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The Federal Workforce Development Program: An Analysis of Probationers and Characteristics Associated with and Predictive of Successful Reentry

Kelley McNichols

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THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: AN ANALYSIS OF

PROBATIONERS AND CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH AND

PREDICTIVE OF SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Kelley B. McNichols

August 2012

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Kelley B. McNichols, M.S.Ed.

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THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:
AN ANALYSIS OF PROBATIONERS AND CHARACTERISTICS
ASSOCIATED WITH AND PREDICTIVE OF SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

Approved by:

_____, Chair
Rick Myer, Ph.D.
Professor

_____, Member
David Delmonico, Ph.D.
Professor

_____, Member
William Casile, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

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ABSTRACT

THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: AN ANALYSIS OF

PROBATIONERS AND CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH AND

PREDICTIVE OF SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

By

Kelley B. McNichols

August 2012

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Rick A. Myer

With years of research focusing on soaring incarceration rates, the phenomena of

prisoner reentry has been largely overlooked. The majority of incarcerated people will

return to the community setting. In fact, millions of recently released offenders are on

some form of community based supervision. Today, recidivism is a problem that plagues

prisoner reentry. In order to address the challenge of prisoner reentry successfully,

reentry initiatives have been established in an attempt to change the way corrections is

conceptualized. The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics of probationers

that are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. The data gathered for this

study was existing data from the United States Probation and Pretrial Services office in

the Western District of Pennsylvania. Existing data examined included a sample of

probationers who were enrolled in the Federal Workforce Development Program (WFD)

and a sample of probationers who were not enrolled in WFD. Chi-square and logistic regression tests were conducted to examine variables that may be associated with or predictive of successful reentry. The variables explored in this study included age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse, mental health, employment, education, WFD, and recidivism. Employment was the only variable found to be predictive and significant of successful reentry. Results may have been impacted by the type of sample, sample size, demographics, limited number of contextual variables, and ordinal nature of the data. Recommendations for future research and program implementation are included.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother. Dreams do come true.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

After nearly 50 years of stability, incarceration rates in America dramatically increased between 1973 and 2000 (Visher & Travis, 2003). In the last 30 years, the prison population in the United States has steadily grown resulting in millions of people being held in prison each year (Mallenhoff, 2009; Visher & Travis, 2003). Furthermore, "in 2001, America posted a new record of 1.3 million people held in prison" (Visher & Travis, 2003, p. 89). In fact, the number of persons sentenced to federal prison between 1995 and 2005 nearly doubled (Motivans, 2010). Wexler and Fletcher (2007, p. 10) reported in The National Crime Justice Drug Treatment that, in 2003, "it was estimated that about 6.9 million individuals were under some form of correctional control, with nearly 2.1 million in prison or jail and about 4.8 million under community supervision."

The majority of people who enter the criminal justice system will be released into the community setting. With rare exception, approximately 95% of state and federal prisoners will return home (Mallenhoff, 2009; Visher & Travis, 2003). In fact, Wilkinson and Rhine (2005) reported that approximately 700,000 offenders will be released annually from state and federal prisons into communities across the country. Roughly 5 million ex-offenders are under a form of community-based supervision, such as probation or parole (Mallenhoff, 2009).

As of September of 2005, 375,631 persons out of the estimated 5 million ex-offenders were under some form of federal supervision (Motivans, 2010). Motivans reported that, in 2005, 3 out of 5 persons (234,425) were in secure confinement, which included detention pending trial and imprisonment following imposition of a sentence.

Of the 234,425 persons in secure confinement, 80% were serving a prison term following a conviction and 20% were awaiting case disposition (Motivans, 2010). In addition to persons that were in secure confinement in 2005, Motivans reported that 141,206 persons were under federal supervision in a community setting.

Offenders sentenced to probation and sentenced offenders who had been released from prison to serve the remainder of their term under post-prison supervision accounted for 79 percent of persons under community supervision in 2005; defendants released pending trial accounted for 21 percent. (Motivans, 2010, p. 7)

Figure 1.1 shows the number of persons on federal supervision as of 2005.
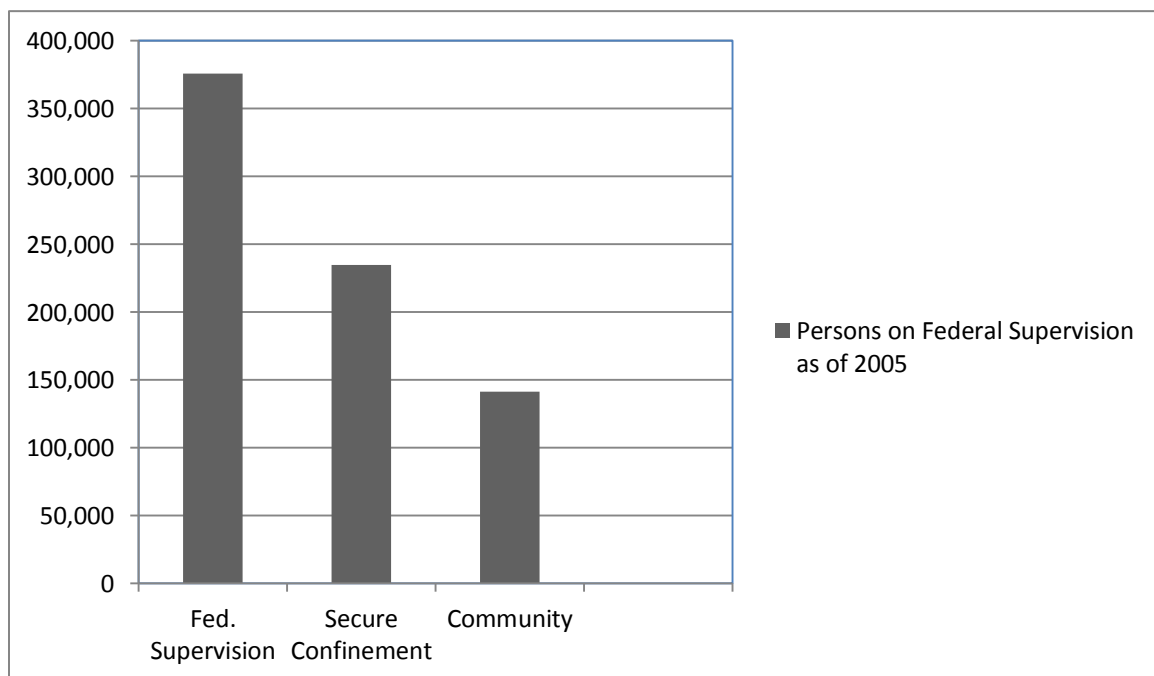
Figure 1.1. Persons on federal supervision

Inevitably prisoners will complete their sentences and be granted release into the community setting, sometimes even earlier than expected. In 2009 the Department of

Justice provided explicit information regarding the early release of inmates that had successfully completed drug treatment while incarcerated reporting that:

> Federal law allows the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to grant a non-violent offender up to 1 year off his/her term of imprisonment for successful completion of the Residential Drug Abuse Treatment program (Title 18 U.S.C. 3621(e)(2)). In fiscal year 2008, 4, 800 inmates received a reduction in their term of imprisonment based on this law. Since the implementation of this provision in June 1995, a total of 32,618 inmates have received such a reduction. (pp. 10-11)

Similarly, Wilkinson (2001) reported that as a result of change in sentencing guidelines, the number of prisoners being released directly into the community setting without post-conviction supervision has increased by 20%. Consequently, our communities and community correction agencies are now challenged to address not only the rising number of offenders, but also the subsequent concerns associated with prisoner reentry.

As early as 1970, John Irwin, author of *The Felon*, was one of the first people to address the epidemic of prisoner reentry. Irwin began to explore critical aspects of prisoner reentry. Irwin shed light on early implications and complexities of the reentry phenomenon. He declared that for felons the impact of release is an anticipated, dramatic event. Irwin delineated three categories of reentry problems: the problems that arise immediately upon release, the problems that occur after the felon has become a functioning citizen, and the problems that take place because the felon is under supervision. Today, recidivism is a problem that plagues prisoner reentry.

To further explore the reentry phenomenon, the Judicial Business of the United States Courts reported as of September 2009 that 124,183 offenders were under post-

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conviction supervision, an increase of nearly 3% since 2008 (Duff, 2010). Additional

reports concluded that persons serving terms of supervised release after leaving

correctional institutions rose more than 4%. Samenow (2004) reported that during 1994,

300,000 prisoners were released in 15 states and 67.5% were rearrested within three

years. Similarly, Visher and Travis (2003) referenced a national study and reported that

within three years of their release almost 7 out of 10 prisoners will be rearrested and

approximately half of the prisoners released will be back in prison either for a new crime

or for violating conditions of their supervised release. Moreover, offenders who were

originally convicted of drug related crimes had the second highest rate of recidivism

(Petersilia, 2003).

Prior research (Duff, 2010; Travis, 2005; Visher, Smolter, & O'Connell, 2010;

Visher & Travis, 2003) has started to explore recidivism as a reentry phenomenon. The

Recidivism Study is a comprehensive recidivism study that was conducted by the Bureau

of Justice Statistics (BJS) in 1994. The study examined the recidivism rates of prisoners

from 15 states three years after their release date (Nunez-Neto, 2009). Nunez-Neto

summarized the BJS recidivism study reporting:

> After three years, the study found that over two-thirds (67.5%) of the prisoners
>
> released had been rearrested for a new offense. Almost half (46.9%) of the
>
> prisoners had been reconvicted of a new crime. Just over half (51.8%) of the
>
> prisoners released were back in prison either because they had been resentenced
>
> to prison for a new crime they had committed (25.4%). (p. 188)

Extant research has provided a wealth of information on reentry experiences (e.g.,

Belenko, Foltz, Lang, & Sung, 2004; Duff, 2010; Langan & Levin, 2002; Travis, 2005;

Wexler & Fletcher, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005a). This existing research on reentry has proposed various factors that may contribute to successful reentry. Protective factors that promote successful reentry include the prisoner's length of incarceration, individual characteristics, family and community support, health care, as well as employment opportunities (Sung & Belenko, 2005; Travis, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003; Wilkinson 2001).

However, many ex-prisoners also face a number of barriers to successful reentry. One of the central challenges to successful reentry for ex-prisoners is employment (Bloom, Redcross, Zweig, & Azurdia, 2007). Recently, evidenced-based research has been monumental in exploring what types of "prisoner reentry programs, policies, and services work and which do not" (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010, p. 2). The federal Workforce Development Program (WFD) is one specific program established to assist ex-offenders in their transition from prison into the community setting (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Historically, research has provided an exhaustive amount of information focused on recidivism and relapse rates (Hiller, Knight, & Simpson, 1999; Nunez-Neto, 2009; Quinsey & Zamble, 1997; Sung & Belenko, 2005). The research on recidivism and relapse has identified risk factors for ex-offenders, such as limited education, insufficient work history, and history of substance abuse or mental illness. This research has helped to define what promotes successful offender reentry. In recent years, prisoner reentry has been widely addressed among policy makers. In fact, major reentry initiatives are being implemented across the nation, such as the Federal Workforce Development Program

(WFD), Second Chance Act of 2005, the Urban Institute, the Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI), and the Job Retention Project (Houston & Moore, 2001; Laughlin, 2000; Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan, & Blitz, 2005; Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010; Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005).

Wilkinson (2001) proclaimed that in order to successfully address the challenge of prison reentry, a change was needed in the way that people conceptualize corrections. The federal WFD, a recent reentry initiative that has been piloted in several federal probation offices (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010), aims to address the challenge of prisoner reentry. Preliminary research on the federal WFD found the program has assisted in increasing employment rates of federal probationers, subsequently reducing recidivism rates (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The reentry phenomenon is multifaceted with specific emphasis placed on risk factors and protective factors. As reentry implications appear to be unclear, even more unclear is what promotes successful prisoner reentry. The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics of probationers that are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. Logistic regression and chi-square tests were conducted on data gathered from existing records on a sample of probationers enrolled in the federal WFD and a sample of probationers not enrolled in the program. Variables examined included age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse, mental health, employment, educational, WFD, and recidivism.

Significance of the Study

The rationale for this study emanates from the United States Probation and Pretrial Service office's interest in evaluating evidenced-based reentry initiatives. Increased interest in evidenced-based practices stems from the growing need for service providers to demonstrate that their programs are evidence-based and contribute to the community safety goals set forth by correctional agencies (Gerace & Day, 2010). The federal probation and pretrial services system have been diligently exploring evidenced-based practices in order to implement organizational and process changes to improve their outcomes (Gregoire, 2011). In fact, Gregoire explicitly addressed the current importance of promoting evidenced-based practices in the federal probation and pretrial services by reporting, "we are more purposefully identifying evidenced-based principles and very consciously basing our decisions on the best evidenced available" (p. 2).

The federal WFD is a fairly new reentry initiative that has been implemented in a few U.S. probation offices (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). Until this time, exploratory research has only been conducted on the federal WFD in Missouri, Louisiana, and Vermont. In addition, one pilot study was conducted on the federal WFD in Delaware. Initial research on the federal WFD has found that the program has assisted in increasing employment rates of probationers, subsequently reducing recidivism rates (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). This research is the first study conducted on the federal WFD in the Western District of Pennsylvania.

As previously detailed, a great deal of research has focused on recidivism and relapse rates (Belenko et al., 2004; Duff, 2010; Langan & Levin, 2002; Travis, 2005; Wexler & Fletcher, 2007). However, limited research has been conducted on

characteristics of probationers that promote successful reentry. Since this study includes a sample of probationers enrolled in the federal WFD as well as a sample of probationers not enrolled in the federal WFD, the results can be used to better understand characteristics associated with successful reentry for probationers in WFD.

The results of this study can be used to enhance evidence-based practices ultimately promoting efficient and accountable reentry initiatives in community corrections, public safety, as well as in the counseling profession. Probation officers, case managers, and counselors alike may achieve new understanding of the risk and protective factors that affect prisoner reentry. Furthermore, this study can assist the justice system in bridging the gap for offenders transitioning from the institution into the community. Subsequently, offenders may be more likely to complete their term of post-conviction supervision successfully and avoid reincarceration.

It is anticipated that through reentry initiative programs, such as the federal WFD, the issues and challenges prisoners face during their reentry experience can be counteracted. As a result of this study, research findings can be used as a springboard to stimulate further research on the successful prisoner reentry initiatives changing the way that corrections is conceptualized. In time, more informed decisions can be made by community corrections agencies. Ultimately, society as a whole could reap the benefits of WFD as a reentry initiative as recidivism rates could be reduced.

The Federal Workforce Development Program

On November 8, 2010, the co-investigator of this study attended a meeting with the Chief Deputy, Assistant Chief Deputy, and Community Resource Specialist of the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania. The

Chief Deputy discussed his invested interest in conducting evidenced-based with specific emphasis on the federal WFD reentry initiative. At that time, the Chief Deputy requested and granted permission to conduct a study of the federal WFD in the Western District of Pennsylvania.

The federal WFD was established in the Western District of Pennsylvania on July 1, 2005. The program assists probationers in developing job readiness strategies, learning trades and vocational skills, and establishing long term goals for career advancement. Once enrolled in the voluntary, open-ended program, probationers can participate in a wide array of services offered. For instance, the federal WFD offers individual career counseling to probationers, as well as workshops that offer information for enhanced interviewing skills and ways to create resumes (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). Additional services offered include career assessments, resume building, rap sheet expungement, driver's license restoration, job club, cognitive thinking courses, as well as workshops that address financial literacy and homeownership.

<center>**Qualifications of U.S. Probation Employees**</center>

The jobs of U.S. Probation Officers and officer assistants present unique demands and challenges. Officers and officer assistants have access to confidential, sensitive, and private information (United States Courts, 2010). Employees are upheld to the professional standards of the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System as the position falls within the Judicial Branch of the U.S. Government.

To become an employee with the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System, a person must be a U.S. citizen or be eligible to work in the United States. As a job applicant, the potential employee must be under 37 years of age at the time of

appointment and background investigations are a pre-employment condition. Reinvestigations take place every five years for employees. Employees are subject to workplace drug testing. The U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services office enforces as zero tolerance for any use of illegal drugs. Furthermore, an employee must have a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in the fields of study such as criminal justice, criminology, psychology, sociology, human relations, business, or public administration (United States Courts, 2010).

Qualifications of the Researcher

My qualifications as the researcher includes having completed a 60-credit master's degree program in community counseling and the requirements for doctoral candidacy in Executive Counselor Education and Supervision (ExCES). Additionally, I worked as a Chemical Dependency Therapist with juvenile offenders in a residential setting as well as with adult federal offenders during their reentry experience. In total, I have approximately 11 years of counseling experience with forensic populations.

My supervisory experiences include training and supervising practicum and internship students in a CACREP accredited master's program in counselor education. Also, I have supervised other chemical dependency therapists that work with adult federal offenders in the community setting. Moreover, I have designed and implemented a dual recovery group curriculum and an orientation curriculum used in licensed drug and alcohol facilities. While working with federal offenders, I developed and facilitated psychoeducational group counseling for inmates in a community corrections facility.

Finally, my professional identity as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) is supported by my credentials and professional affiliations with counseling associations. I

am a member of the American Counseling Association and the Pennsylvania Counseling Association. I also have a wide array of certifications ranging from state certifications, national certifications, and international certifications.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

This research evaluates the characteristics of probationers that are associated with successful reentry. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry?

2. Is involvement with the federal WFD predictive of successful reentry for probationers?

<div align="center">**Definitions**</div>

For the purposes of the research study, it is necessary to clearly define the key terms that are used throughout this study.

- *Federal Workforce Development Program (WFD)* is a program "providing men and women under community supervision with assistance to increase their job readiness (including education and vocational skills), identify potential employers, and develop resumes and interview skills with the goals of obtaining full-time employment and reducing recidivism" (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010, p. 2).

- *Offense Classifications* as defined by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) and adapted to fit this study are as follows:

  - *Drug Crimes*, such as Possession with Intent to Distribute, Conspiracy to Distribute, and so forth.

- *Violent Crimes* which include child pornography, rape, murder, sexual assault, robbery, and so forth.

- *Property Crimes* which include burglary, motor vehicle theft, property theft, larceny, and so forth.

- *Weapon Offenses* which include unlawful possession of a firearm, unlawful transportation of a firearm, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and so forth.

- *Prisoner* or *Offender* are terms that are used interchangeably throughout this document being defined as a person who has committed a crime.

- *Recidivism* is defined as the reconviction or recommitment of a prisoner to an institution (Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, & Visher, 1986).

- *Reentry* has been defined by Wilkinson (2001) as the "process of prisoners reentering society after a period of incarceration in a prison, jail, or detention facility" (p. 46).

- *Successful* as defined by the federal WFD is a probationer that has not recidivated.

Assumptions

Based on my experience and background in working with prisoners during their reentry experience, four primary assumptions were made regarding this study. First, for the sample of probationers enrolled in WFD, the facilitation of the federal WFD was equivalent with respect to the content and the facilitators. This assumption was addressed by utilizing the same facilitators for all workforce development activities. Second, all federal probationers enrolled in the WFD are internally and equally motivated, as evidenced by probationers volunteering to participate in the WFD. Third, the archival

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data collected from the U.S. Probation Office of the Western District of Pennsylvania is accurate. Lastly, it is assumed that the same data was collected in the same fashion for both the WFD and non-WFD groups.

Delimitations

Rudestam and Newton (2001) defined delimitations as limitations on the research design that the researcher has deliberately imposed. For the purposes of this research study, the following delimitations apply: This research will be conducted by using archival data obtained from a small sample of probationers under supervision of the U.S. Probation Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania. The archival data was originally obtained by the employees of the U.S. Probation Office.

Limitations

Rudestam and Newton (2001) referred to limitations as restrictions in a study that the researcher does not control. For the present study, there are a variety of limitations. For instance, the U.S. Probation Office does not have a standard program curriculum for their WFD. In addition, the U.S. Probation Office does not have a singular mission statement for the WFD. At the time of this study, there were four members of the workforce development team providing services to probationers involved in the program. All services are individualized to address the needs of each probationer. However, in general, the services available are constant for each probationer in the program.

Race was identified as a limitation to this study. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) labeled the race of federal offenders under supervision as Caucasians, African Americans, Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and "other." The Hispanic population is not delineated; however, according to

Petersilia (2005), Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group representing 16% of the current prison population. Subsequently, the Hispanic race may be underrepresented or mislabeled as "other." For this study, existing data collected were limited because Caucasians and African Americans were the only identified races.

All of the data obtained for the purposes of this study were archival data. Since the research takes place after the groups have been formed, there are many independent variables that cannot be manipulated. In addition to the foreseen limitations, I was previously employed as a chemical dependency therapist and worked with federal probationers during their reentry experience. Thus, I contributed to the research process by providing practical experience as a professional counselor in the field of addictions having knowledge of the conditions of federal probation. Although my professional experiences could be seen as an asset to the study, I acknowledge that professional experiences could act as a limitation to the study because of bias which could affect the interpretations of findings.

Another aspect of researcher bias is my philosophy on addictions. I follow the treatment philosophy of the disease concept of addiction. With that being said, the research also proposes that involvement in 12 step programs enhances professional treatment efforts by extending support services within the community setting. I believe that those who are involved in professional drug and alcohol treatment in addition to 12 step involvement are more likely to experience successful reentry.

Summary

This chapter begins with an introduction that reviews the context and background comprising the realms of offender reentry. The context and the background provided a

framework for the proposed quantitative research study. A narrowly defined problem statement was followed by the statement of purpose. The chapter went on to provide the significance of the study and research questions to foster exploration and discovery of variables that promote successful reentry for probationers. This chapter also detailed the proposed rationale, and provided definitions of key terminology that are incorporated throughout this study. Additionally, this chapter included a discussion of the limitations, delimitations, the researcher's biases, and the researcher's assumptions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literary review provides critical information related to prisoner reentry. The historical roots of corrections, theories of criminology, and history of prisoner reentry are reviewed establishing a stepping stone to address current offender reentry concerns and initiatives. Emphasis is placed on the pathways and pitfalls of prisoner reentry. Specific focus is on reentry initiatives, such as the federal Workforce Development Program (WFD), and characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

The Historical Roots of Criminal Justice

Under the leadership of William Penn, the modern American correction system was established in colonial Pennsylvania (Travis, 2005). The early, barbaric forms of punishment included pillories, branding irons, and gallows (Travis, 2005). Quaker reformers attempted to replace such barbaric forms of punishment with more humane punishment, such as hard labor, fines, and forfeiture in the workhouse, which was a building where offenders could be imprisoned.

Established in 1682, The High Street Jail was the first workhouse located in Philadelphia, PA (Travis, 2005). A century later in 1790, the Quakers of Pennsylvania were successful in petitioning the Pennsylvania legislature and expanded Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail by adding a wing to the Jail. The new wing of the Walnut Street Jail consisted of a group of single cells that could be used to house convicted felons (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis, 2005). The single cells were used as a way to isolate offenders from one another as well as the community. The Quakers hoped isolation would give

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offenders an opportunity to repent and reflect on their sins ultimately having the offender return to society less likely to reoffend (Travis, 2005). Hence, institutions became called "penitentiaries," a place where "penitents could realize the error of their ways" (Travis, 2005, p. 7). Following the framework of the Walnut Street Jail, other prisons were established. For instance, the Auburn Prison and the Western Penitentiary are two major prison systems that had profound impact on the history of America's correctional system.

The Auburn Prison was built in 1816 in New York (Travis, 2005). Similar to the Walnut Street Jail, prisoners incarcerated in the Auburn Prison system were isolated from one another and silence was strictly enforced. As a result, the prison saw a number of suicides and cases of self-mutilation among the prisoners (Travis, 2005). Subsequently, in 1823 extreme practices, such as isolation, were replaced with a system that isolated the prisoners in their cells only at night and allowed silent labor in workshops during the day (Travis, 2005).

Another noteworthy prison system that had historical influence on America's correctional system was Western Penitentiary. Western Penitentiary was based on an isolation model and was established in 1818 (Travis, 2005). Each prisoner in the Western Penitentiary was confined to a single cell for the entire period of their sentence and was only permitted one hour of exercise in their personal yard each day (Travis, 2005).

According to Travis (2005), from 1816 through 1866, more than 30 state prisons were built using the Auburn model. Travis went on to report that:

Between 1840 and 1870, the number of prisoners across the country skyrocketed from 4,000 to 33, 000, and the per capita rate of imprisonment more than tripled

from 24 per 100,000 population to 83 per 100,000 population, a rate of prison

growth similar to that seen recently. (p. 8)

Travis also reported that since the early 19th century the basic architectural structure of

the American prison has remained virtually the same.

During the next 200 years, America witnessed the pendulum of corrections swing

back and forth from rehabilitation to retribution (Pratt, 2009; Seiter & Kadela, 2003;

Stinchcomb, 2002; Travis, 2005). In an attempt to establish institutions as a form of

corrections, America borrowed from England's John Howard. Pennsylvania and New

York were influential entities shaping the corrections system by stressing the importance

of religion for resisting the moral temptations that may arise from criminal behavior

(Pratt, 2009).

Not surprisingly, the morality of the offender was questioned when exploring the

problems of crime and incarceration in late 1800s to the early 1900s (Pratt, 2009). In the

1800s, there was a lack of emphasis on rehabilitation. Offenders were sentenced to serve

a set amount of time in overcrowded prisons (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). This paradigm

corresponded with the classical school of criminology's focus on rational choice as it

pertained to corrections. In the early 20th century, the faith-based approach to corrections

lost momentum. The loss of momentum was largely a result of a paradigm shift that

began to view science, psychology, and sociology as explanations to crime (Maxfield &

Babbie, 1998; Pratt, 2009). Thus, the medical model became the predominant focus of

corrections during this century.

The medical model shaped correctional policies for most of the 20th century

(Stinchcomb, 2002). The premise of the medical model was an optimistic belief that

prisoners could achieve behavioral change (Stinchcomb, 2002). During these early days

of corrections, offenders were incarcerated so that they would be isolated from morally

corrupted influences and "while engaged in productive labor, they could reflect on their

past misdeeds, repent, and be reformed" (Pratt, 2009, p. 16).

Stemming from historical events that occurred in America from the 1930s to the

1960s, the pendulum of corrections shifted again. The dominant policy model followed

the medical model. The depression of the 1930s and mass social demonstrations that

took place in the 1960s gave way to the dominant policy model. The dominant policy

model viewed crime as "the inevitable by-product of social, psychological, and biological

conditions that substantially reduced the capacity for self-determination" (Stinchcomb,

2002, p. 2). In addition, policy makers began to adopt the "get tough on crime" motto in

the late 1960s and 1970s (Pratt, 2009). The "get tough on crime" policy fueled the

national political agenda and subsequently created enhanced sanctions to address criminal

behavior (Pratt, 2009).

Finally, the momentum has most recently shifted to the justice model. The justice

model gained popularity in the 1980s through the 1990s. The key concepts of the justice

model include a renewed emphasis on free-will, individual responsibility, and rational

choice (Stinchcomb, 2002). In fact, according to Stinchcomb, the justice model gained

increased momentum in the 1990s as a result of political conservatism, media

sensationalism, and President Regan's "war on drugs." Offenders were held accountable

for their actions receiving fixed or determinate sentences proportionate to the seriousness

of the crime (Stinchcomb, 2002). Furthermore, offenders were incapacitated with the

hope that potential offenders would be deterred from crime through example (Stinchcomb, 2002).

As the pendulum has swung throughout history, crime and punishment continue to be controversial topics. Rehabilitation, retribution, and incapacitation are prominent paradigms of punishment in America. There appears to be a cyclical relationship between historical events, political policies, theory, and the current crises that encompass the criminal justice system today.

Undoubtedly, the criminal justice system continues to evolve. Since the 1970s, America has witnessed colossal changes in sentencing policies that have fundamentally altered the landscape of punishment (Travis, 2005). Historical paradigms concerning criminal justice, such as the medical model, the rehabilitation model, and the indeterminate sentencing model, have provided Americans with a basic scheme of our criminal justice system and has affected how we approach problems within our criminal justice system.

Throughout U.S. history, different paradigms associated with punishment, such as rehabilitation, retribution, and incapacitation, played a major role in shaping the criminal justice system. Rehabilitation is a paradigm that views punishment as an instrument to change problematic behavior (Maxfield & Babbie, 1998). Retribution holds the belief that society, for sake of expressing disapproval, has a vested interest in punishing criminal offenders (Maxfield & Babbie, 1998). Lastly, incapacitation assumes that society is safe from further harm when offenders are incarcerated (Maxfield & Babbie, 1998). Incapacitation, the most recent paradigm shift in criminal justice, has created vast implications for prisoners and society alike.

For nearly 50 years, the rate of incarceration remained relatively stable; however, between 1973 and 2000 the rate of incarceration radically increased climbing from 110 per 100,000 to 470 per 100,000 people incarcerated (Visher & Travis, 2003). In 2001, America reached an all-time high of 1.3 million people in prison (Visher & Travis, 2003). Incarceration rates continue to drastically soar. As of 2008, Pratt (2009) reported that 1% of the United States population was incarcerated. Without a doubt, America has developed the biggest prison system on the planet (Pratt, 2009). Over the past generation, America has experienced a steady growth of imprisonment peaking 2 million incarcerated people (Pratt, 2009; Travis, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003). This is largely a result of the conservative contemporary political culture that places emphasis on controlling crime through incarceration (Pratt, 2009; Travis & Visher, 2005). Subsequently, the rate of incarceration has increased fourfold (Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003).

Prisoner Reentry

Just as the rate of incarceration has increased fourfold, the number of incarcerated people leaving prison each year has also quadrupled (Travis, 2005). Despite considerable focus placed on life-without-parole sentences, as well as the death penalty, Petersilia (2003) reported that only 7% of offenders are serving death or life sentences. Petersilia also reported that approximately 3,000 offenders die in prison each year. Therefore, 93% of all offenders will be released back into the community setting (Petersilia, 2003). On any given day in the United States approximately 1,700 individuals will be released from federal and state prisons (Travis, 2005).

Recent research (Bloom et al., 2007; Travis, 2005; Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2010; Visher & Travis, 2003; Western, 2008) has reported that between 600,000 and 700,000 individuals are released from federal and state prisons each year. The United States is facing a profound challenge of prisoner reentry. The purpose of this study is to examine characteristics of probationers that are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. A vast number of variables directly influence prisoner reentry; however, this literary review identifies predictor variables of probationers that are associated with successful reentry, such as type of offense, age, gender, race, education level, employment history, substance abuse histories, mental health histories, and the federal WFD.

The Stages of Prisoner Reentry

Recognizing the unique needs of prisoners experiencing reentry will begin to shape the pathways of prisoner reentry. Petersilia (2003) reported:

Today's inmate is likely to have been in custody several times before, has a length history of alcohol and drug abuse, is more likely to be involved in gang activities and drug dealing, has probably experienced significant periods of unemployment and homelessness, and may have a physical or mental disability. Most of them have young children, with who they hope to reunite after release, although in most cases, their children will have infrequently visited them during their incarceration. A significant number of inmates will have spent weeks, if not months, in solitary confinement or supermax prisons, devoid of human contact and prison program participation. (p. 21)

Visher and Travis (2003) further reported that the transition that offenders undergo as they leave prison and return to the community setting is fundamentally a dynamic, social process. Visher and Travis stated that individuals experiencing reentry "have been shaped by their offending and substance abuse histories, their work skills and job histories, their mental health and physical health, their prison experiences, and their attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits" (p. 91).

Visher and Travis (2003) identified four stages of the reentry process. The first stage is the pre-prison stage, which includes the offender's demographic profile, family characteristics, as well as their employment, criminal, and substance abuse history. The second stage is the in-prison stage, which includes the offender's length of incarceration, participation in treatment programs offered in the institution, ability to maintain contact with a support network (e.g., family and friends), and involvement in pre-release preparation. The third state is the post-release transition stage. This stage includes circumstances surrounding the moment of release, such as housing needs, family support, and availability of transitional assistance. Finally, the last stage is the post-release integration stage. The post-release integration stage consists of criminal justice supervision, social service support, family connections, employment experiences, and the influence of peers.

The success or failure of prisoner reentry depends greatly on the variables identified in each of the four stages of reentry. However, for the purposes of this study, variables that affect the post-release integration stage are explored.

Factors Influencing Prisoner Reentry

"Who is experiencing prisoner reentry?" Although that may seem like a simple question, the answer is multifaceted. Austin and Irwin (2001) reported that more than 50% of incarcerated people have committed crimes that the public did not view as serious crime. Austin (2001) also concluded that a significant number of prisoners that will be released into the community setting will pose little risk to public safety. On the other hand, Petersilia (2005) reported that prisoners coming home are not only dangerous, but they are in fact career criminals. Similarly, Bennett, DiIuli, and Walters (1996) argued that a vast majority of incarcerated criminals are violent offenders, repeat offenders, or violent repeat offenders.

How the public perceives prisoners returning home will have a dramatic impact on how the challenge of prisoner reentry is addressed. If the public perceives incarcerated offenders as non-violent offenders they may be more likely to support rehabilitation and work reentry initiatives. However, if the public perceives the returning offender as dangerous, violent, or a career criminal, the reentry initiatives are more likely to support law enforcement and surveillance (Petersilia, 2005).

Type of offense. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) reported that between October of 2007 and September of 2008, there were 120,053 federal offenders under supervision. Of the 120,053 offenders under federal supervision, 45.2% of the offenders had been convicted on a drug offense (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). The number of offenders convicted of drug crimes far surpass other felony convictions, such as violent offenses (murder, assault, robbery, manslaughter, sex offenses, kidnapping, etc.), property offenses (embezzlement, fraud, arson, counterfeiting, etc.), public order offenses

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(non-violent sex offenses, perjury, communications, racketeering, transportation, etc.), weapon offenses, and immigration offenses (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).

Undoubtedly, the war on drugs has had a significant impact on the U.S. prison population (Petersilia, 2005). Numerous factors associated with the war on drugs continue to affect the swelling prison population. Critics argue that police are proactive in dealing with drug offenses and reactive in responding to burglary, robbery, or other index offenses (Petersilia, 2005). Empirical research supports such arguments. For example, from 1980 through 1997 the number of offenders convicted for drug offenses increased by 1,040% (Petersilia, 2005). Due to the nature of their offense, drug offenders appear to receive shorter sentences compared to violent offenders. Therefore, drug offenders are recycled back into the community setting more quickly than their violent offender counterparts (Petersilia, 2005).

Age. In 1990, the average age of state prisoners released to parole was 31 (Petersilia, 2003). In 1999, the average age of state prisoners returning home was slightly older at the age of 34 (Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005). During the 1990s, the number of prisoners over the age of 55 more than doubled (Petersilia, 2003). The age of soon-to-be-released prisoners is slightly older than the median age of those currently in prison, which is 36 years old for federal prisoners and 32 years old for state prisoners (Petersilia, 2005).

Accordingly, a greater number of older prisoners are experiencing reentry today. Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001) reported that in 1999, an estimated 109,300 state prisoners age 40 or older were paroled and about 44,000 parolees were 55 years old and older. State parolees 40 years of age and older accounted for 26% of state parolees

(Petersilia, 2005). In the past decade, this number has more than doubled. The majority of older state prisoners, or 61%, are incarcerated for violent offenses (Petersilia, 2005).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) reported that between October 2007 and September 2008 there was a total of 120,053 federal offenders under some form of federal supervision (e.g. probation, supervised release, or parole). The total number of federal offenders 40 years of age or older accounted for 39.9% of the total number of offenders under federal supervision (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the total number of federal offenders that were 40 or older compiled the largest age group on federal supervision. The next largest age group was federal offenders ranging in age from 31 to 40 at 33.4%. Federal offenders ranging in age from 21 to 30 accounted for 25.3% of offenders on federal supervision. Federal offenders ranging in age from 19 to 20 accounted for 1.2% of federal offenders under federal supervision. The smallest group of federal offenders on serving a term of federal supervision was 19 or younger at 0.2%.

Gender. Gender is also an important characteristic to explore when asking the question, "Who is experiencing prisoner reentry?" Historically, the majority of offenders serving a term of post-conviction supervision were mostly minority males. In fact, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) reported that males accounted for 57.7% of federal offenders under federal supervision.

By the end of 2000, there were an estimated 478 prisoners per 100,000 United States residents (Petersilia, 2003). Therefore, Petersilia estimated that by the end of 2000 1 in every 109 men and 1 in every 1,695 women were incarcerated. Recently, there has been a specific change in the prison population that will most definitely pose a new

challenge to prisoner reentry. That is, over the past decade the number of incarcerated females has steadily risen (Petersilia, 2005).

Females have been the least violent, yet rapidly growing population of America's correctional system (Petersilia, 2005; Travis, 2005). According to Petersilia (2003) in 1990 women comprised 7.9% of state parole. The number of women involved with state parole grew reaching 9.9% in 1999. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) reported that from October of 2007 through September of 2008, women accounted for 19.3% of federal offenders under supervision.

There are a number of reasons for the rising number of incarcerated females. First, the war on drugs has dramatically impacted females. In 1986 mandatory sentencing for drug convictions was passed (Petersilia, 2003). During the next decade the number of women incarcerated for drug crimes rose by 888% (Mauer, Potler, & Wolf, 1999). Under mandatory sentencing guidelines, women and men who committed the same offense received the same punishment (Petersilia, 2003).

Female offenders have different needs than male offenders. For instance, 57% of women in state prison reported a history of sexual or physical abuse (Petersilia, 2005). Female offenders also have high rates of drug addiction and infectious disease compared to their male counterparts (Harlow, 1999). Petersilia (2005) reported that a quarter of female offenders attempted suicide prior to incarceration, almost half of female offenders ran away from home as youths, and most female offenders never earned more than $6.50 per hour. Despite the unique needs of incarcerated women, there are fewer programs to assist them (Petersilia, 2005). Addressing the needs of female offenders is only one of the many challenges plaguing the epidemic of prisoner reentry.

Race. Race is another critical aspect of prisoner reentry. Race is defined as a

presumed classification of all human groups on the basis of visible physical traits

or phenotype and behavioral differences . . . a sociopolitical designation in which

individuals assigned to a particular racial group based on presumed biological or

visible characteristics such as skin color, physical features, and in some cases,

language. (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008, p. 367)

Petersilia (2003) pointed out that the rates of incarceration varied dramatically by race:

"In 2000, 1 in every 29 black males was sentenced to at least a year's confinement,

compared with 1 in every 82 Hispanic males, and 1 in every 223 white males" (p. 21).

Approximately a third of soon-to-be-released state prisoners are White, 47% are Black,

and 17% are Hispanic (Petersilia, 2005). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) reported

that 57.7% of federal offenders under supervision are Caucasian; 36.8% are African

American; 2.8% are Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 2.3% are American

Indian or Alaska Native; and 0.4% fall under the "other" category.

Hispanics represent the fastest growing minority group (Petersilia, 2005).

Although Hispanics only comprise 9.4% of the U.S. population, they represent 16% of

the current prison population (Petersilia, 2005). Petersilia reported the number of racial

or ethnic minorities returning home is approximately 3 times the percentage of the

minorities in the general population of the United States. About two thirds of all

returning prisoners are racial or ethnic minorities (Petersilia, 2005).

There are a number of reasons for the overrepresentation of racial minorities in

prison. Just a few of the controversial topics that may account for the overrepresentation

of racial minorities in prison include "overt discrimination policies that have differential

racial effects and racial difference in committing the kinds of crime that lead to imprisonment" (Petersilia, 2005, p. 20). With the exception of some property crimes and drug crimes, differential Black imprisonment rates are mostly explained by the differential rates of offending (Petersilia, 2005).

Education and employment. The profile of returning prisoners have consistently been male minorities that present with work and education deficits (Petersilia, 2003, 2005). Prisoners tend to have minimal work experience and averaging about a 10th-grade education (Western, 2008). Petersilia (2003) wrote: "While illiteracy and poor academic performance are not direct causes of criminal behavior, people who have received inadequate education or who exhibit poor literacy skills are disproportionately found in prisons" (p. 32). Twenty six percent of federal prisoners and 41% of state prisoners that are considered "soon-to-be released inmates" do not have a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (GED; Petersilia, 2005).

An offender's education level and work history has a profound impact on his or her reentry experience. For example, for most offenders successful reentry requires employment (Uggen, Wakefield, & Western, 2005; Visher, Debus, et al., 2010; Visher & Travis, 2003; Western, 2008). Unfortunately, convicted felons often enter the criminal justice system with a history of unemployment, few marketable job skills, and low educational attainment (Travis, 2005; Uggen et al., 2005). Only 31% of state prisoners and only 27% of federal prisoners reported they were unemployed one month prior to their arrest (Petersilia, 2005). For the offender experiencing reentry who does not have a work history, they are at high risk of recidivism (Petersilia, 2005; Uggen et al., 2005; Western, 2008).

Substance abuse. Substance abuse is another challenge of reentry today. In the early 1980s the United States declared a "war on drugs." Severe penalties for drug involved offenders, such as the passing of mandatory drug sentencing guidelines in 1986 (Petersilia, 2005), was established expecting to reduce drug use and decrease drug related crime (MacKenzie, 2006). The war on drugs resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of drug related offenders in prisons.

The U.S. Department of Justice National Drug Intelligence Center National Drug Threat Assessment (2010) reported that 53% of federal prisoners and 20% of state prisoners are currently incarcerated as a result of a drug offense. Moreover, by the end of 2007, 27% of individuals on probation and 37% of individuals on parole had committed a drug offense. The research provides empirical evidence that the war on drugs continues to have an impact on prisoner reentry today.

A plethora of previous research has linked substance abuse to recidivism (Belenko et al., 2004; Shivy, Wu, Moon, & Mann, 2007; Sung & Belenko, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003). Approximately 75% of ex-offenders have a history of substance abuse or dependence (Shivy et al., 2007). In fact, about half of all offenders reported being under the influence of mood altering chemicals during the commission of their crimes, which subsequently led to their incarceration (Shivy et al., 2007).

Mental health. In order to enhance understanding of the link between mental illness and institutions, it is critical to provide background information on mental health policies and practices. Reaching an all-time high, in 1955 there were 559,000 mental health patients residing in state hospitals (Petersilia, 2005). In an attempt to treat mental health patients in a fashion that was of a more humane manner and less expensive, new

antipsychotic drugs were developed in the 1950s. Known as deinstitutionalization, the development of new antipsychotic drugs provided a community based alternative for treating mentally ill patients (Petersilia, 2005). As a result of deinstitutionalization policies, many state run mental hospitals were closed. According to Petersilia, by 2000, less than 70,000 mentally ill patients were in mental hospitals.

The outcome of community-based alternatives for the treatment of mental health patients has had a profound impact on the criminal justice system and subsequent reentry epidemic. In recent years, a growing number of mentally ill people have been sent to prison (Petersilia, 2005). Some of the reasons for the increased mentally ill prison population include the mentally ill being non-compliant with their psychotropic medication regime, deteriorating mental health conditions within the community setting, the decreased number of mental health hospitals, and criminal activity associated with mental illness that draws the attention of law enforcement (Petersilia, 2005).

Today, persons suffering from mental health illnesses are being criminalized through the corrections system, instead of the mental health system, at alarming rates (Petersilia, 2005). An estimated 16% of offenders have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Shivy et al., 2007; Travis et al., 2001). In 2000 the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that 16% of state inmates had spent at least one night in a mental hospital or mental health facility and had a mental health diagnosis (Beck & Maruschak, 2001). In addition, the criminal justice system has witnessed an increased in the number of prisoners who present with dual diagnoses (e.g., substance abuse and mental health disorders). Petersilia (2005) estimated that 13% of the prison population have been dually diagnosed adding to the already complex reentry concerns. Overall, prisoners

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returning home who have mental illness are an "underidentified and underserved population and most parole officers are unable to handle the problems of these new offenders successfully" (Petersilia, 2005, p. 33).

Recidivism and Prisoner Reentry

As reentry implications continue to plague the criminal justice system, characteristics that are associated with successful reentry have been largely overlooked. Visher and Travis (2003) reported that the majority of existing research on prisoner reentry focuses solely on recidivism ignoring the reality that recidivism is directly affected by post-prison reintegration and overall adjustment to the community setting. The purpose of this study is to examine characteristics of probationers that are associated with successful reentry among probationers. Logistic regression and chi-square tests were conducted on data gathered from existing records on a sample of probationers who were enrolled in the federal WFD and a sample of probationers who were not enrolled in the program. Data obtained include static variables (e.g., age, race, and gender) and fluid variables (e.g., type of offense, substance abuse history, mental health history, employment history, educational history, enrollment in workforce development, and recidivism) to evaluate which variables are associated with successful reentry.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics examined criminal recidivism among approximately 300,000 prisoners released in 15 states in 1994 (Langan & Levin, 2002; Petersilia, 2003). The research concluded that 67.5% of the prisoners examined were arrested for a new offense within 3 years of their release. Even more disturbing was the fact that 51.8% of recidivists were back in prison serving time for a supervised release technical violation or for a new offense (Visher & Travis, 2003).

Just as men are incarcerated at higher rates than women, men are also more likely to return to prison than are women. Fifty three percent of men are recidivists compared to 39.4% of women (Visher & Travis, 2003). In addition, 54.2% of African Americans are more likely to return to prison compared to 49.9% of Caucasians (Visher & Travis, 2003). Related facts (Visher & Travis, 2003) linked to recidivism rates include the following; Non-Hispanics are 57.3% more likely to return to prison than 51.9% of Hispanics, younger prisoners are more likely to return to prison than their older counterparts, and prisoners with extensive criminal histories are more likely to be returned to prison than those with shorter records.

Individual circumstances can be risk factors, or protective factors, associated with an offender's reentry experience. For instance, the offender's substance abuse history, mental health history, physical health history, work history, and type of support network can all be variables that can either positively or negatively affect reentry (Pelissier et al., 2001; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Shearer & Balekta, 1999; Visher & Travis, 2003). Employment is one variable that can affect influence reentry that has been receiving increased attention.

Previous research (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Uggen, 2000; Western, 2008) has identified unemployment as a predictor of recidivism. This corresponds with the fact that many offenders return home with a limited work history. Some return home without a work history at all. It is likely that offenders lack the education or job skills needed to obtain employment when they experience reentry (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). For offenders experiencing reentry, finding employment can be a daunting task.

Prisoner Reentry and Workforce Development Programs

Recent research on prisoner reentry programs has provided mixed messages regarding the influence of reentry programs on employment (McDonough & Burrell, 2008; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Western, 2008). Western declared that many evaluations of prisoner reentry programs report large reductions in recidivism. Western readily noted that these findings "are often artifacts of weak research designs" (p. 10). On the contrary, Sieter and Kadela (2003) conducted prisoner reentry studies that focused on the effects of vocational and work programs. As a result of their studies, Sieter and Kadela concluded that work release programs are effective in reducing recidivism, thus effective in promoting successful reentry. Uggen and Staff (2001) found "enough sound experimental evidence of program effectiveness to conclude that employment remains a viable avenue for reducing crime and recidivism" (p. 14).

In 2010, Visher, Smolter, and O'Connell published the results of their federal WFD pilot study. This study was conducted in the U.S. Probation Office, District of Delaware and explored the experiences of 80 federal probationers. Of the 80 federal probationers who participated in the program almost two-thirds of the sample had a high school diploma or GED, 25% had a consistent employment history prior to their incarceration, and only 40% were employed when they entered the program (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010).

Their findings were promising in addressing the epidemic of prisoner reentry. Federal probationers that participated in the federal WFD showed consistent improvement in not only employment outcomes, but in their ability to obtain full-time employment and achieve higher wages (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). Furthermore,

Visher et al. concluded that participants in the federal WFD were 58% less likely to recidivate than their counterparts who were not involved in the program.

The federal WFD was launched in the Western District of Pennsylvania on July 1, 2005 (T. Johnson, personal communication, November 8, 2010). Federal WFD is intended to provide "men and women under community supervision with assistance to increase their job readiness (including education and vocational skills), identify potential employers, and develop resumes and interview skills with the goals of obtaining full-time employment and reducing recidivism" (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010, p. 2). The federal WFD is a fairly new reentry initiative that has been implemented in a few U.S. probation offices (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). Until this time, exploratory research has only been conducted on the federal WFD in Missouri, Louisiana, and Vermont. In addition, one pilot study was conducted on the federal WFD in Delaware. Initial research on the federal WFD has found that the program has assisted in increasing employment rates of probationers, subsequently reducing recidivism rates (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010).

By embarking on the reentry initiative, the U.S. Probation Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania began to reach out and network with employers in the Pittsburgh area. The U.S. Probation Office contacted local organizations and businesses to learn more about the services and resources, such as unions and apprenticeship programs, available for federal probationers returning to the community setting. While the U.S. Probation Office began to network with employers in the community, the Office also had an opportunity to promote the benefits of hiring individuals who were under the supervision of the federal probation (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). The federal WFD is intended to assist federal probationers serving a term of post-conviction supervision to

increase job readiness, obtain employment, and reduce recidivism (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010).

At the time this research was conducted, the federal WFD Western District of Pennsylvania consisted of four Community Resource Specialists. The federal WFD assists ex-offenders with developing job readiness strategies. One tool used to address job readiness is the Occupational Information Network, or O*Net. O*Net was developed under the sponsorship of the United States Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA). The O*Net Interest Profiler is a self-assessment career explanation tool that can help probationers discover various types of work activities and occupations. The O*Net Interest Profiler creates a Profiler Score Report that includes an in-depth interpretation of the scores identifying standard occupational classifications. The results can be linked to over 800 occupations to assist in occupational development (O*Net, 2010). By utilizing this tool, Community Resource Specialists can assist probationers enrolled in the WFD in achieving employment goals.

Moreover, job readiness strategies encompass helping probationers to learn trades and vocational skills that are invaluable in the labor market. The program also assists probationers by helping them to establish long term goals sufficient for career advancement. The Community Resource Specialists offer group meetings along with individual sessions that can assist probationers in preparing individualized portfolios. One of the goals of the federal WFD is to provide support and direction to probationers by helping them to not only define their career goals, but help them to achieve their career goals.

By networking with local employers, the U.S. Probation Office and the Community Resource Specialists of the WFD can assist offenders in gaining meaningful employment. Employers that chose to hire probationers involved in the federal WFD can experience benefits. The benefits of employing probationers include receiving federal bonding and a work opportunity tax credit. Furthermore, the probationer will receive random drug testing to ensure they are drug free promoting a safer workplace.

Probationers are able to receive a wide array of services when they participate in the federal WFD. For instance, probationers that chose to become involved with the program receive individual career counseling. The program also offers workshops so that probationers can learn about interviewing skills and how to create a resume (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). Additional services that the WFD offer include career assessments, resume building, rap sheet expungement, driver's license restoration, job club, cognitive thinking courses, along with workshops that address financial literacy and homeownership (J. Albert, personal communication, November 8, 2010).

Summary

This quantitative study is intended to explore the characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry. The review of the literature presented research to support the purpose and significance of the study as well as the research questions of the study. This chapter provided a wealth of information related to prisoner reentry. Specific focus was given to the history of corrections in America, description of who is experiencing prisoner reentry, the stages of reentry, recidivism rates, and WFD initiatives.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry. Logistic regression and chi-square tests were conducted on data gathered from existing records on a sample of probationers enrolled in the federal Workforce Development Program (WFD) and a sample of probationers not enrolled in the federal WFD. Data obtained include static variables (e.g., age, race, and gender) and fluid variables (e.g., type of offense, substance abuse history, mental health history, employment history, educational history, WFD, and recidivism) to evaluate which variables are predictive of successful reentry.

In order to address the purpose and specific research questions of this study, permission to use existing, de-identified data to evaluate WFD was requested and granted by the Chief Deputy of the U.S. Probation Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania (T. Johnson, personal communication, June 30, 2011). This research evaluates the characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry?

2. Is involvement with the federal WFD predictive of successful reentry for probationers?

This chapter briefly reviews the research design, research questions, and hypotheses. This chapter also describes the sample, collection of data, and data analysis

methods used to collect and analyze predictor variables in relation to successful prisoner reentry.

Research Design

The data on the federal probationers were collected by Community Resource Specialists and Supervisors of the U.S. Probation Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania. The existing data were retrieved from the probationer files. The probationer files consist of paper files and the online data management system, which are secured and maintained by the U.S. Probation Officer. Detailed information maintained in the probationer files includes demographics, criminal history and risk factors, re-arrests, and noncompliance with the conditions of supervision (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). For the purposes of this study, the aforementioned employees of the U.S. Probation Office collected archival data that included the following characteristics of probationers: age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse history, mental health history, employment history, educational history, recidivism, and whether or not the probationer was enrolled in the federal WFD. The research consisted of archival data which included a sample of 75 probationers enrolled in the federal WFD in 2007, 75 probationers enrolled in the federal WFD in 2010 (J. Albert & S. Albert, personal communication, December 21, 2011) and a sample of 75 non-WFD (not enrolled in the federal WFD) from 2010 (M. Dibiasi, personal communication, February 8, 2012). Each sample was selected in a random fashion.

Sample

Heppner et al. (2008) identified a sample as a subset of the population. In the process of sampling, observations are taken that constitute the population. The validity

of the inferences made from the observations of the sample depends on how well the sample accurately represents the population (Heppner et al., 2008). Adults serving a term of post-conviction supervision under the U.S. Probation Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania define the target population. The existing data set included 225 adult male and female offenders on federal probation in the Western District of Pennsylvania. Participants were selected in a random fashion from the participant pool.

Collection of Data

The data on the federal probationers were collected from the federal probationer files, including paper files and the online data management system. All of the federal probationer's files are secured and maintained by the U.S. Probation Officer. The data files were selected randomly. First, the Community Resource Specialist established a list of probationers enrolled in the federal WFD in 2007 and a list of probationers enrolled in the federal WFD in 2010. Second, the Community Resource Specialist took the established lists and started with the first name on each list and then selected every third name until 75 participants were selected to establish the 2007 and 2010 WFD samples. Third, the Supervisor obtained a list from the Community Resource Specialist that identified probationers enrolled in the federal WFD in 2010. With that list the Supervisor was then able to cross reference data to determine probationers who were not enrolled in the federal WFD in 2010. The Supervisor randomly selected five non-WFD probationers from each U.S. Probation Officer's caseloads. Thus, a sample of existing data from 2010 that included 75 non-WFD was created.

For the purposes of this research, deidentified archival data were collected randomly from the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office. Based on conversations

with employees of the U.S. Probation Office, a few variables were able to be identified in order to proceed with this study. Variables that were included in the database are age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse history, mental health history, employment history, educational history, recidivism, and whether or not the probationer was enrolled in the federal WFD.

Age

Age is a continuous independent variable. Twenty to 74 years old is the age range of the probationers in this sample. The age recorded was the age of the probationer at the time the data were collected by the U.S. Probation employees.

Race

As mentioned in the limitation section of Chapter 1, Caucasians and African Americans are the only racial groups represented in this study. The existing data collected only included Caucasians and African Americans.

Gender

Gender is identified as male or female. The majority of the probationers in this study were males.

Type of Offense

For the purpose of this study, four types of offenses were identified; drug crimes, property crimes, violent crimes, and weapon offenses. This co-investigator categorized the type of offenses by using the offender's primary offense. For instance, if a probationer was convicted of Unlawful Transportation of Firearms and Possession with Intent to Distribute Heroin the crime would be labeled as a weapons offense. A few examples of crimes identified as *drug crimes* include possession with intent to deliver or

conspiracy to distribute. A few examples of crimes identified as *violent crimes* include

activities relating to material constituting or containing child pornography, bank robbery,

and assault crimes. A few examples of crimes identified as *property crimes* include bank

fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States, and bringing in and harboring aliens. A

few examples of crimes identified as *weapon offenses* include unlawful transportation of

firearms and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Substance Abuse

For each probationer their substance abuse history was determined by whether or

not (yes or no) the probationer had a *DSM-IV* substance abuse or dependence diagnosis in

his or her record.

Mental Health

For each probationer their mental health history was determined by whether or not

(yes or no) the probationer had a mental health diagnosis in his or her record.

Employment

For the probationers enrolled in the federal WFD, employment was determined

based on whether or not (yes or no) the probationer was employed at any time during the

year studied (2007 or 2010).

Education Level

For the probationers enrolled in the federal WFD, their education levels were

defined based on their level of education at the time they were enrolled in the WFD. For

non-WFD probationers, their education level was defined at the time the data were

collected by U.S. Probation. For the purpose of this study, education levels are identified

as (a) no high school education; (b) high school diploma; (c) GED; or (d) higher

education, which includes vocational or trade school, associate degrees, bachelor degrees, master degrees, or PhD.

Recidivism

As defined by the U.S. Probation Office, recidivism occurs when a probationer is reincarcerated. Recidivism is labeled as yes if a probationer was reincarcerated or no if the probationer was not reincarcerated during the 2007 or 2010 archival data, calendar year.

Workforce Development Program

Existing data collected from the 2007 and the 2010 WFD groups contained a sample of 150 probationers. Existing data collected from the 2010 non-WFD group contained a sample of 75 probationers. To ensure that a probationer who was in the 2007 group was not in the 2010 group, the U.S Probation employees cross referenced the data. Lastly, subject numbers were assigned to the cases. For instance, the letter "A" was placed after the subject number for the 2010 group (e.g., 1A, 2A, 3A, etc.), the letter "B" was placed after the subject number for the 2007 group (e.g., 1B, 2B, 3B, etc.), and the letter "C" was placed after the subject number for the 2010 non-workforce development group (e.g., 1C, 2C, 3C, etc.).

Once all of the above identified variables were collected from the records, the U.S. Probation employees established an Excel spreadsheet with this archival data. After the archival data were stripped of all identifiers and the database was created, the researcher had access to collect the archival data.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The principal focus of investigation in this research was to examine characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry. The general research questions are:

1. What are the characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry?

2. Is involvement with the federal WFD predictive of successful reentry for probationers?

With consideration given to the findings of previous research (Petersilia 2005; Travis 2005; Travis & Visher 2005; Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010; Western 2008), the research hypotheses are as follows:

H_1: Older age groups are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H_2: Caucasian probationers are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H_3: Female probationers are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H_4: Probationers that meet the criteria for property crimes are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H_5: Probationers without substance abuse histories are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H_6: Probationers without mental health histories are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H7:   Probationers that are employed are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H8:   Probationers with higher education are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

H9:   Probationers that are enrolled in the federal WFD are associated with and predictive of successful reentry.

Research Design and Data Analysis

According to Heppner et al. (2008), a great deal of counseling research involves an attempt to manipulate and control variables. However, many independent variables cannot be manipulated. For the purposes of this study, the research took place after the groups had been formed and independent variables were examined to determine if they were predictive of successful reentry.

By developing categories, subgroups, or factors the data set becomes simplified (Heppner et al., 2008). The existing data set consisted of 225 participants. In order to evaluate characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry, the following variables were used; age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse history, mental health history, employment history, educational history, recidivism, and whether or not the probationer was enrolled in the federal WFD.

Regression analysis was used to examine the correlation of probationer characteristics and the phenomenon of successful reentry (Cleophas, Zwinderman, Cleophas, & Cleophas, 2009). Specifically, logistic regression and chi-square tests were chosen for this quantitative study. Logistic regression is a model-building technique used in statistics to describe the relationship between an outcome variable and a set of

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independent, or predictor, variables (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Logistic regression is the statistical method used to study the separate and collective characteristics of the probationers experiencing reentry (Heppner et al., 2008). Thus, logistic regression can be used to determine what characteristics of probationers are associated with successful reentry.

Summary

This research was conducted using an existing data set. Participants were federal probationers experiencing the reentry phenomena in the Western District of Pennsylvania. Logistic regression and chi-square tests were conducted on data gathered from existing records on a sample of probationers enrolled in the federal WFD and a sample of probationers not enrolled in the program. The research utilized a logistic regression analysis to explore the variables that may be predictive of successful reentry.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results for the data analyzed for this study. The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry. The research used archival data to examine predictor variables associated with successful reentry. A logistic regression was conducted on data gathered from existing records on a sample of probationers enrolled in the federal Workforce Development Program (WFD) and a sample of probationers not enrolled in the WFD program.

Population

Adults serving a term of post-conviction supervision under the U.S. Probation Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania defined the target population. The existing data set included 225 adult male and female offenders on federal probation. Participant data files were selected randomly from the pool of cases available in the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania for the years of 2007 and 2010. In order to evaluate characteristics of probationers associated with and predictive of successful reentry, the following variables were analyzed: age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse history, mental health history, employment history, educational history, recidivism, and whether or not the probationer was enrolled in the federal WFD.

Data Organization

With the exception of the continuous variable of age, this research study generated data that included nominal data. The average age of probationers was 41.65

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(*sd* = 11.30). For a definition of each variable examined in this study and to identify the

values of the variables, please refer to Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Variables, Values, and Definitions

Variables	Definitions
Group	A quantitative variable that indicates the data source of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = 2010 Non-WFD 2 = 2007 WFD 3 = 2010 WFD
Type of Offense	A quantitative variable that indicates the type of offense of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Drug Crime 2 = Violent Crime 3 = Property Crime 4 = Weapon Offense
Race	A quantitative variable that indicates the race of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Caucasian 2 = African American
Gender	A quantitative variable that indicates the gender of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Male 2 = Female
Education	A quantitative variable that indicates the education level of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = No High School 2 = GED 3 = High School 4 = Higher Education 5 = Missing
Employment	A quantitative variable that indicates the employment status of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Yes 2 = No
Recidivism	A quantitative variable that indicates the recidivism status of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Yes 2 = No

(*table continues*)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Variables, Values, and Definitions

Variables	Definitions
Drug and Alcohol	A quantitative variable that indicates the drug and alcohol history of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Missing
Mental Health	A quantitative variable that indicates the mental health history of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Missing
WFD	A quantitative variable that indicates WFD classification of the probationers with the following categories: 1 = Yes 2 = No

Note. WFD = Workforce Development; GED = General Equivalency Degree.

In order to make meaningful conclusions about the data, a frequency distribution was conducted. A frequency distribution is a common procedure in descriptive statistics for organizing a set of data (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009) and is defined as a "tabular or graphical presentations of the data that show each category for a variable and the frequency of the category's occurrence in the data set" (Green & Salkind, 2008, p. 139). Therefore, data can be organized into a comprehensible form and data patterns can be recognized.

Calculating a frequency distribution also checks for missing data. Missing data is defined as any case that does not have a valid value for the variable in question (Rosenthal, 2001). For the current study, a frequency distribution was calculated for each variable. A total of 69 data points were identified as missing. Variables that were

identified as *unknown* were marked as missing variables. There were 10 unknown values for the education variable, 1 unknown value for the employment variable, 19 unknown values for the drug and alcohol variable, and 39 unknown values for the mental health variable totaling 69 missing values overall. Table 4.2 shows the frequencies and percentages for the data variables.

Table 4.2

Frequencies and Percentages

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Groups		
2010 Non-WFD	75	33.3
2007 WFD	75	33.3
2010 WFD	75	33.3
Type of Offense		
Drug Crime	97	43.1
Violent Crime	33	14.7
Property Crime	54	24.0
Weapon Offense	41	18.2
Race		
Caucasian	92	40.9
African American	133	59.1
Gender		
Male	195	86.7
Female	30	13.3
Education		
No H.S.	16	7.1
GED	75	33.3
H.S.	103	45.8
Higher Education	21	9.3
Missing	10	4.4
Employment		
Yes	118	52.4
No	106	47.1
Missing	1	.4

(*table continues*)

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Table 4.2 (continued)

Frequencies and Percentages

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Recidivism		
Yes	44	19.6
No	181	80.4
Drug and Alcohol		
Yes	142	63.1
No	64	28.4
Missing	19	8.4
Mental Health		
Yes	70	31.1
No	116	51.6
Missing	39	17.3
WFD		
Yes	150	66.7
No	75	33.3

Data Analysis Plan

Independent *t* Test

Age was the only continuous variable in this data set. As a result, an independent *t* test was conducted to compare age across participants that recidivated versus participants that did not recidivate. The independent *t* test examined independence, normality of the distribution, and the equality of variances.

Chi-Square

By using the cross tabulation analysis in SPSS, a chi-square test of significance was conducted to analyze frequencies of the nominal data. The chi-square test of significance compared observed and expected frequencies of the existing data. Because the chi-square test is a test of association, the test determined if recidivism occurred more

or less often than statistically expected when probationers are categorized in terms of other variables of interest (i.e., age, gender, etc.).

A few assumptions underlie the chi-square test of significance. Green and Salkind (2008) reported on chi-square assumptions noting that the observations of a two-way contingency table analyses are independent of each other; therefore, observations are independent when one observation does not affect other observations. Specifically, "one consequence of independent observations is that each observed frequency is generated by a different subject" (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009, p. 628). Therefore, a chi-square test would be inappropriate if a subject's response could be classified in more than one category. Based on observations of the existing data, this type of consequence is not of concern for this study.

Another assumption of the chi-square test is the size of expected frequencies. Cronk (2008) reported "the expected frequencies for each category should be at least 1, and no more than 20% of the categories should have expected frequencies of less than 5" (p. 85). Therefore, a chi-square test should not be performed when the expected frequency of any cell is less than five. For the purpose of this study, the frequencies for each category were satisfied.

Logistic Regression

Logistic regression was used to compute the odds that recidivism would occur among participants. Logistic regression examined what predictor variables were more or less likely to be associated with recidivism. An omnibus test of model coefficients was used to determine how well the model preformed. It provided a test of the joint predictive ability of all of the covariates in the model accounting for all other covariates

in the model simultaneously. In logistic regression, summary measures of fit are functions of a residual defined as the difference between the observed and fitted value (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000).

Relatively few assumptions constrain a logistic regression. One assumption of logistic regression is that the outcome must be discrete. Similarly, predictor variables should not be too closely related to each other in terms of collinearly. Finally, the regression equation should have a linear relationship with the logit form of the dependent variable (recidivism).

Analysis of Chi-Square Test of Significance

After determining the accuracy of the data and exploring the chi-squared assumptions, Pearson chi-square results were calculated. An alpha level of .05 ($p = .05$) was used for all statistical tests. The following sections examine each hypothesis individually, including descriptive statistics and logistic regression findings. Scores were calculated for statistical significance. The existing data set included information on the predictor variables of age, race, gender, type offense, education level, employment, substance abuse history, mental health history, and whether or not the probationer was enrolled in WFD.

H1: Older age groups are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. Age was the only continuous variable in this data set. The age range of participants was 20 to 74 years old. Figure 4.1 provides a histogram of age for the participants in the data set showing that the distribution was normal. The mean for age was 41.65 ($sd = 11.30$). The median age was 40.00 and the mode was 40. The average age of participants that recidivated was 39.95 years of age and the average age of participants who did not

recidivate was 42.06 years of age. To determine if recidivists were significantly younger than non-recidivists, an independent samples *t* test was conducted. The results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference (*t*(223) = 1.11, *p* = .27) showing the support for the null hypothesis and indicating that age did not differ across groups.
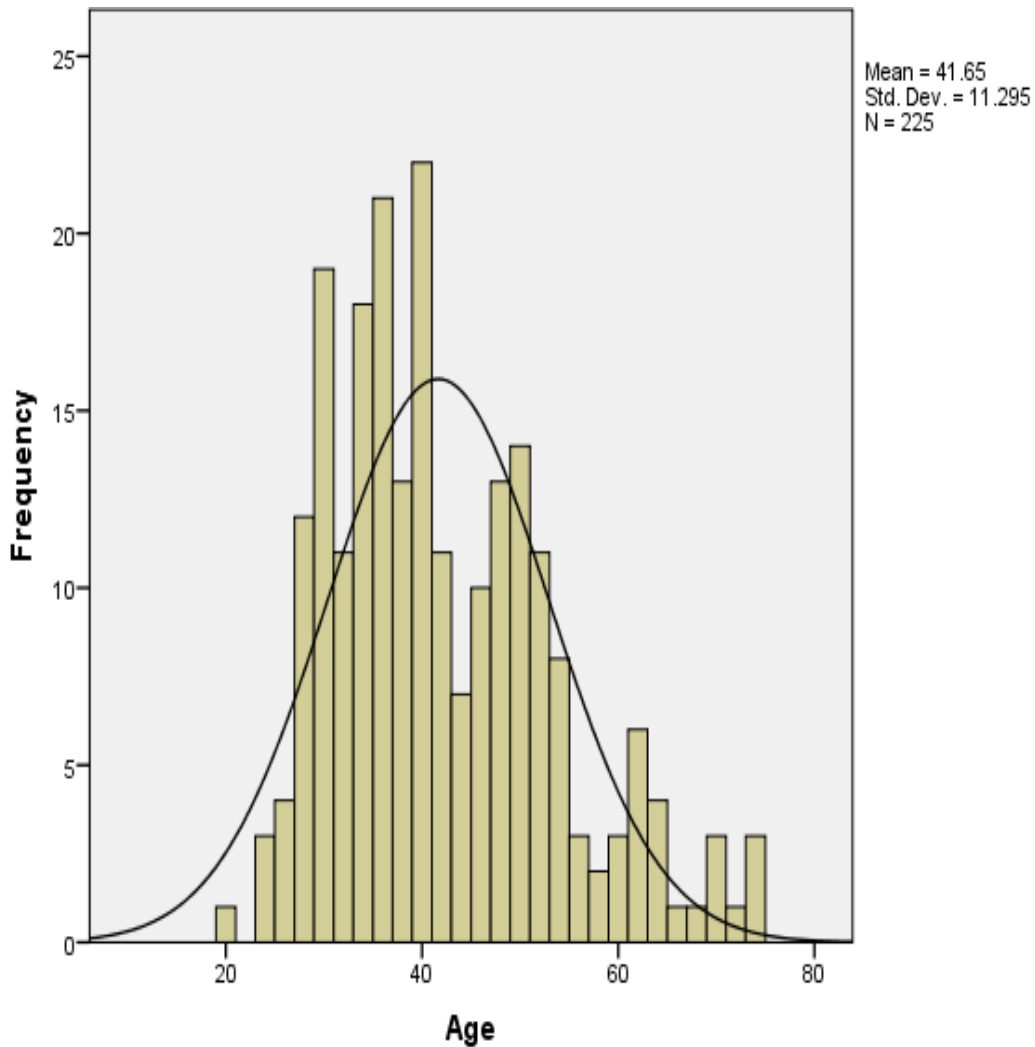
Figure 4.1. Age range of participants

H2: Caucasian probationers are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by a chi-square test of significance to determine if an unexpected proportion of Caucasians experienced successful reentry. Results indicated

that there was no significant relationship between race and recidivism ($\chi2 = .115$, $df = 1$, $p = .74$). Table 4.3 displays race and recidivism findings.

Table 4.3

Race and Recidivism

| | Recidivism | | |
	Yes	No	Total
Race			
White			
Count	17	75	92
Expected Count	18.0	74.0	92.0
% within Race	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%
% within Recidivism	38.6%	41.4%	40.9%
% of Total	7.6%	33.3%	40.9%
African American			
Count	27	106	133
Expected Count	26.0	107.0	133.3
% within Race	20.3%	79.7%	100.0%
% within Recidivism	61.4%	58.6%	59.1%
% of Total	12.0%	47.1%	59.1%

H3: Female probationers are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by using a chi-square test of significance to determine if an unexpected proportion of females experienced successful reentry. As stated previously, the majority of probationers were male. When examining gender and recidivism, the results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference ($\chi2 = .85$, $df = 1$, $p = .36$). Table 4.4 displays gender and recidivism findings.

Table 4.4

Gender and Recidivism

| | Recidivism | | |
	Yes	No	Total
Gender			
Male			
Count	40	155	195
Expected Count	38.1	156.9	195.0
% within Gender	20.5%	79.5%	100%
% within Recidivism	90.9%	85.6%	86.7%
% of Total	17.8%	68.9%	86.7%
Female			
Count	4	26	30
Expected Count	5.9	24.1	30.0
% within Gender	13.3%	86.7%	100%
% within Recidivism	9.1%	14.4%	13.3%
% of Total	1.8%	11.6%	13.3%

H4: Probationers that meet the criteria for property crimes associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by using a chi-square test of significance to determine if an unexpected proportion of probationers that had property crimes experienced successful reentry. When examining type of offense and recidivism, the results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference ($\chi2 = .71$, $df = 3$, $p = .87$). Table 4.5 displays type of offense and recidivism findings.

H5: Probationers without substance abuse histories are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by a chi-square test of significance. When examining drug and alcohol and recidivism, the results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference ($\chi2 = .04$, $df = 1$, $p = .87$). Table 4.6 displays substance abuse and recidivism findings.

Table 4.5

Type of Offense and Recidivism

		Recidivism	
	Yes	No	Total
Type of Offense			
Drug Crime			
Count	18	79	97
Expected Count	19.0	78.0	97.0
% within Offense Type	18.6%	81.4%	100%
% within Recidivism	40.9%	43.6%	43.1%
% of Total	8.0%	35.1%	43.1%
Violent Crime			
Count	8	25	33
Expected Count	6.5	26.5	33.0
% within Offense Type	24.2%	75.8%	100%
% within Recidivism	18.2%	13.8%	14.7%
% of Total	3.6%	11.1%	14.7%
Property Crime			
Count	11	43	54
Expected Count	10.6	43.4	54.0
% within Offense Type	20.4%	79.6%	100%
% within Recidivism	25.0%	23.8%	24.0%
% of Total	4.9%	19.1%	24.0%
Weapons Offense			
Count	7	34	41
Expected Count	8.0	33.0	41.0
% within Offense Type	17.1%	82.9%	100%
% within Recidivism	15.9%	18.8%	18.2%
% of Total	3.1%	15.1%	18.2%

Table 4.6

Substance Abuse and Recidivism

| | | Recidivism | | |
	Yes	No	Total	
Substance Abuse				
Drug and Alcohol (Yes)				
Count	26	116	142	
Expected Count	25.5	116.5	142.0	
% within D&A	18.3%	81.7%	100%	
% within Recidivism	70.3%	68.6%	68.9%	
% of Total	12.6%	56.3%	68.9%	
Drug and Alcohol (No)				
Count	11	53	64	
Expected Count	11.5	52.5	64.0	
% within D&A	17.2%	82.8%	100%	
% within Recidivism	29.7%	31.4%	31.1%	
% of Total	5.3%	25.7%	31.1%	

H6: Probationers without mental health histories are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by using a chi-square test of significance. When examining mental health and recidivism, the results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference ($\chi 2 = .05$, $df = 1$, $p = .82$). Table 4.7 displays mental health and recidivism findings.

H7: Probationers that are employed are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by using a chi-square test of significance. When examining employment and recidivism, the results revealed a statistically significant difference ($\chi 2 = 6.76$, $df = 1$, $p = < .01$). Table 4.8 displays employment and recidivism findings. Examination of the distribution indicated that 12.7% of participants that were employed recidivated, whereas 26.4% of unemployed participants recidivated. As such, fewer employed probationers recidivated.

Table 4.7

Mental Health and Recidivism

	Recidivism		
	Yes	No	Total
Mental Health			
Mental Health (Yes)			
Count	13	57	70
Expected Count	12.4	57.6	70.0
% within Mental Health	18.6%	81.4%	100%
% within Recidivism	39.4%	37.3%	37.6%
% of Total	7.0%	30.6%	37.6%
Mental Health (No)			
Count	20	96	116
Expected Count	20.6	95.4	116.0
% within Mental Health	17.2%	82.8%	100%
% within Recidivism	60.6%	62.7%	62.4%
% of Total	10.8%	51.6%	62.4%

Table 4.8

Employment and Recidivism

	Recidivism		
	Yes	No	Total
Employment			
Employed (Yes)			
Count	15	103	118
Expected Count	22.7	95.3	118.0
% within Employment	12.7%	87.3%	100%
% within Recidivism	34.9%	56.9%	52.7%
% of Total	6.7%	46.0%	52.7%
Employed (No)			
Count	28	78	106
Expected Count	20.3	85.7	106.0
% within Employment	26.4%	73.6%	100%
% within Recidivism	65.1%	43.1%	47.3%
% of Total	12.5%	34.8%	47.3%

H8: Probationers with higher education are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by using a chi-square test of significance. When examining education level and recidivism, the results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference ($\chi 2 = 5.30$, *df* = 3, *p* = .15). Table 4.9 displays education and recidivism findings.

Table 4.9

Education Level and Recidivism

| | Recidivism | | |
	Yes	No	Total
Education			
No High School			
Count	3	13	16
Expected Count	3.2	12.8	16.0
% within Education Level	18.8%	81.2%	100%
% within Recidivism	7.0%	7.6%	7.4%
% of Total	1.4%	6.0%	7.4%
GED			
Count	20	55	75
Expected Count	15.0	60.0	75.0
% within Education Level	26.7%	73.3%	100%
% within Recidivism	46.5%	32.0%	34.9%
% of Total	9.3%	25.6%	34.9%
High School			
Count	19	84	103
Expected Count	20.6%	82.4%	103.0
% within Education Level	18.4%	81.6%	100%
% within Recidivism	44.2%	48.8%	47.9%
% of Total	8.8%	39.1%	47.9%
Higher Education			
Count	1	20	21
Expected Count	4.2	16.8	21.0
% within Education Level	4.8%	95.2%	100%
% within Recidivism	2.3%	11.6%	9.8%
% of Total	0.5%	9.3%	9.8%

WFD Analyses

H9: Probationers enrolled in the federal WFD are associated with and predictive of successful reentry. This hypothesis was tested by using a chi-square test of significance. When examining WFD and recidivism, the results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference ($\chi 2 = .35$, $df = 1$, $p = .55$). Table 4.10 displays WFD and recidivism findings.

Table 4.10

WFD and Recidivism

| | | Recidivism | | |
		Yes	No	Total
WFD				
WFD (Yes)				
	Count	31	119	150
	Expected Count	29.3	120.7	150.0
	% within WFD	20.7%	79.3%	100%
	% within Recidivism	70.5%	65.7%	66.7%
	% of Total	13.8%	52.9%	66.7%
WFD (No)				
	Count	13	62	75
	Expected Count	14.7	60.3	75.0
	% within WFD	17.3%	82.7%	100%
	% within Recidivism	29.5%	34.3%	33.3%
	% of Total	5.8%	27.6%	33.3%

Additionally, the 2010 non-WFD group consisted of 75 participants ($n = 75$); 29.5% of those participants recidivated. The 2007 WFD group consisted of 75 participants ($n = 75$); 43.2 of those participants recidivated. The 2010 WFD group consisted of 75 participants ($n = 75$); 27.3% of those participants recidivated. Findings indicated that participants in the 2010 WFD group were least likely to experience

recidivism. When using chi-square test of significance it was determined there was no significant findings among these groups ($\chi 2 = 2.43$, *df* = 2, *p* = .30). Table 4.11 displays WFD and recidivism per group.

Table 4.11

WFD Per Group and Recidivism

| | Recidivism | | |
	Yes	No	Total
WFD Groups			
Non-WFD 2010			
Count	13	62	75
Expected Count	14.7	60.3	75.0
% within WFD Groups	17.3%	82.7%	100%
% within Recidivism	29.5%	34.3%	33.3%
% of Total	5.8%	27.6%	33.3%
WFD 2007			
Count	19	56	75
Expected Count	14.7	60.3%	75.0
% within WFD Groups	25.3%	74.7%	100%
% within Recidivism	43.2%	30.9%	33.3%
% of Total	8.4%	24.9%	33.3%
WFD 2010			
Count	12	63	75
Expected Count	14.7	60.3	75.0
% within WFD Groups	16.0%	84.0%	100%
% within Recidivism	27.3%	34.8%	33.3%
% of Total	5.3%	28.0%	33.3%

Analysis of Logistic Regression

A binary logistic regression was performed with recidivism as the dependent variable. Predictor variables included type of offense, age, gender, race, education level, employment substance abuse history, mental health history, and whether or not a probationer was enrolled in WFD. The statistic *-2 log likelihood* was used in the logistic

regression to measure the success of the model. A total of 225 cases were analyzed and the full model was not significantly reliable ($\chi 2 = 9.16$, $df = 13$, $p = .76$). This model accounted for between 5.1% and 8.4% of the variance in recidivism. Overall, 82.4% of predictions were accurate. Table 4.12 displays values for each of the predictor variables in the logistic regression equation. This table displays a statistical trend of employment being predictive of recidivism.

Table 4.12

Logistic Regression

Variables	β	Significance
Step 1a		
Offense		.668
Offense (1)	-.700	.275
Offense (2)	-.799	.302
Offense (3)	-.378	.643
Age	.006	.770
Race (1)	.124	.809
Gender (1)	-.035	.963
Education		.624
Education (1)	-1.23	.344
Education (2)	-1.02	.367
Education (3)	-1.38	.230
Employment (1)	.798	.068
Drug and Alcohol (1)	-.006	.991
Mental Health (1)	-.243	.593
WFD	.031	.948

Summary

This chapter reviewed the purpose of the study, population, data collection, assumptions, and explored research hypotheses. By implementing descriptive statistics, specifically logistic regression and Pearson chi-square test of significant, predictor variables and the criterion variable (recidivism) were examined. The only variable revealed a significant difference and appeared to be predictive of successful reentry was employment.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter V summarizes the current research. The summarization includes a restatement of the problem, restatement of the purpose of the study, methodology, and findings. Following the summary, conclusions regarding the research are presented. Finally, recommendations for future research are discussed.

Restatement of the Problem

Historically, research has provided an exhaustive amount of information focused on recidivism and relapse rates (Hiller et al., 1999; Nunez-Neto, 2009; Quinsey & Zamble, 1997; Sung & Belenko, 2005; Wilkinson, 2005b). The research on recidivism and relapse has focused on risk factors for ex-offenders, such as limited education, insufficient work history, and history of substance abuse or mental illness. This research embraces the idea of what promotes successful offender reentry. In recent years, prisoner reentry has been widely addressed among policy makers. In fact, major reentry initiatives are being implemented across the nation, such as the Federal Workforce Development Program (WFD), Second Chance Act of 2005, the Urban Institute, the Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI), and the Job Retention Project (Laughlin, 2000; Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan, & Blitz, 2005; Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010; Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005).

Wilkinson (2001) proclaimed that in order to address the challenge of prison reentry successfully a change is needed in the way that people conceptualize corrections. The Federal Workforce Development Program (WFD) aims to address the challenge of prisoner reentry. The federal WFD is a fairly new reentry initiative that has been piloted

in several federal probation offices (Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010). Preliminary research

on WFD has found that the program has assisted in increasing employment rates of

federal probationers, subsequently reducing recidivism rates (Visher, Smolter, et al.,

2010).

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The reentry phenomenon is multifaceted with specific emphasis placed on risk

factors and protective factors. As reentry implications appear to be unclear, even more

unclear is what promotes successful prisoner reentry. The purpose of this study is to

examine characteristics of probationers that are associated with and predictive of

successful reentry. Data obtained from existing records includes the following variables:

age, race, gender, type of offense, substance abuse, mental health, employment,

educational, WFD, and recidivism to evaluate which variables are associated with

successful reentry.

Methodology

This research utilized an existing data source. The total sample for this study

consisted of 225 participants. The sample was divided into three groups: 75 participants

were in the 2010 WFD program, 75 participants were in the 2007 WFD program, and 75

participants were in the 2010 non-WFD program. For the purposes of this research,

archival data were collected randomly and stripped of identifiers. The Federal Probation

and Pretrial Services Office created a database that did not include identifying

information. Variables included in the database were age, race, gender, type of offense,

substance abuse, mental health, employment, education, recidivism, and WFD. The

rationale for selecting the identified variables was based on a review of prisoner reentry

literature that explored risk factors associated with recidivism as well as the phenomena of prisoner reentry (Austin, 2001; Hiller et al., 1999; Nunez-Neto, 2009; Sung & Belenko, 2005; Travis, 2005; Travis & Visher, 2005; Visher, Smolter, et al., 2010; Western, 2008). Furthermore, it was determined by the Federal Probation and Pretrial Services office that the information for these specific variables could be pulled from the existing data for the purposes of this study (J. Albert & S. Albert, personal communication, March 14, 2011).

The research used archival data to examine predictor variables associated with successful reentry. A logistic regression and Pearson chi-square test of significance were conducted on data gathered from existing records on a sample of probationers enrolled in the WFD and a sample of probationers not enrolled in the WFD program. After determining the accuracy of the data, exploring frequencies and assumptions, the multiple logistic regression and Pearson chi-square results were calculated. An alpha level of .05 ($p = .05$) was used for all statistical tests.

Findings

By utilizing independent t tests, chi-square test of significance, and logistic regression, conclusions about the relative importance of variables in predicting a criterion were reached. This research determined how well the criterion (recidivism) was predicted by each predictor variable (age, race, gender, type of offense, employment, education, substance abuse, mental health, and WFD). In this research, the only variable that demonstrated a statistic trend, and appeared to be predictive of successful reentry, was employment.

Conclusions

The results of this research warrant the following conclusions. Based on the statistical analysis of the data, conclusions are discussed within the limitations of the research and the sample used.

It may be concluded that the WFD, as designed and implemented, was not predictive of successful reentry. It may further be concluded that of all the predictor variables examined, employment was the only variable that was predictive of successful reentry. Although a few pilot studies have been conducted on the WFD, this study was the first study conducted on the WFD in the Western District of Pennsylvania. As a result, review of the program and changes to the program structure may be necessary to ensure that WFD is adequately addressing reentry initiatives. Specific recommendations are presented throughout this chapter.

The WFD program in the Western District of Pennsylvania began on July 1, 2005. Since that time, record keeping and record management appears to be a work in progress. Due to increased accuracy of data collection throughout the program's initial years, existing data from 2007 and beyond were more readily available than that of 2005 to 2006 WFD data. Thus, existing data from the 2007 and the 2010 WFD groups were selected for this study. Additionally, the ordinal nature of the variables examined in this study may have impacted the findings. With the exception of the only continuous variable of age, the predictor and criterion variables were ordinal. As a result, the findings were limited.

In regards to WFD as a reentry initiative, findings concluded that recidivism rates of the 2010 WFD (27.3%) participants decreased compared to their 2007 WFD (43.2%)

counterparts. This finding may indicate that WFD reentry initiatives improved from 2007 to 2010 and seems to warrant future research to determine what occurred that may be indicative of increased successful reentry rates.

Research also explored recidivism and employment rates among the WFD and non-WFD groups. Statistical evidence shows that 29.5% of the 2010 non-WFD participants recidivated, whereas 27.3% of the 2010 WFD participants recidivated. When comparing non-WFD versus WFD recidivism rates, the difference between groups appeared minimal.

Further research is warranted to adequately address differences in employment rates among the WFD participants and the non-WFD participants. What causes difference in employment rates between these two groups? Differences may be a result of the offender's perceived need, or lack thereof, for WFD. As mentioned previously, involvement in the WFD is voluntary; however, the offender's perception of enrollment in WFD may not be such. For instance, if the offender is experiencing difficulty obtaining employment and their probation officer suggests involvement in the WFD to address this need, the probationer may view this as a negative reentry intervention that involves increased monitoring. Furthermore, the probationer may identify involvement with WFD as an adverse consequence associated with lack of employment which may result in resistance to the programming. I speculate that probationers entering WFD are those who cannot obtain employment. As a result, selection bias is likely to exist.

The above findings regarding WFD reveal a need for further review and potential modification. Hence, it is recommended that WFD data collection and record keeping practices be revised. Once a probationer becomes enrolled in the WFD program it would

be beneficial to record the probationer's level of motivation by recording if the probationer is extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. Resistance may act as a barrier to success whereas internal motivation may be a key component to success, all of which could be recorded and later examined.

Next, the Workforce Development worker could assess the stage of change that the probationer is in at the time of admission. Reassessment of the stages of change could occur every 60 to 90 days and be recorded accordingly. Recording the stages of change could be a valuable tool to enhance future evidenced-based studies.

Also, record keeping and data collection could be improved by detailing what services each probationer receives and the length of time involved in each service. Future research could then explore what services appear to be most beneficial in promoting successful reentry. Utilizing a pretest-posttest design could be a way to accomplish such a task. Pretest-posttest control group designs could be implemented within WFD participants alone or could be implemented with a group of WFD participants and a group of non-WFD participants. Not only does the pretest-posttest design allow a researcher to examine the individual performance of specific participants, the pretest-posttest design allows a researcher to compare participant groups and measure the degree of change that occurred as a result of involvement in WFD (Heppner et al., 2008).

Time-series design is yet another research design that could be beneficial in further exploring the effectiveness of WFD. A time-series design could be valuable in examining multiple observations over time (Heppner et al., 2008). For instance, a time-series design could account for WFD trends over time. This study indicated that the 2010

WFD participants experienced decreased recidivism rates compared to their 2007 WFD counterparts. By incorporating a time-series design, specific reasons for this change over time could be determined.

Missing variables also affected the research outcomes. For instance, the predictor variables that demonstrated the majority of missing information included drug and alcohol as well as mental health variables. For example, of the total 225 participants, existing data reported that 39 participants' mental health histories were unknown (i.e., missing) and that 19 participants' drug and alcohol histories were unknown (i.e., missing). Therefore, I would recommend collecting specific data on substance abuse and mental health information by establishing and implementing a survey.

Prior research has discovered that offenders' drug and alcohol and mental health histories have a profound impact on their reentry experience. Since a number of the participants' drug and alcohol as well as mental health histories were unknown, they may have been underrepresented and under-identified in this study. When considering the effect of substance abuse on employment, probationers are unlikely to obtain or sustain employment if they cannot pass a drug screen. Similarly, if a probationer is actively abusing mood altering chemicals, they could be placing themselves and others at risk in the work place not to mention how negatively drug use can impact overall work performance. As a result, suggestions include clinical assessment of the probationer and collaborative efforts among providers which would significantly aim to account for substance abuse, substance dependence, and mental health diagnoses that are critical for appropriate program evaluation.

Moreover, mental health facilities in the Western District of Pennsylvania have experienced budget cuts and closures in the recent years. As a result, a number of mentally ill people have been released to the community setting and resources have been limited. Subsequently, untreated mental illnesses within the community may have resulted in a person's propensity towards criminal activity. A person with a mental illness may be convicted of a crime but their mental health needs may not always be addressed.

Similarly, substance abuse disorders may mimic symptoms of mood or personality disorders. Active use of mood altering chemicals can present as the primary concern and can mask underlying mental health symptoms. Thus, offenders could be misdiagnosed and dual diagnoses need may be overlooked. This study did not identify substance abuse or mental health variables as significant in addressing successful reentry. However, these two variables alone may not be significant yet it is possible that addressing these variables collectively may lead to significant findings. It is suggested that offenders who are identified as having either drug and alcohol histories or mental health histories be accurately assessed for dual diagnoses and be recommended for treatment that will concurrently address their presenting clinical needs. It is hoped that more accurate assessment will lead to effective treatment resulting in decreased recidivism.

Additionally, this research explored specific offenses which included drug crimes, violent crimes, property crimes, and weapon offenses. Further research may need to be conducted on criteria for sentencing guidelines. Although a person may be charged with a violent crime, this crime may have been a direct result of a substance induced state. Furthermore, about half of all offenders reported being under the influence of mood

altering chemicals during the commission of their crimes, which subsequently lead to their incarceration (Shivy et al., 2007). This information may be of utmost importance when exploring reentry treatment needs.

Contextual factors appeared to be underrepresented in this study. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) labeled the race of federal offenders under supervision as Caucasians, African Americans, Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and "other." The Hispanic population is not delineated; however, according to Petersilia (2005), Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group representing 16% of the current prison population. Subsequently, the Hispanic race may be underrepresented or mislabeled as "other." For this study, existing data collected were limited because Caucasians and African Americans were the only identified races. In terms of race, this study concluded that 38.6% of Caucasians and 61.4% of African Americans recidivated. The ability to classify contextual factors will need to be addressed in order to achieve culturally sensitive research.

Another conclusion of this research addresses the lack of statistical significance in relation to the confounding variables. When conducting field research, it is difficult to regulate all of the predictor variables that may have affected the participants in this research. A wide array of confounding variables may include intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to treatment, prior treatment experiences (i.e., drug and alcohol and/or mental health treatment prior to incarceration, while incarcerated or post incarceration), prior vocational training, or exposure to educational programs.

Another potential confound is related to the Community Resource Specialist and the Probation Officer. For the most part, the Community Resource Specialists and

Probation Officers remain constant in the participant's reentry experience. Therefore, it is likely that the Community Resource Specialist's and Probation Officer's skills improved over time, especially since enrollment in the WFD is open ended. Although it is assumed that a consistent WFD treatment protocol was used, it is probable that those working with the probationer have improved in the execution of that protocol over time. This is to be considered when exploring increased successful reentry experiences for participants involved in the 2010 WFD compared to their 2007 counterparts.

Recommendations for Future Research

From this research, the following recommendations can be drawn. These recommendations relate to the need to conduct additional research on the WFD and predictor variables associated with successful reentry.

This research contained methodological limitations that could be addressed in future research. Research on a larger sample that contains more diverse demographics may lead to a better understanding of predictor variables associated with successful reentry. The sample for this research was demographically limited (i.e., age, gender, and race). Also, the research seemed to underrepresent contextual factors, substance abuse histories, and mental health histories. After reviewing the literature, all of these variables warrant future investigation to further determine whether or not they are predictive of successful reentry. Use of random assignment of program participants, rather than use of existing groups, would result in a stronger research design.

In general, further research is necessary on the WFD program itself. As previously mentioned, the WFD is a relatively new reentry initiative. As defined by Visher et al. (2010), the WFD provides "men and women under community supervision

with assistance to increase their job readiness (including education and vocational skills), identify potential employers, and develop resumes and interview skills with the goals of obtaining full-time employment and reducing recidivism" (p. 2). This definition may need to be refined to best describe the WFD in the Western District of Pennsylvania. For future research, a comprehensive definition of WFD and solid theoretical basis are needed.

Advances in reentry initiatives, such as the WFD, appear to be directly linked to definition and theoretical considerations. Continued research could further explore the administration of WFD program components, such as the services offered to probationers and how the services are being implemented (i.e., career assessments, resume building, Rap sheet expungement, driver's license restoration, job club, cognitive thinking courses, along with workshops that address financial literacy and homeownership). However, these services seem to be individualized based on the assessed needs of the probationer. Consideration may need to be given for curriculum development to enhance the consistency of what the program can offer. In addition, this may offer the probationer with a more consistent support network which is conducive to successful reentry. Such measures could also offer opportunities for a more comprehensive study.

Future research is also needed to explore the meaningfulness of rapport between the U.S. Probation Office and the probationer. Carl Rodgers endorsed humanistic psychology which proposed that those who are in a superior or "expert" position (U.S. Probation employee) can create a growth-promoting climate in which individuals (probationers) can move forward and become what they are capable of becoming (Corey, 2001). Attributes that are said to create a growth-promoting climate include genuineness,

unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding (Corey, 2001). If these attributes are communicated by the "expert" (U.S. Probation employee), the probationers may become less defensive and better able to engage in prosocial and constructive behaviors. Subsequently, further qualitative research may be warranted to explore the impact of relationships between the probationer and the U.S. Probation employee to determine if the quality of relationship is predictive of successful reentry.

Summary

This chapter provided a restatement of the problem and the purpose statement. The chapter also reviewed the methodology, research findings, and research conclusions. As evidenced by findings, this research concludes that employment is a predictor of successful reentry. Providing probationers with the tools to become employable appears to be critical in addressing the reentry epidemic. In order to accomplish this, reentry initiatives will benefit from future research so that appropriate interventions can aid in reducing recidivism rates and support successful reentry.

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Appendix A

Approval Letter

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
Probation and Pretrial Services Office

Theodore W. Johnson
Chief U.S. Probation Officer

Gerald R. Buban
Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer

700 Grant Street
Suite 3330
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Telephone: 412-395-6907
Fax: 412-395-4864

June 30, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that Kelley B. McNichols, has been given approval by the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office, Western District of Pennsylvania, to conduct research on the Workforce Development Program operating within this district.

If you have any questions relative to this letter, please feel free to contact me at the address and telephone numbers listed above.

Sincerely,

Theodore W. Johnson
Chief United States Probation Officer

TWJ:lc