Ryan, 2009).

### **Social Capital and Social Control**

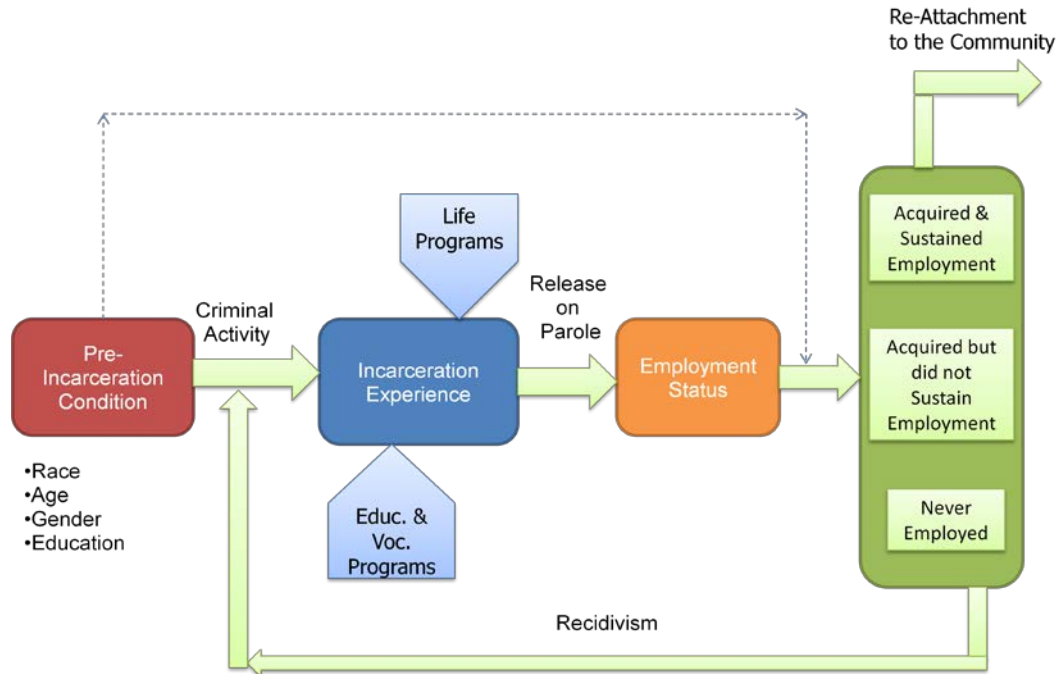
We expect the normative dimension of social capital to enhance a neighborhood's level of private control. As Hunter (1985, p. 233) argues, "The private order of friends is found in both the informal and formal primary groups where the values of sentiment, social support, and esteem are the essential resources of the social order and the basis of social control" (Hunter, 1985, p. 233). Similarly, Shaw and McKay (1942/1972) argue that low delinquency rates are found in areas where there is relative uniformity of values and attitudes in favor of conformity to law. Thus, when a high degree of consensus exists among residents, they are able to control youth and adults. Norms of trust and

reciprocity will also be directly related to parochial control. The greater the attachment to one's community and sense of trust toward fellow residents, the greater the probability one will participate in collective action (Berkowitz, 2000; Hawdon et al., 2000; Saegert & Winkel, 2004). As Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) state, "One is unlikely to intervene in a neighborhood context in which the rules are unclear and people mistrust or fear one another" (p. 919). Although norms of trust and reciprocity will likely increase private and parochial controls, they are likely to decrease public control. Public control is enacted by police (Hunter, 1985); hence, public control is formal social control or law. Because friends and relatives are unlikely to enlist the state to settle their disputes, law is unlikely to be present in such a context (Black, 1976).

The relationship between civic participation and the forms of social control will also likely vary in direction. Civic participation will be directly related to parochial control. Because parochial control, exercised through local organizations such as neighborhood watches, relies on volunteers (Hunter, 1985), the extent to which residents participate in civic life generally will determine to a great degree the extent to which they participate in neighborhood organizations. Similarly, civic engagement will increase public control because residents who are involved in community life are the most likely to cooperate with the police (Duffee, 1990).

## Governing Dynamics and Organizing Framework

Figure 4: Governing Dynamics and Organizing Framework



The framework for the study is shown above in Figure 4. As the framework shows, there are certain pre-incarceration conditions that may lead to someone committing a crime. These conditions include age, gender and education. As stated previously, African-Americans are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and so race is also included in the list of pre-incarceration conditions. While incarcerated, an inmate has a number of programs available to him/her. However, for this study, only the impact of education, life and vocational programs will be investigated. When an inmate is released on parole, he/she may acquire a job and sustain it or acquire a job and not sustain it. Social control, social cognitive and social capital theories posit that sustained



employment will eventually lead to re-attachment to the community as social capital increases. Other parolees may remain unemployed. Yet others may commit another crime and return to prison and begin the cycle all over again.

## **Research Questions**

There are two research questions in this dissertation:

1. What are the contributions of pre-incarceration experiences to post-release employment acquisition, employment retention and to successfully staying out of prison in the future?
2. What are the contributions of prison-based programs to post-release employment acquisition, employment retention and to successfully staying out of prison in the future?

## **Statement of Hypotheses**

This dissertation has four key hypotheses:

1. Parolees who participate in prison programs will have higher rates of employment acquisition.
2. Parolees who participate in prison programs will have higher rates of employment retention.
3. Employment retention is the best predictor of success staying out of prison.
4. Pre-incarceration conditions do influence outcomes:

- a. African-American parolees will have less success acquiring and retaining employment than White parolees.
- b. Parolees with low levels of education will have less success acquiring and retaining employment than parolees with higher education levels.

### Logic Model: Organizing Theory, Research Questions, Hypotheses

Figure 5: Logic Model

<b>Long-Term Outcome</b>	Previously incarcerated persons who sustain employment will be successful at staying out of prison (social control theory).		
<b>Intermediate Outcome</b>	Previously incarcerated persons who complete these classes will be more likely to sustain employment and support themselves and their families (social cognitive theory).		
<b>Short-Term Outcome</b>	Inmates who complete these classes will be more likely to acquire employment upon their return to the community (social cognitive theory).		
<b>Outputs</b>	1,266 inmates completed at least one of these classes and were released on parole between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 (social control theory).		
<b>Activities</b>	Education Classes	Life classes	Vocational Classes
<b>Inputs</b>	Offenders (social control theory and social capital) WV State tax dollars WV Dept. of Ed. Institutional Ed. staff Classroom space Curriculum materials		

As Figure 5 shows there are a number of inputs into the WVDOC prison-based educational system. These inputs include the offenders themselves, tax dollars that cover the cost of incarceration, staff from the WV Department of Education

Institutional Education and other training providers, classroom space and curriculum materials. The lack of social control and social capital may have led to crimes being committed. The activities of interest in this dissertation are education classes (Adult Basic Education GED Preparation, General Educational Development (GED), Associates degree, Bachelor's degree and college courses), life classes (99 Days and a Get Up, Employment Maturity, Job Search and Life Skills), and all of the twenty seven vocational programs offered at various correctional facilities around the state of West Virginia. Social control theory can be used to explain why inmates took advantage of these training activities and why 1,266 of them completed at least one of them during the study period - July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009.

Social cognitive theory may be the reason for the WVDOC offering training in these areas to prepare inmates for life back in the community after release. Social cognitive theory is the theoretical underpinning for the short-term and intermediate-term outcomes. In the event that the expected outcomes do not materialize, social interaction/labeling theory may be the reason. With the right family and community supports and social capital, social control theory predicts that ex-offenders will thrive in the community and not return to prison.

## 4. METHOD

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND INTERNAL VALIDITY

The design of the study is as follows:

Comparison Group 1	N	O <sub>0</sub>	X <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub> O <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>
Comparison Group 2	N	O <sub>0</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	O <sub>1</sub> O <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>
Comparison Group 3	N	O <sub>0</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	O <sub>1</sub> O <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>
Comparison Group 4	N	O <sub>0</sub>	X <sub>1/2/3</sub>	O <sub>1</sub> O <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>
Control group	N	O <sub>0</sub>		O <sub>1</sub> O <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>

Definitions of the design notation are:

X<sub>1</sub> – Education intervention

X<sub>2</sub> – Life intervention

X<sub>3</sub> – Vocational intervention

O<sub>0</sub> – Pre-Incarceration Conditions (ethnicity, education, age, gender)

O<sub>1</sub>– Employment acquisition after release on parole versus no employment

O<sub>2</sub> – Employment acquisition and retention after release on parole versus no retention

O<sub>3</sub> – Recidivism (Parolees returning to prison for any reason on or before December 31, 2009) versus no recidivism

This dissertation did not involve direct program implementation or any direct observations and investigations at the time of implementation. The programs were implemented by the WVDOC and its partners. As a result, internal validity can be assumed, but not confirmed.

## PROCEDURES

### Hypothesis 1

Parolees who participate in prison programs will have higher rates of employment acquisition.

The **independent (predictor) variables** to test this hypothesis were as follows:

1. Completion of life class and at least one other class
2. Completion of at least one education or vocational class, but no life class
3. Completion of at least one life class only
4. No education, life or vocational classes completed

The **dependent (outcome) variable** to test this hypothesis was:

1. Employment Acquisition (Did the parolee hold a job at any time in the study period?)

## Procedures and Source of Data

Program completion data for inmates who were paroled between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 were obtained in Microsoft Excel files from the WVDOC Research Department after being retrieved from the department's Inmate Management Information System. The data in these files are listed below:

- Inmate Number
- Prison where housed
- Release Date
- Sex
- Birth date
- Highest Grade Completed
- GED
- Race
- Program Name
- Program Enrollment Date
- Program Completion Date
- Incarceration Date
- Last Offense
- Offense Rank
- Commitments to Prison during the Study Period

Inmates who completed life programs, education programs and any of thirteen vocational programs while incarcerated were filtered out of the spreadsheet and then grouped by race. The life programs were 99 Days and a Get Up, Employment Maturity, Job Search and Life Skills. These programs are implemented by the WV Department of Education, Office of Institutional Education. Below are descriptions that were available on the department's web site ([http://wvde.state.wv.us/institutional/PD/filecabinet.html#Counselor's Resources](http://wvde.state.wv.us/institutional/PD/filecabinet.html#Counselor'sResources)).

The 99 Days and a Get Up program is comprised of 20 one-hour sessions that are facilitated by independent study. The program prepares participants for five years of arrest-free living. Participants identify changes in the economy and how to survive in it and gain a realistic

picture of earning potential. They understand the requirements for successfully completing parole. They understand changes in society and local community. Participants practice stress reduction techniques, identify high-risk situations nearing release and develop a plan to overcome them. They identify prison survival techniques that are unacceptable for free living, and recognize the danger in them. Participants write a personal history in order to develop a sense of responsibility for actions. They recognize that destructive behavior is rationalized or justified, and practice accepting feedback. They look for ways to accept responsibility and practice self-control. They conduct or review self-inventories. They explore the reality of release and form reasonable expectations. This class is for those inmates referred because they are expected to discharge or to be paroled within six months.

In the Employment Maturity class, students learn and practice how to keep a J-O-B. The focus is getting along on the J-O-B.

Life Skills is an employment readiness program created by the West Virginia Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Workforce Development. Life Skills is one of the three components necessary to get the "Ready to Work" Certificate from the WV Department of Education.

The education programs were Adult Basic Education GED Prep, GED, college courses, Associate's degree and Bachelor's degree. While the vocational programs were:

- 3D Home Architect
- Apprentice Electrician Exam Preparation
- Aquaculture
- AutoCAD LT97- Computer Aided Drafting
- Automotive Technology
- Blueprint Reading
- Building Construction
- Carpentry
- CLN Workplace Safety-Food Service
- C-Tech Cabling
- Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management
- Electrical
- Exam Prep and Business Law
- Facility Maintenance
- Floral Design
- Horticulture
- Landscaping
- Logger Certification

- Masonry
- Metals Technology
- Mill and Cabinetry
- OSHA Standards General Industry
- OSHA Standards- Specialized certification
- Printing/Graphic Arts
- Underground Apprentice Mining
- WV Welcome: Service Industry

The inmate numbers of randomly selected samples of White program graduates and African-American program graduates were then sent to the WVDOC Research Department. Two control groups of inmates who did not complete education, life or vocational programs – one of White and another of African-American inmates – were also included in the study. Inmates who were paroled out of West Virginia were not included in the study as getting information from out-of-state parole officers would be an almost impossible task. After obtaining approval from the Chairman of the WV State Parole Board, a description of the study and a questionnaire were given to the research department for dissemination to parole officers. The questionnaire was designed to gather employment status information. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix I. Parole Officers essentially reported on whether the subjects were never employed; acquired but did not sustain employment; or acquired and sustained employment. Hours worked per week and wages were also reported by parole officers. Parole officers returned the completed questionnaires to the WVDOC Research Department.



Once the completed questionnaires were received from the research department, the data was coded in SPSS along with the other data obtained from the IMIS.

### **Analysis of Data for Hypothesis 1**

Cross Tabulations were run in SPSS and the Pearson Chi Square result was checked for significance. Logistic regression was also used to predict the probability of employment acquisition and retention.

### **Hypothesis 2**

Parolees who participate in prison programs will have higher rates of employment retention.

The **independent (predictor) variables** to test this hypothesis were as follows:

1. Completion of life class and at least one other class
2. Completion of at least one education or vocational class, but no life class
3. Completion of at least one life class only
4. No education, life or vocational classes completed

The **dependent (outcome) variable** to test this hypothesis was:

1. Employment Status (Did the parolee sustain a job through the end of the study period?)

### **Procedures and Source of Data**

Same as described above in Hypothesis 1.

### **Analysis of Data for Hypothesis 2**

Cross Tabulations were run in SPSS and the Pearson Chi Square result was checked for significance. Logistic regression was also used to predict the probability of employment acquisition and retention.

### **Hypothesis 3**

Employment retention is the best predictor of success staying out of prison.

The **independent (predictor) variable** to test this hypothesis was:

1. Employment status

The **dependent (outcome) variable** to test this hypothesis was:

1. Success at staying out of prison

## **Procedures and Source of Data**

Same as described above in Hypothesis 1.

## **Analysis of Data for Hypothesis 3**

Cross Tabulations were run in SPSS and the Pearson Chi Square result was checked for significance. Logistic regression was also used to predict the probability of employment acquisition and retention.

## **Hypothesis 4**

Pre-incarceration conditions will influence outcomes:

- a. African-American parolees will have less success acquiring and retaining employment than White parolees.
- b. Parolees with low levels of education will have less success acquiring and retaining employment than parolees with higher education levels.

The **independent (predictor) variables** to test this hypothesis were as follows:

1. Race
2. Highest Grade Completed

The **dependent (outcome) variables** to test this hypothesis were:

1. Employment status

### **Procedures and Source of Data**

Same as described above in Hypothesis 1.

### **Analysis of Data for Hypothesis 4**

Cross Tabulations were run in SPSS and the Chi Square result was checked for significance. Gender and age were also included in the analysis or pre-incarceration conditions.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

As described in the Procedures section above, demographic, pre-incarceration condition and program completion data on parolees who were released between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009, were obtained from the WVDOC Research Department. There was no need to design an instrument to gather this data.

However, a questionnaire was developed to gather employment status data on subjects from their respective parole officers. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix I. Parole Officers essentially reported on whether the subjects were never employed; acquired but did not sustain employment; acquired and sustained employment. Hire date, employer, earnings, weekly work hours and

termination date were also compiled. A total of fifty-three (53) parole officers from all around the state of West Virginia completed questionnaires.

### **SAMPLING AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY**

Parolees released between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 were categorized into two groups – White and African-American. The time period of focus resulted from preliminary discussions with a parole supervisor. Sub-groups were then created according to the typology below in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Sampling Typology

<b>Classes Completed</b>	<b>Took Life Skills</b>	<b>Didn't take Life Skills</b>
Completed other classes	This group contains African-American prisoners who completed life classes and at least one other class. <b>(BQ1)</b>	This group contains African-American prisoners who didn't complete life classes, but completed at least one other class. <b>(BQ2)</b>
Didn't complete other classes	This group contains African-American prisoners who completed life classes but completed no other class of any type. <b>(BQ3)</b>	This group contains African-American prisoners who completed no education, life or vocational training. This is the control group for black prisoners. <b>(BQ4)</b>
Completed other classes	This group contains White prisoners who completed life classes and at least one other class. <b>(WQ1)</b>	This group contains White prisoners who didn't complete Life Classes, but completed at least one other class. <b>(WQ2)</b>
Didn't complete other classes	This group contains White prisoners who completed life classes but completed no other class of any type. <b>(WQ3)</b>	This group contains White prisoners who completed no education, life or vocational training. This is the control group for white prisoners. <b>(WQ4)</b>

This typology was developed after preliminary analyses revealed the following breakdown of classes completed:

Table 2: Summary of IMIS Program Completion Data

<b>Classes Completed</b>	<b>African-American Inmates</b>	<b>White Inmates</b>
<b>Higher Ed, Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Vocational</b>	0	1
<b>Education, Higher Education, Life, Vocational</b>	3	8
<b>Education, Life, Vocational</b>	9	44
<b>Education, Higher Ed, Life</b>	1	5
<b>Higher Ed, Life, Vocational</b>	3	10
<b>Education, Higher Ed, Vocational</b>		1
<b>Education, Life</b>	17	84
<b>Education, Vocational</b>	0	4
<b>Higher Ed, Life</b>	3	10
<b>Higher Ed, Vocational</b>		4
<b>Life, Vocational</b>	40	197
<b>Education, Higher Ed</b>	1	
<b>Education</b>	8	38
<b>Life</b>	123	568
<b>Vocational</b>	5	45
<b>Higher Ed</b>	2	2
<b>No Programs Completed</b>	241	1112

As Table 2 shows, the number of inmates completing life classes far exceeded inmates completing any other class or combination of classes.

Thirteen to twenty one randomly selected parolees from each sub-group were included in the study. Program graduates who paroled to other states were not included in the study as retrieving employment experience information from out-of-state parole officers would be nearly impossible.

Regarding **external validity**, the results of the study cannot be generalized to the general ex-offender population, only to those ex-offenders who were paroled in West Virginia. Furthermore, since the study only included parolees from West Virginia, the results cannot be generalized to parolees in other states.

### **DATA ANALYSIS PLAN**

The general population of the study was comprised of ex-offenders who were released on parole between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 from the WV Division of Corrections. There were a total of 1,404 parolees released during this time period. The focus of the study was on the parolees who completed life programs (99 Days and a Get Up, Employment Maturity, Job Search and Life Skills), education programs (Adult Basic Education GED Prep, GED, Associates degree, Bachelor's degree and college courses) and any vocational program while incarcerated. There were 1,266 parolees who completed at least one of these programs. The total sample size of the study was one hundred and thirty four (134) distributed as follows:



Table 3: The Study Group

<b>Classes Completed</b>	<b>Took Life Skills</b>	<b>Didn't take Life Skills</b>
Completed other classes	BQ1 - 20	BQ2 - 12
Didn't complete other classes	BQ3 - 16	BQ4 - 13
Completed other classes	WQ1 - 15	WQ2 - 17
Didn't complete other classes	WQ3 - 20	WQ4 - 21

The SPSS data file for the study had a number of variables as listed in Appendix II.

Basic frequencies and descriptives were run in SPSS to get a clear picture of the sample characteristics. These runs were followed by Cross Tabulation runs and the Pearson Chi Square results were checked for significance. Logistic regression was also utilized in data analyses.

## **STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS**

This study does not include parolees who may have attended but not completed an education, life or vocational program. As a result, these non-completers may have acquired some knowledge of the subject matter even though they may not be reflected in the sample of completers for that particular program.

The results of the study cannot be generalized to the general ex-offender population, only to those ex-offenders who were paroled in West Virginia. Furthermore, since the study only included parolees from West Virginia, the results cannot be generalized to parolees in other states.

The study period is limited by the fact that ex-offenders only remain on parole for up to two years. Retrieving employment experience information from ex-offenders who are no longer on parole is outside the scope of this dissertation.

Finally, the study does not take into account other barriers to employment like the economic climate, substance abuse, transportation and childcare.

## 5. RESULTS

A total of one hundred and thirty four parolees were included in the study. Sixty-one or 45.5% of them were African-Americans and 73 or 54.5% were White. Race was an independent variable in the study so the percentage of African-Americans in the sample is not proportionate with respect to the general parolee population; it is significantly higher. Female parolees comprised 12.7% of the sample and males made up the remaining 87.3%. A comparison of these key demographic characteristics to the general WVDOC population on June 30, 2009 is below in Table 4.

Table 4: Race and Gender of Study Sample and Prison Population

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>WV Prison Population</b>
% White	54.5	84.6
% African American	45.5	13.6
% Male	87.3	90.0
% Female	12.7	10.0

Subjects ranged in age from 20 to 63. Table 5 below shows the frequencies for various age groups:

Table 5: Age Distribution of Study Sample

Age Range	Frequency	Percent (%)
20-29	46	34
30-39	43	32
40-49	35	26
50-59	8	6
60-69	2	1
Total	134	100

As Table 5 above shows 66% of the sample was between 20 and 39 years of age.

Table 6: Age and Gender of Sample

			Gender		Total (n=134)
			Female (n=17)	Male (n=117)	
Age	20-29	%	35.3	34.4	34.2
	30-39	%	29.5	32.6	32.1
	40-49	%	29.5	25.7	26.0
	50-59	%	5.9	6.3	5.7
	60-69	%	0.0	1.8	1.4
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

There were 117 males and 17 females in the sample. Table 6 above summarizes the gender and age characteristics of the sample. As the data show, the ages of the females and males in the sample were comparable.

A key independent variable in the study was the highest grade completed by parolees. Table 7 shows the frequencies in the sample:

Table 7: Highest Grade Completed

Highest Grade Completed	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
1 – 8	14	10.4	11.4
9 – 11	68	50.7	55.3
12	34	25.4	27.6
13+	7	5.2	5.7
Total Valid	123	91.8	100.0
Missing	11	8.2	
Total	134	100.0	

As Table 7 shows, 67% of the sample had less than a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education.

Another key independent variable in the study is High School or GED completion.

Table 8 shows the frequencies in the sample:

Table 8: High School/GED Completed

High School/GED Completed	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No	16	11.9	14.8
Yes	92	68.7	85.2
Total Valid	108	80.6	100.0
Missing	26	19.4	
Total	134	100.0	

Finally, the class completion dependent variables are keys to answering the research questions. Table 9 below contains class completion data for study participants.

Table 9: Class Completion

<b>Class</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Completed a Life Class and at Least One Other Class	35	26.1
Completed at Least One Education or Vocational Class, but No Life Class	29	21.6
Completed a Life Class Only	36	26.9
Did not complete a Life, Education or Vocational Class	34	25.4
Total	134	100

Essentially Table 9 shows that 75% of subjects completed at least one education, life or vocational class.

The key dependent variables in the study were: Never employed; Employment acquired but not sustained; Employment acquired and sustained; Success at staying out of prison.

The outcome for each variable is captured below in Table 10.

Table 10: Dependent Variable Outcomes for Subjects

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of Sample(%)</b>	<b>Percent of Employed (%)</b>
Never Employed	52	38.8	
Employment Acquired	82	61.2	100.0
Employment Acquired but not Sustained	24	17.9	29.2
Employment Acquired and Sustained	58	43.3	70.7
Success at Staying Out of Prison during the Study Period	119	88.8	

\*Based on persons acquiring employment

As Table 10 shows, only 61% of the entire sample acquired employment and only 43% of the entire sample retained employment. When considering only the subjects who acquired employment, 71% of them retained employment. Nevertheless, only 11% of the sample returned to prison on or before December 31, 2009.

### **Pre-Incarceration Conditions**

Tables 11 through 16 below are cross tabulations of employment status and success at staying out of prison with key pre-incarceration conditions – race, gender, age and highest grade completed.

In this study, the principal investigator was looking for statistical significance that was at the alpha equals 0.05 level.

Table 11: Employment Status by Race

			Race		Total (n=134)
			African-American (n=61)	White (n=73)	
Employment Status of the Subject	Never Employed (n=52)	%	39.3	38.4	38.8
	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment (n=24)	%	21.3	15.1	17.9
	Acquired and Sustained Employment (n=58)	%	39.3	46.6	43.3
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 1.133; Sig = 0.568

As Table 11 above shows the relationship between race and employment status is not significant.

Table 12: Success at Staying out of Prison by Race

			Race		Total (n=134)
			African-American (n=61)	White (n=73)	
Success staying out of prison	No	%	11.5	11.0	11.2
	Yes	%	88.5	89.0	88.8
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 0.009; Sig = 0.925

As Table 12 above shows the relationship between Race and Success at Staying out of Prison is not significant.



Table 13: Employment Status by Gender

			Gender		Total (n=134)
			Female (n=17)	Male (n=117)	
Employment Status	Never Employed	%	29.4	40.2	38.8
	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment	%	47.1	13.7	17.9
	Acquired and Sustained Employment	%	23.5	46.2	43.3
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 11.434; Sig = 0.003

As Table 13 above shows the relationship between gender and employment status **is significant**.

Table 14: Success at Staying out of Prison by Gender

			Gender		Total (n=134)
			Female (n=17)	Male (n=117)	
Success staying out of prison	No	%	11.8	11.1	11.2
	Yes	%	88.2	88.9	88.8
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 0.006; Sig = 0.936

As Table 14 above shows the relationship between gender and Success at Staying out of Prison is not significant.

Table 15: Employment Status by Age Group

			Age Group		Total (n=134)
			36 Years and Older (n=56)	35 Years and Younger (n=78)	
Employment Status	Never Employed	%	42.9	35.9	38.8
	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment	%	14.3	20.5	17.9
	Acquired and Sustained Employment	%	42.9	43.6	43.3
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 1.117; Sig = 0.572

As Table 15 above shows, the relationship between age and employment status is not significant. Because of the large range of ages, ages were grouped into two categories – 36 years and older and 35 years and younger.

Table 16: Employment Status by Age Group (smaller age groups)

			Age Group					Total (n=134)
			20-29 (n=46)	30-39 (n=43)	40-49 (n=35)	50-59 (n=8)	60-69 (n=2)	
Employment Status	Never Employed	%	47.8	25.6	37.1	50.0	100	38.8
	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment	%	15.2	25.6	14.3	12.5	0	17.9
	Acquired and Sustained Employment	%	37.0	48.8	48.6	37.5	0	43.3
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 9.346; Sig = 0.314

Even with smaller age groups as shown above in Table 16, the relationship between age and employment status was still not significant.

Table 17: Success at Staying out of Prison and Age Group Cross Tabulation (smaller age groups)

			Age Group					Total (n=134)
			20-29 (n=46)	30-39 (n=43)	40-49 (n=35)	50-59 (n=8)	60-69 (n=2)	
Success at staying out of prison	No	%	13.0	16.3	5.7	0	0	11.2
	Yes	%	87.0	83.7	94.3	100.0	100.0	88.8
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 3.594; Sig = 0.464

As shown above in Table 17, the relationship between Success at Staying out of Prison and Age Group is not significant.

Table 18: Employment Status and Highest Grade Completed Cross  
Tabulation

			Highest Grade Completed		Total (n=133)
			Less than 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade (n=59)	Greater than 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade (n=74)	
Employment Status	Never Employed	%	45.8	32.4	38.3
	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment	%	22.0	14.9	18.0
	Acquired and Sustained Employment	%	32.2	52.7	43.6
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 5.619; Sig = 0.060

As Table 18 above shows, the relationship between highest grade completed and employment status is not significant. Because of the large range of grades, grades were grouped into two categories – less than 10<sup>th</sup> grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grade and higher.

Table 19: Employment Status and Highest Grade Completed Cross  
Tabulation (Smaller Groups)

Cross Tabulation (smaller groups)			Highest Grade Completed				Total (n=123)
			1-8 (n=14)	9-11 (n=68)	12 (n=34)	13+ (n=7)	
Employ- ment Status	Never Employed	%	50.0	33.8	38.2	28.6	36.6
	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment	%	7.1	23.5	5.9	28.6	17.1
	Acquired and Sustained Employment	%	42.9	42.6	55.9	42.9	46.3
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 7.407; Sig = 0.285

Even with smaller highest grade completed groups, the relationship between age and employment status was not significant as shown above in Table 19.

Table 20: Success at Staying out of Prison and Highest Grade Completed  
Cross Tabulation (smaller age groups)

			Highest Grade Completed				Total (n=123)
			1-8 (n=14)	9-11 (n=68)	12 (n=34)	13+ (n=7)	
Success at Staying out of Prison	No	%	7.1%	14.7%	5.9%	0%	10.6%
	Yes	%	92.9%	84.3%	94.1%	100%	89.4%
Total		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square = 3.022; Sig = 0.388

As shown above, the relationship between Success at Staying out of Prison and Highest Grade Completed is not significant.

To summarize, the only pre-incarceration condition that had a significant Pearson Chi-Square value when cross tabulated with employment status was gender.

**Logistic regression** was also used to predict the probability of Employment Acquisition and Retention and Success at Staying Out of Prison.

Tables 21 and 22 below show the variables included in the model and the variables not included in the model in the regression involving the Employment Acquisition as the dependent variable and the following independent variables:

- Age Group (AGEGROUP2)
- Highest Grade Completed (HGHGRP3)
- Race (RACE): 0 = Black; 1 = White
- Gender (SEX): 0 = Female; 1 = Male
- Completed Life Class (QUESTA)
- Completed a Non-Life Class (QUESTB)

Table 21: Employment Acquisition Logistic Regression:  
Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0						
Constant	.550	.187	8.634	1	.003	1.733



Table 22: Employment Acquisition Logistic Regression:  
Variables not in the Equation

			Score	df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables	AGEGROUP2	.207	1	.649
		HGHGRP3	.385	1	.535
		RACE(1)	.281	1	.596
		SEX(1)	.226	1	.635
		QUESTA(1)	.034	1	.855
		QUESTB(1)	1.515	1	.218
	Overall Statistics		3.141	6	.791

As Table 22 above shows, none of the independent variables are significant; including them would not make a significant contribution to the predictive power of the model.

Tables 23 and 24 below show the variables included in the model and the variables not included in the model in the regression involving the Employment Acquisition and Retention as the dependent variable and the following independent variables:

- Age Group (AGEGROUP2)
- Highest Grade Completed (HGHGRP3)
- Race (RACE)
- Gender (SEX)
- Completed Life Class (QUESTA)

- Completed a Non-Life Class (QUESTB)

Table 23: Employment Acquisition & Retention Logistic Regression:  
Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1(a)	Gender(1)	1.891	.695	7.400	1	.007	.151	.039	.589
	Constant	1.331	.300	19.626	1	.000	3.786		

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: Gender.

As Table 23 shows, the value of Exp (B) is less than 1. This indicates that men have a significantly higher probability than women of acquiring and retaining employment.

Table 24: Employment Acquisition & Retention Logistic Regression:  
Variables not in the Equation

		Score	df	Sig.	
Step 1	Variables	AGEGROUP2	.009	1	.923
		HGHGRP3	.241	1	.624
		RACE(1)	1.619	1	.203
		QUESTA(1)	1.292	1	.256
		QUESTB(1)	1.164	1	.281
Overall Statistics		3.566	5	.613	

As Table 23 above shows the gender variable is included in the logistic regression equation and the other variables are not. Gender contributes to the predictive power of the model.

Tables 25 and 26 below show the variables included in the model and the variables not included in the model in the regression involving the Success at Staying out of Prison as the dependent variable and the following covariates:

- Age Group
- Highest Grade Completed
- Race
- Gender
- Completed Life Class
- Completed a Non-Life Class

Table 25: Success at Staying Out of Prison Logistic Regression:  
Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1(a)	QUESTB(1)	1.450	.633	5.239	1	.022	4.263	1.232	14.756
	Constant	1.440	.371	15.096	1	.000	4.222		

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: QUESTB (Completed a Non-Life Class).

As Table 25 shows, the value of Exp (B) is greater than 1. This indicates that completing a non-life class increases the probability of staying out of prison.

Table 26: Success at Staying Out of Prison Logistic Regression:  
Variables not in the Equation

		Score	df	Sig.	
Step 1	Variables	AGEGROUP2	3.092	1	.079
		HGHGRP3	.537	1	.464
		RACE(1)	.458	1	.498
		GENDER(1)	.026	1	.871
		QUESTA(1)	.005	1	.945
	Overall Statistics	4.054	5	.542	

As Table 26 above shows the Completing a Non-Life Class variable is included in the logistic regression equation and the other variables are not. Completing a Non-Life Class contributes to the predictive power of the model.

### **Program Completion**

Tables 27 through 29 below show the program completion cross tabulations with employment status.

Table 27: Life Class Completed Cross Tabulation with Employment Status

			Did the subject complete a life class?		Total (n=134)
			No (n=63)	Yes (n=71)	
Employment status of the subject	Never employed	%	38.1	39.4	38.8
	Acquired but did not sustain employment	%	17.5	18.3	17.9
	Acquired and sustained employment	%	44.4	42.3	43.3
Total			100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 0.066; Sig = 0.968

As Table 27 above shows, the relationship between life class completion and employment status is not significant.

Table 28: Non-Life Class Completed  
Cross Tabulation with Employment Status

			Did the subject complete a non-life class?		Total (n=134)
			No (n=82)	Yes (n=52)	
Employment status of the subject	Never employed	%	43.9	30.8	38.8
	Acquired but did not sustain employment	%	13.4	25.0	17.9
	Acquired and sustained employment	%	42.7	44.2	43.3
Total			100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 3.817; Sig = 0.148

As Table 28 above shows, the relationship between non-life class completion and employment status is not significant.

Table 29: Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Employment Status

		Class Completion				Total
		Life Class and at least one other Class Completed	Education or Vocational Class Completed but no Life Class Completed	Life Class Only Completed	No Life, Education or Vocational Class Completed	
Employment status of the subject	Never employed	12	9	16	15	52
	Acquired but did not sustain employment	7	7	6	4	24
	Acquired and sustained employment	16	13	14	15	58
Total		35	29	36	34	134

Pearson Chi-Square = 2.869; Sig = 0.825

As Table 29 above shows, the relationship between class completion and employment acquisition is not significant.

Table 30: Success Staying out of Prison  
Cross Tabulation with Employment Status

			Employment Status			Total (n=82)
			Never Employed (n=52)	Acquired but did not Sustain Employment (n=24)	Acquired and Sustained Employment (n=58)	
Successful at Staying Out of Prison	No	%	13.5%	29.2%	1.7%	11.2%
	Yes	%	86.5%	70.8%	98.3%	88.8%
Total		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square = 13.3; Sig = 0.001

As Table 30 above shows the relationship between employment status and success staying out of prison **is significant**.

### **Success at Staying out of Prison**

Tables 31 through 33 below contain the results of cross tabulations between success staying out of prison and class completion.



Table 31: Life Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Success

			Did the subject complete a life class?		Total (n=134)
			No (n=63)	Yes (n=71)	
Was subject successful at staying out of prison during the study period?	No	%	7.9	14.1	11.2
	Yes	%	92.1	85.9	88.8
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 1.269; Sig = 0.260

As Table 31 above shows, the relationship between completing a life class and success staying out of prison is not significant.

Table 32: Non Life Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Success

			Did the subject complete a non-life class?		Total (n=134)
			No (n=82)	Yes (n=52)	
Was subject successful at staying out of prison during the study period?	No	%	7.3	17.3	11.2
	Yes	%	92.7	82.7	88.8
Total		%	100.0	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 3.195; Sig = 0.074

As Table 32 above shows, the relationship between completing a non-life class and success staying out of prison is not significant.

Table 33: Class Completion Cross Tabulation with Success

		Class Completion				Total
		Life Class and at least one other Class Completed	No Life Class but at least one other Class Completed	Life Class Only Completed	No Life, Education or Vocational Classes Completed	
Was subject successful at staying out of prison during the study period?	No	5	5	5	0	15
	Yes	30	24	31	34	119
Total		35	29	36	34	134

Pearson Chi-Square = 5.952; Sig = 0.114

As Table 33 above shows, the relationship between class completion and success staying out of prison is not significant.

## **FINDINGS BY RESEARCH QUESTION**

### **Question 1 Findings**

What are the contributions of pre-incarceration experiences to post-release employment acquisition, employment retention and to successfully staying out of prison in the future?

The study revealed that the only independent pre-incarceration characteristic that appears to contribute to employment status is gender. Table 34 below summarizes the Pearson Chi Square significance values for the SPSS analyses performed to answer this research question. Independent variables are in column one, dependent variables are in column two and the significance of the relationship between each pair of independent and dependent variables is shown in column 3.

Table 34: Research Question 1 Analysis Results

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Pearson Chi Square Value</b>	<b>Pearson Chi Square Sig</b>
Race	Employment status	1.133	0.568
	Successful at staying out of prison	0.009	0.925
Gender	Employment status	11.434	0.003*
	Successful at staying out of prison	0.006	0.936
Age group	Employment status	9.346	0.314
	Successful at staying out of prison	3.594	0.464
Highest grade completed	Employment status	5.496	0.482
	Successful at staying out of prison	2.247	0.523

\* = significant at the .05 level

In Chi-Square analysis, the relationship between gender and employment status is significant.

## Question 2 Findings

What are the contributions of prison-based programs to post-release employment acquisition, employment retention and to successfully staying out of prison in the future?

Table 35: Research Question 2 Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Chi Square Value	Pearson Chi Square Sig
Did the subject complete life skills and at least one other class?	Employment Status	2.869	0.825
Did the subject take at least one education or vocational class, but no life skills class?			
Did the subject take life skills but did not take education or vocational classes?			
Subject did not take any education, life skills or vocational classes			
Did the subject complete life skills and at least one other class?	Successful at staying out of prison	5.952	0.114
Did the subject take at least one education or vocational class, but no life skills class?			
Did the subject take life skills but did not take education or vocational classes?			
Subject did not take any education, life skills or vocational classes			

The study revealed that the completion of prison-based programs did not contribute to post-release employment acquisition, employment retention or to successfully staying out of prison in the future. As Table 35 shows these relationships are not significant.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Surprisingly, the study concluded that the relationship between a parolee's ability to achieve employment success and the education, life or vocational programs that he/she completed in prison is not significant. The study also showed that gender was the only pre-incarceration condition that was significant in determining outcomes. Furthermore, the relationship between employment and success at staying out of prison was significant.

Despite the preponderance of studies reporting a positive relationship between classes and post-prison outcomes, there are reasons to doubt the effectiveness of education, life and vocational training in reducing future offending. Piehl (1998) noted that a literature review of the relationship between economic conditions, work and crime concluded that evidence of the relationship is weak and unconvincing. There are surveys that found that participation in the legitimate labor market is unusually high among persons with criminal histories (Reuter, MacCoun and Murphy 1990). However, Saylor and Gaes (1996) showed that half of the prison inmates studied had limited work histories during the five years before incarceration. Therefore, if employment is not related to crime, then

there is little reason to believe that programs designed to increase employability will have a positive impact on offending behavior.

MacKenzie and Hickman (1998) concluded that evidence on vocational and correctional work impacts was mixed. The evidence suggests that programs with positive outcomes have multiple components, follow-up programming and focus on skills relevant to the current job market (Bushway and Reuter 1997; Tracy and Johnson 1994). The lack of program elements such as follow-up and focus on skills relevant to the job market may have limited the effectiveness of the programs studied here.

Subjects being motivated to complete education, life and vocational programs while incarcerated can be explained by social control and social cognitive theories. When an offender volunteers to participate in prison programs, the outcome may be the fostering of instructor and employer contact and a commitment to conventional aspects of society. Social controls disappear where social norms and relationships breakdown. To be effective in maintaining desired behavior, social bonds must be between individuals who are compliant with social norms, not with deviants. In social cognitive theory, human behavior is extensively



motivated and regulated by the ongoing exercise of self-influence. The major self-regulative mechanism operates through three principal sub-functions. These include self-monitoring of one's behavior, its determinants, and its effects; judgment of one's behavior in relation to personal standards and environmental circumstances; and affective self-reaction.

The results of this study suggest that upon release from prison, subjects did not have social bonds to individuals who were compliant with social norms like acquiring and retaining employment. Furthermore, there was evidently a breakdown in the self-regulative mechanism that led offenders to complete prison-based programs. This mechanism dissipated when subjects returned to the community and led to them not being able or interested in acquiring and retaining employment.

A lack of social capital could have yielded the results in the study. When subjects returned home, they may have encountered a limited number or an absence of social networks, norms and trust. This void could have resulted in subjects experiencing difficulties in acquiring employment.

Labeling could have impacted the parolee's ability to acquire and sustain employment. Once someone is labeled an ex-con, many employers may have no interest in offering him employment. Bushway (1998) showed that arrest leads to problems in employment beyond any educational or experience deficits. Therefore, any effects of programs on employability may be diminished by the challenges of finding employment.

Once a parolee returns to the community, he/she will more than likely still need support to become re-adjusted to life outside of prison. Organizations engaged in community economic development have a role to play in providing re-entry services (e.g. mentoring) to assist in this transition. Strategies like mentoring increase social control and social capital and can be keys to a parolee's success as demonstrated by the Ready4Work study (Good and Sherrid, 2005).

Finally, there was a concern that substance abuse could be an intervening variable in the study when it was discovered that 82% of subjects completed a substance abuse program while incarcerated. Substance abuse can be a barrier to employment acquisition and retention. However, in a 2001 report by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, it

was noted that state corrections officials estimate that between 70% and 85% of inmates need some level of substance abuse treatment. So the observations in West Virginia are consistent with national trends.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The differences in the content and structure of training programs may explain some of the difference between the results of this study and other similar studies. WVDOC officials should ensure that all classes and workshops reflect best practices in both content and delivery. This could result in an overhaul of the programming offered by the WVDOC. It could also result in the exploration of program content and delivery at correctional facilities in neighboring states as well as a similar study on data from other states.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study concluded that there is no relationship between education, life and vocational program completed by an incarcerated person in the WV Division of Corrections and his/her employment status upon release. It suggests that perhaps there are other pre-release or post-release variables that actually predict employment success. Furthermore, there may be other pre-incarceration conditions that predict employment success.

In light of the results of this study, future research may be conducted in the following areas:

- A subject's criminal history/nature of the crime(s) committed could affect his/her ability to find and retain employment. Is there a correlation between criminal history (as a pre-incarceration condition) and employment acquisition and retention and success staying out of prison?
- Given the time constraints of the study, only near-term recidivism was studied. Typically recidivism studies are over a three-year period. Results of the study may be different over time. So one

question would be: What percentage of subjects returned to prison in three years or less?

- Unemployed persons regardless of their criminal records have many barriers to employment such as childcare, transportation and substance abuse issues. Perhaps the results of this study were impacted by these and other barriers. So another question would be: What are the barriers to employment that are faced by parolees?
- It is unclear whether the programs implemented at WVDOC facilities are evidenced based and implemented in a consistent manner in all facilities. So another research question would be: Are the programs implemented at the WVDOC evidenced-based and if so, are they being implemented as designed?
- Some of the programs implemented in the WVDOC may also be implemented in other nearby states. How do the employment outcomes from evidenced-based programs compare to that of neighboring states?
- Labeling may have contributed to the employment of experiences of subjects. So it would be interesting to determine: What perceptions do employers have about parolees?

- Support and community follow-up may have helped subjects to be more successful. So a future research question could be: What community-based re-entry services are available in West Virginia and did subjects utilize these services?

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### EDUCATION

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Southern New Hampshire University      Manchester, New Hampshire  
*Ph.D. in Community Economic Development conferred May 2010*  
 Dissertation: The Contributions Of Pre-Incarceration Experiences And  
 Prison-Based Programs To Post Release Employment Acquisition,  
 Retention And Recidivism

Southern New Hampshire University      Manchester, New Hampshire  
*Master of Science Degree in Community Economic Development conferred*  
*May 2007*  
 Thesis: The Harambee Asset Development Initiative

Marshall University Graduate College      So. Charleston, West Virginia  
*Master of Science Degree in Engineering Management conferred May*  
*1996*

Case Western Reserve University      Cleveland, Ohio  
*Graduate Studies in Chemical Engineering, 1991 to 1992*

The City College of New York      New York, New York  
*Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering conferred May 1990*

## CERTIFICATIONS

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Certified Economic Development Finance Professional (March 2004) -  
National Development Council.

Certified Housing Development Finance Professional (November 2004)  
- National Development Council.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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9/98 to Present

Kanawha Institute for Social Research & Action, Inc. (KISRA)  
**131 Perkins Avenue**, Dunbar, West Virginia 25064

### *Chief Executive Officer*

Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization including securing project funding, planning, organizing, controlling, staffing, and leading projects.

- Established KISRA as the only US Small Business Administration (SBA) micro-lender in West Virginia and secured \$750,000 in intermediary loan funds for businesses around the state of West Virginia.
- Initiated the KISRA Offender Re-Entry Program in response to rising incarceration and recidivism rates. Secured \$600,000 from state and federal sources to offer the program in five counties.
- Led the Empowerment Center Renovation Project- a one-stop shop for KISRA's education, employment and economic empowerment initiatives. Secured over \$2,000,000 from federal, state and local sources to complete project.
- Developed the KISRA Responsible Fatherhood Program to promote responsible fatherhood and economic stability among non-custodial fathers. Secured \$2,500,000 federal grant to operate the program for five years in two counties. KISRA is the only organization in West Virginia funded by this source.

- Chartered KISRA Homeownership as a HUD-certified housing counseling agency to help community residents to obtain the necessary skills and resources to achieve the “American Dream” of homeownership. Secured \$180,000 over three years from the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation for affordable housing initiatives, annual support from HUD for housing counseling and designations as a community housing development organization and correspondent lender.
- Established the Harambee Child Development Center that provides quality child development services for 55 children and 25 jobs for community residents. Secured \$500,000 to launch the center.
- Established the Harambee Learning Center, an after-school, safe and drug-free haven that reaches over one hundred and fifty children and youth annually.
- Developed the Harambee Children & Youth Development Initiative - An AmeriCorps Program with 13 members serving children in pre-school and after-school programs.
- Mobilized community members for the Harambee Communities that Care Project to conduct a risk and resource assessment in order to develop a community prevention plan.

08/01 to 12/01

West Virginia State University  
Adjunct Professor of Mathematics

6/93 to 9/98

Union Carbide Corporation  
So. Charleston, West Virginia  
*Senior Process Engineer, Polymers Process Engineering Department*  
Responsible for the process design of polyethylene plants using UNIPOL technology.

6/90 to 12/92

BP Research  
Cleveland, Ohio  
*Chemical Engineer*

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Implan Software Training

The Standards of Excellence for Non-Profits Training - WV Community Development HUB

Managing Your Non-Profit for Results - Neighborhood Re-investment Training Institute

Capital Strategies - Neighborhood Re-investment Training Institute

Analytical Tools and Methods Used in Community Economic Development - Neighborhood Re-investment Training Institute

Communities that Care: Promising Approaches - Developmental Research and Programs

Communities that Care: Risk and Resource Assessment - Developmental Research and Programs

Housing Counseling - Neighborhood Re-investment Training Institute

Marketing your Homeownership Program - Neighborhood Re-investment Training Institute

Homebuyer Education Trainer - Neighborhood Re-investment Training Institute

Single Family Housing Development Finance - National Development Council

Rental Housing Development Finance - National Development Council

Computer Spreadsheet Analysis for Housing - National Development Council

Housing Development Finance - National Development Council

Economic Development Finance - National Development Council

Business Credit Analysis - National Development Council

Real Estate Finance - National Development Council

Economic Development Deal Structuring - National Development Council

#### **TECHNICAL AND SPECIALIZED SKILLS**

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Community economic development - program planning, design, implementation and evaluation

Grant writing and management

#### **RESEARCH INTERESTS**

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Offender re-entry

Faith-based and community-based initiatives

Asset development

Economic impact of community economic development programs

## **PRESENTATIONS/WORKSHOPS**

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### **Program Planning Utilizing Logic Models:**

Share the Vision Conference 2009, Charleston, WV;  
 WV Commission for National and Community Service, Faces of  
 Leadership Conference 2009, Charleston, WV;  
 US Department of Health and Humans Services, Office of Family  
 Assistance, Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantee  
 Conference 2008, Washington, DC

### **Partnerships for Sustainability:**

US Department of Health and Humans Services, Office of Family  
 Assistance, Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantee  
 Conference 2009, Washington , DC

### **What Works in Fatherhood Programs:**

WV Head Start Conference 2009, Charleston, WV

### **Tools for Effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church leadership**

Abundant Life Leadership Conference  
 November 2007, Charleston, WV

### **Steps to Establishing a Faith-Based/Community-Based Initiative:**

WV Commission for National and Community Service, Volunteerism  
 Conference 2005, Charleston, WV;  
 Tried-Stone Church, Blacksburg, VA

### **501c3 Basics:**

WV Commission for National and Community Service, Volunteerism  
 Conference 2005, Charleston, WV

### **A Faith Community on the Move: Public-Private Partnerships for Community Renewal:**

Share the Vision Conference 2005, Charleston, WV



**AFFILIATIONS**

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Member of Kanawha County Community Corrections Board of Directors  
Steering Committee Member of Partners in Prevention  
Treasurer and board member of Kanawha Communities that Care  
Member of the Governor's Partnership to Promote Community Well-Being  
Member of the Charleston Area Alliance  
Treasurer and board member of Beyond Billions Investment Club  
Member of the STOP Violence Against Women Team  
Co-Chair of the WV Individual Development Account Initiative Advisory Council  
Member of the Compeer of Kanawha Valley Advisory Council

**AWARDS**

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US Small Business Administration - Minority Business Champion 2009  
West Virginia State University - President's Award for Community Service  
2009

**VOLUNTEER WORK**

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Minister of Administration of Ferguson Memorial Baptist Church since  
1997

## APPENDICES

## Appendix I. Parole Officer Questionnaire

	«Wcontrol»			
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**PRE-QUESTION:**

Which of the following accurately describes the inmate’s post-release employment status? Please check only one.

- 1. Never employed
- 2. Acquired but did not sustain employment
- 3. Acquired and sustained employment

If the answer to the pre-question is 1, then please record the reason in the “Notes/Additional Information” section below and return the form.

If the answer to the pre-question is either 2 or 3, then complete the following table for as many jobs as the parolee had during the first 12 months after his/her release and return the form. Add rows for other jobs as needed.

	Hire Date	Employer	Location	Job Type	Wage Rate (\$ per hour)	No. of Work Hours per week	Date of Termination (if more than one job)
Job 1							
Job 2							
Job 3							
Job 4							
Notes/Additional Information							

### Appendix II. SPSS Data File Variables

Variable	Label
ID	Study ID #
HOURS	How many hours per week did the subject work on his/her last job?
GROUP	Study Group
QUAD1	Did the subject complete life skills and at least one other class?
QUAD2	Did the subject take at least one education or vocational class, but no life skills class?
QUAD3	Did the subject take life skills but did not take education or vocational classes?
QUAD4	Subject did not take any education, life skills or vocational classes
MOVEDATE	Date the subject was released from WVDOC
RACE	Race of subject
SEX	Sex of subject
INCARDATE	Date the subject was incarcerated
INCARTIME	Number of days incarcerated
LASTOFFENSE	Subject's last offense
BIRTHDATE	Subject's date of birth
AGE	What is the age of the subject?
AGEGROUP2	Age Group of Subject
HIGHESTGRADE	Highest grade completed by subject
HGHGRP2	Highest grade completed by groups
HGHGRP3	Highest grade completed
HGHGRDE12	Highest Grade Completed
HSorGED	Does the subject have high school diploma or GED?
EMPSTATUS	Employment status of the subject
ACQEMPLOY	Acquired employment
SUSTEMPLOY	Sustained employment
SUSTEMP2	Acquired & Sustained employment
EMPLOYED	Was the subject employed for any period of time?
TIMETOGETJOB	How many days did it take for the subject to become employed?
PCTMAXWORKED	What percent of the time did the subject work during the study period
PCTMAXWKD2	What percent of the time did the subject work during the study period

Variable	Label
DAYSWORKED	How many days did the subject work during the study period?
DAYSTOCOMMIT	How many days were there between when the subject was released and his/her return to prison?
SUCCESS	Was subject successful at staying out of prison during the study period?
COMMITTYPE	What crime led to the subject recidivating?
SUBABUSE	Did the subject participate in substance abuse treatment/programs while in prison?
WAGES	How much did the subject earn on his/her last job (\$/hr)?
LIFESKILLS	Did the subject complete one or more Life Skills programs?
EDPROG	Did the subject complete one or more education programs?
VOCPROG	Did the subject complete one or more vocational programs?
QUESTA	Did the subject complete a life skills class?
QUESTB	Did the subject complete a non-life skills class?
AGEGROUP	Age group of subject
HIGHGRADEGRP	Highest grade completed
INCARTIMEGRP	Incarceration time groups