Secondary Education and Offender Recidivism in Georgia: An Analysis of Perspectives of Community Supervision Officers

A Dissertation submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Leadership

in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership and Technology
of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services

Spring 2018

Roger C. Byrd

M.P.A., Valdosta State University, 2008
B.S. Political Science, Brewton-Parker College, 2007

This dissertation, "Secondary Education and Offender Recidivism in Georgia: An Analysis of Perspectives of Community Supervision Officers," by Roger C. Byrd, is approved by:

Dissertation Committee Chair

James L. Pate, Ph.D.
Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

Committee Members

David M. Monetti, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology

Elizabeth C. Dees, Ed. D.
Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

Gerald R. Siegrist, Ph.D.
Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

Dean of the Graduate School

James T. LaPlant, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science

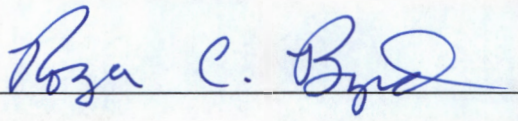
Defense Date

April 5, 2018

FAIR USE

DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature 

I refuse permission for this dissertation to be duplicated in whole or in part.

Signature _____

ABSTRACT

The problem addressed by this study was the high rate of recidivism characterizing correctional systems in the United States. To address this problem, the study attempted to provide a better understanding of whether completion of secondary education before or during incarceration reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders. Ten community supervision officers employed by the Georgia Department of Corrections in rural areas of Georgia were interviewed about their observations in regard to parolees who have a high school diploma or GED versus those who do not. The officers were asked six open-ended questions, along with appropriate follow-up questions, to determine their experiences and perceptions pertinent to whether and how having a secondary education may affect the post-release behavior of parolees. Interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded. Audio recordings were transcribed and then analyzed to determine patterns and themes within the interviewees' responses to questions. The analysis revealed 10 themes in the officers' responses. Findings included a unanimous belief among the officers that having a secondary education is beneficial to released offenders and reduces the likelihood of their returning to incarceration. In addition, the majority of the officers expressed their belief that having a secondary education improves offenders' chances of obtaining a good job after their release and improves their compliance with sentencing and parole conditions. These results support those of other studies finding that having a secondary education reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders. The results suggest it may be of value for the Georgia Department of Corrections to expand secondary education opportunities for incarcerated offenders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the contributions of those who offered advice, assistance, encouragement, and inspiration to me along this journey: Dr. Leon Pate, Dr. Elizabeth Dees, Dr. David Monetti, Dr. Gerald Siegrist, Dr. Lee Cheek, Dr. Ron Bracewell, Tanya Clements Rogers, the people of Bay Springs Baptist Church, the Philemon Fellowship, the Georgia Department of Community Supervision, Brandon Cesari, and my daughter Olivia.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, April, because she never doubted.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, an estimated 1,561,500 individuals were incarcerated in U.S. federal and state prisons. This number represents 612 per 100,000 U.S. residents ages 18 or older and 1,169 of 100,000 adult males (Carson, 2015). The annual cost of incarceration to society is substantial. In monetary terms, the cost in 2010 was estimated to be about $80 billion annually for the federal government and the states combined (U.S. Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2013). An additional economic cost to the nation is the loss of human capital and production resulting from large numbers of individuals being incarcerated. Perhaps the most notable cost, and one exceeding any monetary measure, is the loss in human happiness and well-being paid by incarcerated individuals and their families.

One major factor contributing to the U.S. prison population is recidivism—the phenomenon of individuals released from incarceration being convicted of new crimes and sentenced to additional incarceration. The recidivism rate exceeds 50% for the three years after individuals are released from incarceration and returned back into the community (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). Numerous suggestions have been made to reduce recidivism. One suggestion for reducing both initial and repeated entry into the correctional system is to reform sentencing guidelines so those who are convicted of low-level, nonviolent crimes obtain reduced sentences or are sentenced to treatment and supervision as an alternative to incarceration (USDOJ, 2013). Another suggestion is to promote the employment of released offenders by working toward creating more job

openings to benefit communities. Such promotion could be assisted by educating employers about various financial incentives for hiring individuals after incarceration, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. These efforts could help released offenders obtain and maintain a job, which has been found to reduce recidivism (Re-entry Policy Council Steering Committee, 2004).

A third suggestion aimed at reducing recidivism is for the correctional system to emphasize rehabilitation and not just punishment (Warren, 2007). One of the major rehabilitation initiatives undertaken by correctional systems is education. Some education initiatives for incarcerated individuals can be classified under the general heading of practical training. These include vocational education focused on learning knowledge and skills enabling the incarcerated individual to work in a particular vocation upon release from incarceration and life skills classes intended to help the individual develop practical positive habits and behaviors.

Other inmate education initiatives, though practical in their own right, are more academic in nature. One such initiative is providing post-secondary education classes inmates take with the objective of earning college credit and ultimately a two- or four-year college degree. Considerable research exists on how prison programs for postsecondary education affect the probability of recidivism, with the bulk of these studies suggesting reduced recidivism for inmates who take post-secondary classes (Borden, Richardson, & Meyer, 2012; Stevens & Ward, 1997; Vacca, 2004).

A second type of academic program available to some inmates is one directed toward earning a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, considered to be equivalent to earning a secondary school diploma and as being an alternative high-

school-equivalent certificate. GEDs are earned by taking and passing a series of subject tests in mathematical reasoning, reasoning through language arts, social studies, and science (GED Testing Service, n.d.). Research on the outcomes of prison-based secondary programs indicates a substantial number of federal and state inmates take advantage of and complete such programs while incarcerated. Government data reveal 71% of federal inmates and 74% of state inmates who earned a GED in 1997 did so while incarcerated (Klein, Tolbert, Bugarin, Forrest-Cataldi, & Tauschek, 2004). At the same time, a large percentage for both groups (43% for federal inmates and 50% for state inmates) had earned their GED in a prior incarceration period. This result suggests a substantial number of incarcerated individuals who earn a GED while incarcerated return to prison after being released, putting into question the recidivism-reducing value of receiving a secondary education while incarcerated.

Few studies have measured the recidivism rates of individuals who have specifically earned a high school diploma or equivalency before or during incarceration. While Klein et al. (2004) reported all forms combined of correctional education resulted in a one-third reduction in recidivism rates over a three-year period, the reduction was not broken down to the different kinds of education the inmates received. Thus, no conclusion can be drawn from Klein et al.'s report regarding the recidivism-reducing value of secondary education efforts before or during incarceration.

Studies addressing the value of secondary education for reducing recidivism are mixed in their findings. A study conducted by the New York Department of Correctional Services (Staley, 2001) compared three groups of released inmates: those who had a high school diploma or GED certificate when first entering prison, those who earned a GED

while in prison, and those who did not have a diploma or GED when released. Staley reported a significant difference in recidivism rates between released inmates who either had a secondary degree before entering prison (32.3% recidivism rate) or earned such a degree during prison (31.8% rate) and those who had no high school diploma or GED (36.6% rate). In contrast, another study of individuals released from incarceration from 2007 to 2008 revealed earning a secondary certificate while incarcerated resulted in a significantly greater probability of post-release employment (Duwe & Clark, 2014). However, there was no significant difference in rates of return to prison between those who did and those who did not earn a secondary degree while incarcerated.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study was the high rates of recidivism characterizing correctional systems in the United States. To address this problem, the researcher sought to provide a better understanding of whether completion of secondary education either before or during incarceration reduces recidivism rates. To date, little research has been conducted to determine whether receiving secondary education makes it less likely released inmates will return to the prison system. The research done in this area has produced mixed findings, with some research indicating a significant recidivism-reducing effect of secondary education efforts, and other research revealing no significant difference in recidivism between those with secondary education credentials and those without (Gaes, 2008).

A group of professionals who are likely to have insight into whether secondary education helps reduce recidivism rates are community supervision officers employed by state governments. These law enforcement officers deal closely with individuals who are

released from incarceration into the community. The officers know the history of parolees, including their educational history, and are in a position to observe how well they adjust to life outside the prison and to compare the adjustment of individuals who completed secondary education either before or during incarceration with those who did not. Interviewing community corrections officers to learn their experiences with and observations of these two groups of former inmates may thus provide informed insights into how likely it is for members of each group to recidivate. Such interviews may also provide knowledge of other possible differences in the two groups, including how easy it is to work with members of each group and how well the two groups of individuals adhere to probation guidelines. In addition, it is likely that community corrections officers can provide insight into how secondary education may affect important aspects of former inmates' approach to independent living such as their motivation and sense of responsibility.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to interview rural community supervision officers employed by the Georgia Department of Corrections to determine their experiences and observations in regard to parolees with a high school diploma or GED certificate versus those without. It was deemed that these officers were likely to have information about whether there is a difference between the two groups of released offenders in regard to their recidivism and adherence to post-release guidelines. If the officers were found to perceive having a secondary degree before or earning one after incarceration leads to less recidivism or greater adherence to post-release guidelines, they might have insights into how having a secondary education affects the post-release behavior of offenders.

To date, little research has been conducted on how having a secondary education affects the serious problem of recidivism among released offenders. The information and insights supplied by the supervision officers was sought to help close this gap in research. A practical result of the study findings might be utilization by the Georgia State government to determine allocation of additional financial resources to support secondary education in Georgia's correctional institutions.

Research Questions

1. What have been the experiences of rural Georgia community supervision officers working with post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?
2. What have been the observations of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding how education at the secondary level affects compliance with parole conditions and recidivism among offenders on post-incarceration release?
3. What factors do rural Georgia community supervision officers attribute to any differences between post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?
4. What are the views of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding the provision to offenders of secondary education classes during or after incarceration?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was self-efficacy theory, which is an outgrowth of Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs about his or her capability to complete a task (Raelin, Reisberg, Whitman, & Hamann, 2007). According to Bandura (1997), people's beliefs about their

capability for performing various actions or courses of action are a foundation for their motivation and accomplishment. When people believe they are capable of accomplishing some goal, their belief is a key to their having the motivation to pursue the goal. When, on the other hand, people do not believe they are capable of accomplishing a goal, they are not motivated to pursue the goal.

Three primary factors influence a person's self-efficacy: environment, behaviors, and personal cognitive factors (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura's (1997) concept of reciprocal determinism, people's environment can affect their self-efficacy, and their self-efficacy can affect which environments and situations they choose to deal with. These choices, in turn, may influence the people's activities and their success in accomplishing goals. In particular, people prefer to live in environments where they feel competent to handle whatever challenges may arise, and they tend to avoid environments where they do not feel competent (Allred, Harrison, & O'Connell, 2013). Such tendencies may be relevant to recidivism among offenders who are released from the correctional system. Upon release, it is hoped these individuals will find a legitimate place in society where they can prosper. However, if offenders feel incompetent to deal with the challenges they may meet post-release, challenges such as securing adequate housing, gainful employment, and social acceptance, they may be more likely to return to a former environment they believe they understand better and are more competent to deal with. Thus, they may turn back to criminal activity.

The conditions imprisoned offenders are required to face in correctional institutions may weaken their sense of self-efficacy. Inmates are stigmatized by society, experience limited personal freedoms and comforts, may be subject to threats to their

personal well-being, and may experience considerable stress. In addition, they often have deficient education compared to the general populace. All together, these conditions can make it more difficult for inmates to develop a sustainable sense of self-efficacy (Allred et al., 2013).

Education increases self-efficacy by creating skills and confidence enabling people to better control their future (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2012), which is to say education promotes self-efficacy. In particular, increased self-efficacy is an intended major goal of secondary education, since the purpose of obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent degree is to prepare people to increase their capability to achieve the social and financial goals they set for themselves. Adult education also has the purpose of increasing people's self-efficacy, as indicated by the results of a study by Hammond and Feinstein (2005). The researchers ascertained adult education led to an increase in self-efficacy, with the relation being especially strong for adults who had low levels of previous school achievement.

The positive effects on self-efficacy provided by education may be similar for individuals who are incarcerated (Allred et al., 2013). Such increased self-efficacy may make it more likely that once released, offenders have a lower chance of returning to incarceration (Allred et al., 2013). This study by Allred, et al. investigated whether the view that education leads to greater self-efficacy is reflected by reduced recidivism for released offenders who have earned a secondary degree, in the perceptions of Georgia community supervision officers.

Limitations of the Study

The study had several limitations, all of which threatened the generalizability of the results of the study. One limitation was the study's restriction to community supervision officers who worked in rural Georgia communities. This restriction limited the generalizability of the study results because community supervision officers, community supervision conditions, and/or supervisees in other regions of the country may differ in relevant respects. Therefore, the results of the study are only suggestive for other regions of the country.

A second limitation was the sample of supervision officers was not chosen by a random method, but was a purposive sample. The use of a purposive sample also limited the generalizability of the study because it is unknown whether the sample chosen is representative of the population of rural Georgia community supervision officers.

A third limitation is participants self-selected to be part of the study. This kind of limitation occurs in many studies, both qualitative and quantitative, and is difficult to avoid. One possible result of the limitation is those individuals who self-selected to be in the study may have reported biased observations that did not accurately represent the observations of the larger population of rural Georgia community supervision officers.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it has the potential to provide information to help reduce the high recidivism rates adding to the huge U.S. prison population. Reducing recidivism is a valuable goal because doing so would have significant economic benefits and reduce societal harm (Erisman & Contardo, 2005). Its prime value might be the increased well-being and happiness of individuals released from

incarceration who are able to maintain their freedom and avoid further criminal activity.

Education may be one of the most cost-effective ways to rehabilitate prison inmates so they do not re-offend after release (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013). Education helps build skills and confidence so parolees are more likely to feel themselves to be welcome members of society. This is important because offenders tend to be stigmatized by society (Eisenburg, 1991), whereas it has been argued society has an obligation to help bring offenders back into the culture (Stevens & Ward, 1997).

Although researchers have reported post-secondary education of inmates in correctional facilities helps reduce recidivism, studies on the effects of secondary education, whether before or during incarceration, are mixed (Gaes, 2008). To date, little research has been conducted to address the recidivism-reducing effects of secondary education, and more needs to be understood in this area. By gathering information about the experiences and observations of community supervision officers, this study has the potential to add to our understanding of whether and how secondary education may be a factor in reducing recidivism. A finding that secondary education was believed by the community supervision officers to be such a factor could provide a rationale for investing in secondary education opportunities for incarcerated individuals at a time when financial resources for correctional systems tend to be very limited.

Definitions

Community supervision. Law enforcement supervision of an individual who has been released from incarceration to parole.

Community supervision officer. A law enforcement officer charged with the responsibility of supervising individuals who have been released from incarceration to parole.

Correctional secondary education. Secondary education for individuals who are incarcerated or have been released to parole.

GED. General Educational Development certificate generally held to be equivalent to a high school diploma.

Incarceration. A convicted person's assignment and restriction to live in a federal, state, or private prison.

Recidivism. For individuals who have been previously released from incarceration, the performance of criminal activity resulting in a return to incarceration.

Secondary education. Education with the goal of earning a high school diploma, GED certificate, or other high-school equivalency degree.

Self-efficacy. A person's beliefs about his or her capability to perform some action or course of actions.

Summary

Over 1.5 million individuals are incarcerated in federal and state prisons (Carson, 2015), with a cost to federal and state governments of about $80 billion per year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). One major factor contributing to the prison population is recidivism, with over 50% of released inmates returning to the prison system within three

years (Durose et al., 2014). One kind of initiative to reduce recidivism is education, including secondary education directed toward earning a GED certificate. Research conducted on the possible recidivism-reducing effect of such programs has shown mixed results (Gaes, 2008), suggesting additional research is needed on how secondary education is related to recidivism.

The problem addressed in this study was high rates of recidivism for released offenders. The study addressed this problem by investigating how a secondary education may affect the recidivism and post-release behavior of offenders. To conduct the investigation, I interviewed 10 rural community supervision officers employed by the Georgia Department of Corrections to learn their experiences and perceptions about parolees who had earned a high school degree or GED certificate in comparison to those who had not.

The study's conceptual framework was self-efficacy theory, which is based on Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory. Limitations of the study included the restriction to community supervision officers working in rural Georgia communities, the purposive sampling method, and the self-selection of participants, all of which decreased the generalizability of the study results. Though findings of the study are only suggestive, they are potentially significant by providing information that may help reduce the recidivism of released offenders.

The following chapters present the various elements of the investigation. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature relevant to the study, including an overview of incarceration and recidivism, the costs of recidivism, literature examining various initiatives to reduce recidivism, and literature examining the effects of secondary

education on recidivism. Chapter 3 includes explanations of selection of participants, interview questions, procedures, and the qualitative analysis methodology used in the study. Chapter 4 reports the results of the study, including themes identified in the survey responses. Based on these themes, the study's research questions were answered. The final chapter provides a summary of the study, discussion of results, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview of U.S. Incarceration and Recidivism

The United States is the world leader in rates of incarceration, holding approximately 25% of the world's incarcerated individuals, though the country has only 5% of the world's population (Carter, Gibel, Giguerre, & Stroker, 2007; Subramanian, Henrichson, & Kang-Brown, 2015). After reaching a peak of 2.4 million incarcerated individuals in the United States in 2008, the number of people held in the nation's correctional system fell by about 4% to total approximately 2.3 million prisoners in 2013. Of these individuals, about one-third (750,000) were incarcerated in jails, which are confinement facilities mostly used to hold individuals who have been arrested and charged, but have not yet been convicted of a crime. Jailed men and women typically stay confined in the jail for a relatively short period of no more than several weeks (James, 2015).

About two-thirds (1,550,000) of the individuals confined in U.S. correctional system in 2013 were incarcerated in prisons, which are populated by individuals who have been convicted of a crime and are sentenced to an incarceration period of at least a year and up to a lifetime behind bars (James, 2015). The latest data from the U. S. Department of Justice indicates that in 2005, about 10.2% of imprisoned individuals were in federal prisons, with nearly nine times as many offenders (89.8%) housed in state-run prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2008). The annual financial cost to the federal

government and state governments to incarcerate these offenders was estimated to be about $80 billion in 2010 (USDOJ, 2013). This cost represents approximately $33,000 annually required for each offender incarcerated in the nation's prisons.

Approximately 95% of offenders housed in state-run prison facilities will eventually be released into the community (Hughes & Wilson, 2004). In some cases, offenders serve their entire sentence in confinement and are released unconditionally into the community. In other cases, prisoners who have served the majority of their sentence in confinement are conditionally released into the community on statutory or discretionary parole and under the supervision of community supervision officers, (James, 2015). The great majority of offenders who are released from incarceration on parole are released from state prisons. By law, the only federal prisoners who are eligible to be released on parole are those who were sentenced prior to November 1, 1987 (James, 2015).

The conditions for an inmate to be released on parole from state-run correctional facilities vary from state to state. Usually, these conditions include mandated regular visits with a community supervision officer and testing for drug usage (James, 2015). Violation of any of the conditions for parole may result in the released offender being sent back to prison confinement. Considering releases from both state and federal prisons, records reflect an average of 590,400 inmates being released each year from U.S. prisons since 1990 (Carson & Golinelli, 2013). In 2013, about 4.8 million offenders were under community supervision on probation or parole, with about 900,000 of these individuals on parole (James, 2015).

Most offenders released from incarceration face several major challenges in their efforts to make a successful transition to the community (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2015). One such challenge released offenders often face is limited housing options (NIJ, 2015). Factors contributing to the difficulty of released offenders locating a living space include barriers of a legal nature, discriminatory practices against individuals who were incarcerated, scarcity of available adequate affordable housing, and federal eligibility requirements for obtaining federally subsidized housing (James, 2015). Other challenges obstructing successful integration into the community include the released offender having poor mental health or substance abuse issues (NIJ, 2015). Epperson et al. (2014) reported the population of individuals with serious mental illness who are also subject to correctional supervision in the United States is estimated to exceed one million, the majority of whom have been released into and are being supervised in the community. The Council of State Governments Justice Center (2015) reported 50% of incarcerated adults meet the criteria of at least one mental disorder and many of these individuals also have a co-occurring substance use disorder. Daniel (2007) noted although half of all prison and jail inmates have mental health problems, only one in three receive any form of mental health treatment while incarcerated.

Another major challenge to many released offenders is their having poor prospects for obtaining employment (Shermer & Day, 2013). This situation can stem from a lack of education and job skills resulting in the released offender not being well prepared for finding a job (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2012). Carter et al. (2007) reported 40% of adult offenders who are released from incarceration are lacking both a high school diploma and a GED degree. Besides lack of education or training, other

employment barriers for offenders released from prison include deficiencies in employment history, societal stigma, substance abuse problems, and laws limiting their ability to work in some careers (Carter et al., 2007). Faced with such difficult personal challenges, many prisoners released into the community eventually return to the prison system, resulting in high rates of recidivism and making recidivism a major challenge for the criminal justice system in the United States (Carter et al., 2007).

A study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics examined recidivism over a period of five years among 404,638 incarcerated individuals who were released from prisons in 30 states in 2005 (Durose et al., 2014). By the end of the five-year examination period, over three-fourths of the released offenders (76.6%) had been re-arrested. Of these, offenders who had been released the shortest amount of time comprised the highest percentages of re-arrests, with percentages gradually declining the longer the released individual was out of prison. In particular, 43.4% of the released prisoners were re-arrested within a one-year period. At the end of two, three, and four years, 59.5%, 67.8%, and 73.0% had been re-arrested, respectively. Of the offenders who were re-arrested over the five years, a considerably greater proportion had 10 or more prior arrests in comparison with those who had four or fewer arrests. The percentages for these two groups were 86.5% and 60.8%, respectively. The study results listed several categories of criminal activity. The largest percentage of offenders who were re-arrested were those who had been previously incarcerated for a property crime, with 82.1% of property offenders, 76.9% of drug offenders, 73.6% of public order offenders, and 71.3% of violent offenders being re-arrested (Durose et al., 2014).

Costs of Recidivism

There are various costs attributable to recidivism. One is the financial cost, with each released offender who returns to prison increasing the monetary costs to governments to again house the returned offender for a period (USDOJ, 2013). Based on the overall annual $80 billion incarceration costs reported by the U.S. Department of Justice (2013), each individual who returns to confinement will cost the state or federal government an estimated $33,000. These financial costs borne by the correctional system are paid out of citizens' taxes and result in less money being available for other public services (Carter et al., 2007).

Costs of recidivism also include the decrease in public safety resulting from new crimes committed by released offenders. Victims of crime may experience economic losses, as well as psychological and emotional distress caused by the crime (Carter et al., 2007).

A third cost of recidivism is the cost to the offender's family (Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003). Approximately 55% of offenders released from prison have children below the age of 18, many of whom are dependent on the parent for financial support and other parental responsibilities (Travis et al. 2003). Waul, Travis, and Solomon (2002) reported a risk factor for youth delinquency is having an incarcerated parent. If the released parent is re-arrested, then his or her opportunity to fulfill parental responsibilities outside the correctional system is cut short.

A fourth cost of recidivism is the loss of economic upward mobility borne by the offender himself or herself (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). Instead of successfully integrating into the community and being able to experience the much greater degree of

freedom and possibility for gaining a better life economically, the offender is again required to live some substantial period of life confined by prison walls, which limits the offender's economic opportunity and upward mobility (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

The many costs of recidivism to society, victims, the offender's family, and the offender have resulted in various suggestions and programs being offered as possible ways to reduce recidivism rates. According to the Carter et al. (2007), to be effective, strategies for reducing the risk of re-offending must provide services and programs to increase released prisoners' skills and competencies and enhance their stability as they rejoin the community outside prison walls. These programs should be based on evidence and address the barriers facing offenders re-entering the community as well as their families.

Employment Programs Targeting Recidivism

Strategies offered for reducing the recidivism of individuals released from the correctional system include putting more emphasis on employment programs for released offenders, providing substance abuse treatment for those individuals who need such treatment, providing mental health treatment in prison for offenders with mental health issues, and providing halfway house programs for released offenders to help ease the difficulties of finding housing soon after release (James, 2015).

Turner and Petersilia (1996) compared 218 Washington state offenders who were randomly divided into two approximately equal groups. One group participated in a work-release program and the second did not. A review of results indicated most work-release offenders successfully transitioned to the community and few work-release

offenders committed crimes while they were on work-release. However, though the work-release offenders had a lower rate of recidivism than the other group, the difference was not statistically significant.

Lutze, Drapela, and Shaefer (2015) examined the three-year recidivism rates of 703 Washington State inmates who were employed by Correctional Industries for at least 30 days while incarcerated. These inmates were statistically matched with 627 inmates who were eligible to work for Correctional Industries but did not do so. The Correctional Industries program in Washington State employs inmates who work for businesses similar to community-based businesses who produce services and goods. Participants were released from prison in 2010-2012. The researchers reported members of the Correctional Industries group were less probable to commit a new violation resulting in a conviction than the matched group, with the reduction being statistically significant (35% compared to 43%). The Correctional Industries group were also significantly less probable to commit a felony offense when recidivism occurred (19% compared to 25%).

Berk (2007) investigated recidivism among minimum custody offenders who were incarcerated in and then released from the Florida Department of Corrections. Participants included a group of 2,186 male inmates who were in the prison work-release program and a comparison group of 7,035 male inmates who were not in the work-release program. Released inmates were followed for three years. Berk stated the work-release group had a statistically significant 6% lower probability of recidivating three years after their release.

Two studies conducted by Saylor and Gaes (1992, 1997) evaluated the results of the Post Release Employment Project to investigate the post-release outcomes for over

7,133 federal offenders divided into two groups: those who had training and work experience while incarcerated (N = 3,138) and those who did not (N = 3,995) (Office of Research and Evaluation, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 1991; Saylor & Gaes, 1998). In their evaluation of the Post Release Employment Project, Saylor and Gaes (1992) reported their initial findings suggested the offenders in the training and work experience group were less likely to recidivate than those in the comparison group. In their later report, Saylor and Gaes (1997) reported the 12-month recidivism rate for the training and work experience group was 35% less than for the comparison group. In regard to longer-term recidivism over 8 to 12 years, Saylor and Gaes (1997) reported that during the observation period, offenders who took part in prison industries had a 24% less chance of recidivating, and those who took part in vocational or apprenticeship training had a 33% less chance of recidivating.

Richmond (2009) investigated recidivism among 1,946 female offenders who were in the UNICOR program, the prison industries program in the federal prison system. The UNICOR-treatment women were compared to 11,120 women inmates who were not in the UNICOR program. The two groups were tracked for up to 13 years after release. Results showed the UNICOR-treatment women with a smaller three-year re-arrest rate than the comparison group (14.4% vs. 15.8%); however, this difference was not statistically significant. In addition, no significant differences were ascertained between the two groups in time to first re-arrest, prevalence of federal prison recommitment, or time to federal prison recommitment.

Bohmert and Duwe (2011) investigated incarcerated males who took part in the Minnesota prison industries Affordable Housing (AH) Program, in which prisoners

worked as builders and remodelers of low-cost housing in the community. A total of 224 offenders were in the AH group, and another 224 were in a group not participating in the AH Program. Participants were released on or before December 31, 2005 and were tracked for an average of 5.9 years. Results showed no significant difference in re-arrest rates of the two groups, with 63.8% of the AH Program participants being re-arrested and 65.2% of the comparison group participants being re-arrested over the study period.

The employment program studies reviewed above show mixed results regarding the value of prison-based employment programs for reducing recidivism. Lutze et al. (2015), Berk (2007), and Saylor and Gaes (1992, 1997) reported such programs reduced recidivism rate. Turner and Petersilia (1996), Richmond (2009), and Bohmert and Duwe (2011) reported no significant recidivism-reducing effect of prison-based employment programs.

Substance Abuse Programs and Recidivism

Results from several studies suggest substance abuse programs in correctional facilities may reduce recidivism. One such study was conducted by Rhodes et al. (2001), who examined 1,193 male and female federal prison inmates who were given treatment in therapeutic community drug abuse programs (DAP). These individuals were compared to 592 DAP-facility inmates who did not partake of treatment and a control group of 530 inmates who were in non-DAP facilities. The researchers followed all groups for three years and examined the effects of DAP participation separately for male and female offenders. Using three different statistical approaches, Rhodes et al. (2001) determined drug treatment significantly reduced recidivism and relapse rates for male but not for female offenders. Percentages for the groups were not reported by the researchers.

Duwe (2010) investigated the effect of participation in a prison-based chemical dependency treatment program on recidivism over an average period of 42 months after release from Minnesota state correctional facilities. Recidivism outcomes for 1,852 male and female treatment participants were compared to those of 926 offenders who did not participate. The probabilities of being re-arrested, reconvicted, and re-incarcerated were reduced by 17%, 21%, and 25% respectively for offenders in the treatment group when compared to untreated offenders.

Aos, Phipps, and Barnoski (2005) studied 323 drug and/or property offenders who had been granted reduced sentences for participating in a drug treatment program in Washington State. A comparison group of 323 offenders sentenced before the drug treatment program was available to them were matched with the treatment group. Aos et al. (2005) followed participants for three years post-release to determine non-violent felony convictions. Among drug offenders, the treatment group had a significantly lower felony reconviction rate than the comparison group (30.3% vs. 40.5%). Drug felony reconviction was significantly lower in the treatment group (17.0% vs. 25.3%), but non-drug felony offenses did not differ significantly between the groups. Among drug-involved property offenders, the treatment and non-treatment groups were not significantly different in rates of drug or non-drug felony convictions.

Daley et al. (2004) investigated the relationship of recidivism to treatment in the Connecticut Department of Corrections Substance Abuse Tier Programs, which consisted of four levels:

- Tier One: drug and alcohol education for one week;
- Tier Two: 30 outpatient group sessions over 10 weeks;

- Tier Three: day treatment meeting four times per week for four months;
- Tier Four: full-time daily treatment in a separate housing unit for six months.

Daley et al. (2004) followed 286 released offenders who participated in any of the prison-based tier programs for one year and compared their recidivism rate to 545 released offenders who had not participated in any of the programs. The researchers determined offenders who had attended any of the four tier programs were significantly less likely to be re-arrested than offenders in the comparison group over the 12-month period. While offenders who participated in the first two tiers were not significantly less likely to be re-arrested, those who participated in Tiers Three and Four were significantly less likely to be re-arrested than offenders in the comparison group.

Not all studies have indicated prison-based drug treatment reduces recidivism. Anglin, Prendergast, Farabee, and Cartier (2002) examined 404 men who were treated in the Substance Abuse Program at the California State Substance Abuse Facility. These individuals were matched with 404 men in another California correctional facility whose history indicated substance abuse but who were not treated. After release, participants in both groups were followed for a 12-month period. Anglin et al. (2002) ascertained individuals in the treatment group had returned to prison after 12 months at a greater rate than individuals in the non-treatment group (53.5% vs. 51.9%), though the difference was not statistically significant. Of those individuals who returned to prison, those in the treatment group were significantly more likely than those in the comparison group to be re-incarcerated for committing a new offense instead of for a technical parole violation.

A follow-up study by Zhang, Roberts, and McCollister (2009) of the same offenders who were investigated in the Anglin et al. (2002) study examined the

offenders' recidivism rates five years after their release. The researchers reported a greater number of the substance abuse treatment group had been re-arrested after five years in comparison to the non-treatment group (80.4% vs. 78.2%), though the difference between groups was not statistically significant.

Mental Health Treatment and Recidivism

Studies of the possible association of prison mental health programs with recidivism have shown mixed results. Duwe and Clark (2015) examined the relationship to recidivism of female inmates' participation in Moving On, a cognitive-behavioral mental health treatment program in the Minnesota correctional system. The researchers studied the effects of two implementations of Moving On. The Pre-2011 High Fidelity group consisted of 215 female inmates who volunteered for the program, which lasted for 12 weeks at the time. These women were matched to 215 female inmates who did not enroll in the Moving On program. The 2011-2013 Low Fidelity group consisted of 864 female inmates who were automatically entered into the program when entering incarceration, with the program reduced to 3 weeks. These women were matched with 860 female inmates who were not in the program. All inmates studied were released from incarceration between January of 2003 and December of 2013 and were followed through June 2014 for different lengths of time.

Duwe and Clark (2015) determined participation in the Moving On program was associated with reduced re-arrest and reconviction for the Pre-2011 High Fidelity group. Individuals in the High Fidelity treatment group were arrested at a rate of 49.3% compared to 62.8% for the comparison group, and the High Fidelity treatment group had a reconviction rate of 35% compared to 48% for the comparison group. The High Fidelity

treatment reduced the risk of re-arrest by 31% and the risk of reconviction by 33%. The researchers reported there were no significant differences in re-arrest or reconviction rates for the Low Fidelity group versus the comparison group. After adjusting for follow-up time, the 2011-2013 High Fidelity treatment group had significantly lower re-arrest (16.7% vs. 31%) and reconviction rates (7.9% vs. 19.4%) than the Low Fidelity treatment group. Duwe and Clark concluded the Moving On treatment can effectively reduce recidivism among female inmates if it is carried out in the way it was originally implemented for the pre-2011 High Fidelity group.

Gehring, Van Voorhis, and Bell (2010) investigated the association between recidivism and a Moving On program instituted by the Iowa State Department of Corrections. The program consisted of 26 sessions over six months and was based on cognitive-behavioral approaches, relational theory, and motivational interviewing. Participants were 190 female probationers who were matched with 190 female probationers who did not participate in the program. Outcomes of the program were evaluated at 12, 18, 24, and 30 months after offender release. Gehring et al. reported Moving On participants were less likely to be re-arrested or reconvicted at all four evaluation periods, but the differences reached statistical significance only at the 18-month and 24-month evaluations. At the 18-month mark, 11% of the Moving On group had been re-arrested compared to 21% of the comparison group, and at the 24-month mark, 16% of the Moving On group had been arrested compared to 23% of the comparison group. At 18 months, the re-conviction rate was 9% for the Moving On participants and 16% for the comparison group. At 24 months, the re-conviction rate for the treatment group was 11% and 24% for the comparison group.

Burke and Keaton (2004) examined the effect on recidivism of the Connections Program, a California case-management program for mentally ill offenders released from incarceration to probation. The 12-month program included pre-release treatment planning, referral to community services, links to mental health clinics, substance use monitoring/intervention, and involvement partners and family in the offender's reentry. Participants were 225 male and female individuals enrolled in the program and 223 individuals in a control group. Outcomes were evaluated for the 12 months of the program and for 6 months afterward. At the conclusion of their study, Burke and Keaton ascertained that during the 12 months of treatment, the program participants had a 35% risk of returning to jail, compared to a 46% risk for the control group. During the six months after treatment ended, the program participants were less likely to return to jail on a new charge than individuals in the control group (16% vs. 21%), although the difference was not statistically significant.

Farabee, Bennett, Garcia, Warda, & Yang (2006) examined the relationship of recidivism to the Mental Health Services Continuum Program (MHSCP) for California state prisons. The program included a transitional care element consisting of face-to-face assessments of the mental health needs of eligible inmates prior to their release on parole, which was then sent to the parole officer. The program also included assignment to and encouragement to attend a Parole Outpatient Clinic after release. Program participants numbered 32,322 males and females, and non-participants in the comparison group numbered 28,590. Evaluations at 12 months post-release indicated those offenders who received the pre-release assessments attended the Parole Outpatient Clinics at a significantly higher rate than those offenders who had not and attendance at the clinics

was significantly associated with decreased recidivism for the 12 months post-release. However, pre-release assessment alone was not significantly related to the probability of returning to custody over the 12 months post-release.

Epperson et al. (2014) recommended care for persons involved in the criminal justice system who have serious mental illness should focus not only on evidence-based mental health interventions and treatment but also on a modularized approach addressing other factors combining with mental illness to foster criminal activity among this population. In particular, the researchers recommended mental health and justice system personnel dealing with seriously mentally ill individuals be trained in several modules addressing different types of risk factor that may heighten the likelihood a particular offender will recidivate. Suggested modules by Epperson et al. include training in dealing with criminogenic risk factors, addiction risk factors, trauma risk factors, medication adherence, and stress risk factors.

Housing Programs and Recidivism

Fontaine, Gilchrist-Scott, Roman, Taxy, and Roman (2012) examined the recidivism outcomes for 121 released male and female disabled offenders who participated in the Returning Home – Ohio (RHO) program. The comparison group consisted of 118 released offenders who were eligible for RHO but did not receive RHO services. The services received in the program consisted of placement in affordable permanent housing and referral to one or more services such as mental health, substance abuse, or education services. Two significant differences between the treatment group and the comparison group were the treatment group had a higher ratio of members with drug or alcohol abuse history and a higher average prison security level. According to

Fontaine et al., both of these differences suggested the RHO program participants may have had a higher probability of recidivating than individuals in the comparison group. Individuals in both groups were tracked for one year following their release.

Fontaine et al. (2012) stated treatment group participants were 40% less likely to be re-arrested than individuals in the comparison group after one year, a statistically significant difference. The re-incarceration rate of RHO program participants compared to the comparison group was also less (6% vs. 10%), but the difference was not statistically significant. The time before first re-arrest was significantly greater for the RHO group than for the comparison group. However, the RHO group was re-arrested significantly more times than the comparison group, with the RHO group having an average of 150% more re-arrests. Fontaine et al. suggested a possible reason for the higher multiple re-arrest rate for the RHO group was the housing program resulted in offenders having more contact with individuals likely to report to authorities any suspected criminal activity the offender might be involved in.

Lowenkamp and Latessa (2004) investigated whether offenders' post-release assignment to a halfway house in Ohio State's Halfway House Program (HWH) was associated with recidivism rate. Participants were 3,737 male and female offenders released from Ohio state facilities, assigned to halfway houses, and then terminated from the halfway houses in 1999. These individuals were compared to a group of 3,058 matched released offenders who were not assigned to halfway houses. Outcomes for offenders in each group were tracked for two years. Lowenkamp and Latessa reported small reductions of 2% in re-arrest rates for the overall HWH group in comparison to offenders in the non-HWH group, but this difference was not significant. The researchers

reported a 4% decrease in re-arrest rates for high-risk offenders in the HWH group, which was a statistically significant difference. The overall HWH group had a statistically significant 7% reduction in re-incarceration compared to the non-HWH group (31.6% vs. 38.5%). The reduction effects were stronger for offenders who resided in rural or metropolitan halfway houses compared to offenders who resided in urban halfway houses.

Latessa, Lowenkamp, and Bechtel (2009) examined the association with recidivism of two halfway house programs in Pennsylvania. Participants were 3,923 male and female individuals who participated in one of 53 different Pennsylvania halfway houses while under parole, pre-release, or halfway back status. A matched comparison group included 3,923 individuals who did not take part in either of the halfway house programs. Results of the study showed rates of re-arrest were significantly greater among the halfway house treatment group than for the comparison group (31.3% vs. 23.7%). Significantly more of the treatment group offenders were also re-incarcerated (54.6% vs. 31.9%). In addition, the probability of experiencing a technical violation was greater for the treatment group (53.3% vs. 31.1%).

Latessa et al. (2009) evaluated the individual halfway houses to which the offenders had been assigned and reported 50 of the programs were ineffective or in need of improvement. One major problem was a failure across many facilities to separate offenders by their risk level. Another was poor case planning due to failure to communicate risk scores of offenders to case managers. The researchers concluded the poor recidivism results from the treatment group did not necessarily indicate the

programs were defective in themselves, but rather the delivery of the programs in most of the halfway houses was defective.

Willison, Roman, Wolff, Correa, and Knight (2010) investigated the recidivism effects of participation in the Ridge House program, a faith-based halfway house program in Nevada admitting only offenders who had a substance abuse problem. Released offenders typically reside for 90 days at the facility. Program participants numbered 156 male and female individuals who resided at the halfway house for a minimum of two weeks. The comparison group totaled 461 individuals who were accepted to the program but did not attend. Follow-up periods were at least one year and averaged 2.44 years. Using bivariate analysis, which did not control for individual characteristics, Willison et al. reported the re-arrest rate for the halfway house group was less than the rate for the comparison group (33% vs. 38%), but this difference was not statistically significant. In the bivariate analysis, the halfway house group had significantly fewer average arrests than the comparison group (1.39 vs. 1.82); however, in a multivariate analysis, which enabled individual characteristics of offenders to be controlled for, the researchers ascertained there was no significant difference in re-arrests for the two groups. Willison et al. also determined offenders who completed the halfway house program were significantly less likely to be re-arrested than those in the treatment group who did not complete the program (23% vs. 44%). The average number of re-arrests was also significantly lower for the completers compared to the noncompleters (1.00 vs. 1.67).

Education and Recidivism

One major strategy showing promise for reducing high recidivism rates is to increase investments in correctional education programs aimed at providing knowledge

and skills to prepare incarcerated offenders for gainful employment after release (James, 2015). Such programs may help released prisoners to function well in society without resorting to criminal activity. Deficiency in education places many offenders at a disadvantage in trying to find a job post-release, as education has become increasingly important to procuring employment in today's society (James, 2015). Offenders enter the correctional system with a wide range of educational preparation (Shermer & Day, 2013).

Gaes (2008) noted the results of National Adult Literacy Survey and Bureau of Justice Statistics surveys indicate when compared to those who live in the outside community, prisoners are undereducated and have lower literacy-based skills to enable them to handle various everyday tasks they may confront outside of prison. Of adult offenders released from incarceration into the community, 40% lack a high school or GED degree (Carter et al., 2007). To prepare prisoners educationally for re-entry into the community with an improved chance at finding an adequate job, many correctional institutions offer inmates educational programs (James, 2015). These programs are varied and may include adult basic education, vocational training, secondary school programs in the form of high school education or GED preparation, and post-secondary education programs in the form of college coursework to be taken by inmates (Stephan, 2008). A 2005 census of federal and state correctional facilities reported 85% of U.S. facilities provided one or more types of educational program, with the most frequent type of program being secondary education and GED programs, which occurred in 77% of the facilities (Stephan, 2008). The second most frequent type was adult basic education programs, consisting of lower adult education and literacy training, which were provided by 67% of the facilities. Upper adult basic education was offered by 66%, vocational

training by 52%, and special education programs for prisoners who were learning disabled were provided by 37% of the facilities (Stephan, 2008).

The Effects of Secondary Education on Recidivism

A study on how prison-based secondary education is associated with the likelihood of recidivating was conducted by the New York State Department of Correctional Services (2001), which examined former inmates who had been released from custody by the state Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) and had earned a GED degree while incarcerated. This group of released inmates was compared to two other groups. One comparison group consisted of inmates who had been released from DOCS custody, had entered incarceration without a high school degree, and had not earned a GED certificate while incarcerated. The second comparison group consisted of inmates released from DOCS custody who had earned a high school degree or GED prior to being incarcerated. The purpose of the study was to determine the post-release recidivism rate of the first group in comparison to the other two groups. A total of 16,617 cases were included in the study, including all inmates who were released from DOCS in 1996. Of these released inmates, 2,330 were in the group of prisoners who had earned a GED while incarcerated, 9,419 were in the first comparison group, and 4,868 were in the second comparison group. Released inmates were followed for 36 months to determine whether they had returned to the custody of the New York State DOCS at any time during the period.

Analysis of the data from the New York State Department of Correctional Services (2001) showed the group of released inmates who had earned a GED degree while incarcerated were returned to custody during the three years after their release at a

rate of 31.8% compared to the first comparison group, who were returned to custody at a rate of 36.6%. Analysis by chi-square test showed this difference was statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. The difference between the two groups was even larger for released offenders who were less than 21 years of age at the time of release. In those cases, the return rate for the GED-earners was 40.1% and the rate of the first comparison group was 53.7%. This difference was also statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level.

When compared to the second comparison group, released inmates who had earned a GED while incarcerated had a recidivism rate similar to the rate of inmates who had first entered incarceration with a high school degree or GED (31.8% versus 32.3%) (New York State DOCS, 2001). The recidivism percentage of inmates who were less than 21 years of age when released was also similar for the two groups at 40.1% for the GED-while incarcerated group versus 43.2% for the other group. In both cases, the difference between groups was not statistically significant (New York State Docs, 2001).

Results from the New York State DOCS (2001) study were similar to the results of two other studies conducted by the New York State DOCS (1989, 2010). The first study (1989) examined a total of 4,226 offenders released from custody. The recidivism rate of offenders who earned a GED while incarcerated was compared to the recidivism rate of offenders who first entered DOCS without a high school degree and did not earn a GED while incarcerated. The results of the 1989 study showed 34.0% of the GED-earning offenders were returned to DOCS custody, while 39.1% of the non-GED-earning offenders were returned to custody, a statistically significant difference (New York State DOCS, 1989).

The New York State DOCS (2010) study followed 16,302 offenders who were released from DOCS custody in 2005. A total of 2,154 individuals had earned a GED while incarcerated, 8,450 had no degree on entering incarceration and did not earn a GED while incarcerated, and 5,698 had a high school degree or GED on entering incarceration. Released offenders were tracked for three years, during which 31.2% of the GED-earners were returned to DOCS custody, 38.0% of the non-degree earners were returned, and 36.5% of those who had first been incarcerated having a degree were returned. In this study, the group of GED-earners were returned to custody at a rate significantly lower than the rates of the other two groups. For inmates who were younger than 21 at the time of their release, the recidivism rates were 45.2%, 54.4%, and 50.0%, respectively, for the GED-earners, non-GED earners, and holders of a high school degree or GED when first entering prison (New York State DOCS, 2010).

Gordon and Weldon (2003) examined the recidivism rates of 162 inmates who were released from incarceration at a West Virginia correctional facility. Of these inmates, 53 had been released after completing a vocational education program, 13 were released after completing the GED degree and vocational training, and 96 did not participate in any education program while they were incarcerated. Data were gathered from the correctional facility's Education Center for 1999-2000 and from the Prime Time/Inmate Tracking Center. Analysis of findings suggested the vocational program completers had an 8.75% recidivism rate, those who had completed a GED and vocational training had a 6.71% recidivism rate, and those who did not participate in an educational program while incarcerated had a 26% recidivism rate. These rates for the

three groups suggested the GED and vocational training programs were both effective in reducing recidivism.

Shermer and Day (2013) conducted a qualitative study to determine the relationship of educational programming in correctional institutions to offender recidivism in Minnesota. The researchers noted offenders entering Minnesota correctional facilities had a wide range of degrees of educational attainment, ranging from individuals who were functionally illiterate to holders of a Master's degree. Education programs were mandated in Minnesota for inmates who had low educational achievement. Upon entering the correctional system, inmates were tested and if they were not at the 11th or 12th grade level in reading and mathematics, they were required to take classes toward earning a high school diploma or a GED certificate. They were not allowed to drop out of classes as long as they were at the same institution. Furthermore, inmates were not allowed to get a job in the facility until they had at least received their GED, which the researchers pointed out was a motivator for those inmates who desired to have a job.

Shermer and Day (2013) conducted structured face-to-face and phone interviews with three key informants who had educational experience within and were affiliated with the Minnesota correctional system. These key informants included correctional system educators and supervisors, though the exact positions of the informants were not reported by the researchers. The researchers also conducted a meta-analysis of previous studies focused on the relationship between corrections-based educational programs and recidivism. Shermer and Day concluded, after analysis of previous studies, educational programs in correctional institutions do reduce the recidivism rate. However, they did not

elaborate on what previous studies had reported in regard to how recidivism was related to participation for specific kinds of educational programs in correctional institutions, such as adult education, secondary education, and post-secondary education.

A meta-analytic examination of the effects of education in correctional institutions was conducted by Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, and Miles (2013). The study was funded by the Rand Corporation, which was awarded a grant for conducting the study by the Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice. The researchers conducted an extensive literature search of published and unpublished studies released from 1980 to 2011 and concerned with the relationship between inmates' participation in correctional education and various inmate outcomes. Studies were restricted to ones published in English, concerned with programs of correctional education in the United States, and inclusive of programs with an academic or vocational curriculum with structured instruction. To ensure the studies included in the analysis were of high quality in terms of intervention type, research design, and outcomes, the meta-analysis included only studies rating Level 2 or higher on the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods (MSSM). The MSSM quality criteria for scientific studies are the following (Seiter & Kadela, 2003):

> Level 1: Correlate a type/level of intervention with an outcome at a single time.
>
> Level 2: Observe a temporal sequence between intervention and outcome, or have a comparison group not shown to be comparable to treatment group.
>
> Level 3: Compare two or more comparable units: one with intervention, one without.

Level 4: Compare multiple units with and without the intervention while controlling for other factors or using comparison units with only minor differences.

Level 5: Randomly assign and analyze comparable units to intervention and comparison groups.

Results of the Davis et al. (2013) meta-analysis supported the view participation in correctional education while incarcerated reduces offenders' risk of returning to correctional custody after being released. In particular, meta-analysis of high-quality studies showed participating in correctional education programs provided an average 43% lower chance of recidivating compared to offenders who did not participate. The researchers reported this translates into a 13% reduced risk of recidivating for those who participate in correctional education programs versus those who do not. A similar average reduction was also ascertained when lower-quality studies were included in the meta-analysis.

The overall results of Davis et al.'s (2013) meta-analysis were for correctional education programs including adult basic education, secondary education, and post-secondary education, the researchers also examined the results of studies specifically reporting the outcomes of secondary education and GED programs in correctional institutions. Davis et al. determined such programs were the most common type of correctional education program. Comparing participation in such secondary education/GED programs to receiving no correctional education, the researchers reported those who participated in such a program had an average 30% lower chance of recidivating than those who did not.

In addressing the issue of the cost-effectiveness of correctional education, Davis et al. (2013) estimated the direct re-incarceration costs for a hypothetical group of 100 inmates given the results of their meta-analysis. The researchers estimated the cost to be $0.87 million to $0.97 million less for 100 offenders participating in correctional education than for 100 offenders who did not participate. The researchers also estimated the cost of correctional education as being $1,400 to $1,744 per inmate. Thus, the estimated cost for educating 100 inmates was less than $175,000. Davis et al. concluded these estimates suggest providing correctional education is a cost-effective option when compared to the cost of re-incarceration. The researchers also noted reduction in recidivism resulting from correctional education may have indirect cost benefits by reducing costs to the correctional system as a whole and reducing the financial and emotional costs to victims of crime.

A study to determine what effects different kinds of prison educational programming had on the recidivism of released offenders in Texas was conducted by Armstrong, Giever, and Lee (2012). The researchers investigated the outcomes of educational services in the Texas state prison system provided by the Windham School District and included five kinds of educational program. One of these programs was adult basic education, which included literacy training, secondary education with preparation for the GED examinations, and special education for some individuals. The other four initiatives included vocational training, post-secondary education, life-skills preparation, and cognitive intervention programs.

Armstrong et al. (2012) collected data on 72,218 offenders who were released from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in Fiscal Year 2009, with 51,058 of those

offenders having participated in some form of Windham School District correctional education. A total of 33,338 of the released offenders had participated in adult basic education, which included secondary education GED preparation, with an average of 525.4 hours of participation in adult basic education per offender. The researchers determined for each kind of educational program, including the adult basic education program, the greater the number of hours an offender spent in the program the less likelihood the individual would recidivate after being released from confinement.

Working with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Aos, Miller, and Drake (2006) conducted a systematic review of research pertinent to determining evidence-based strategies to reduce crime. On the basis of reviewing four evidence-based studies on the effects of vocational education in prison, the researchers concluded vocational education resulted in an estimated 9% reduction in crime. On the basis of reviewing 17 evidence-based studies, Aos et al. stated the provision of general education in prison (basic education or post-secondary education) resulted in an estimated reduction in crime of 7%. Calculating the costs and benefits to society of prison-based general education, the researchers ascertained the annual cost per participant was $962. Subtracting this cost from the annual value of the results of such education to taxpayers and crime victims, Aos et al. concluded the net value of general education in prison was $10,669 per participant.

Gaes (2008) performed a meta-analysis of studies investigating the effects of prison education on various outcome variables, including recidivism and employment. The researcher reviewed studies, including other meta-analyses, examining the outcome effects of adult basic education, secondary education, vocational training, and post-

secondary education received by inmates in prison. Gaes noted studies done in this area varied in their methodological quality and reported a number of different results which were difficult to compare because of the variations of study methodology. The researcher also noted there was no determination as to how much of a return on education in a study might be partly due to an offender's ability bias. To sort the different effect sizes for GED and vocational training in different meta-analytic studies, Gaes recommended forming a registry listing each study in the area along with the definition of the effect size and the actual effect size.

Despite the inconsistencies Gaes (2008) identified in studies about the value of prison education, he concluded the bulk of research results indicated prison-based education does improve the likelihood released offenders will not recidivate. Furthermore, he noted research showed prison-based education resulted in increased wages for minority releasees. Gaes also concluded offenders who were educated were less likely to engage in criminal behavior after being released into the community. What was less certain based on previous research was statistical evidence for the strength of the effect of prison education.

Two studies are notable because their results suggest no link between prison-based secondary education and reduced recidivism. One of these studies, conducted by Tyler and Kling (2006), investigated whether earning a GED in prison was associated with post-release earnings in the mainstream job market and whether it was associated with recidivism. The researchers suggested two mechanisms by which earning a GED in prison might increase the employment or the wages of individuals released from incarceration. First, these offenders might increase the value of their human capital by

learning new skills in order to pass the GED examinations, and this increase in human capital might lead to increased wages. Second, earning a GED degree could signal potential employers the released offender may have a degree of motivation or increased cognitive skills in comparison to individuals without a GED degree, making the applicant appear more attractive as a potential employee.

Tyler and Kling (2006) used data on offenders who had entered incarceration in Florida prisons after October 1994 and who were released early enough to gather 12 quarters of data on post-release employment through the first quarter of 2002. The database included 1,967 individuals who had earned a GED in prison between October 1994 and March 1999 (GED completers). This group of released offenders was compared to offenders in two other groups. One comparison group was composed of individuals who entered prison lacking a high school diploma and who attempted but failed GED exams or who took GED classes but did not attempt to take the GED exam (GED attempters). This group numbered 1,400. The second comparison group consisted of individuals who entered the correctional system lacking a high school diploma and who never enrolled in any courses to prepare for the GED exams (GED non-participants). This second comparison group numbered 9,589. In their study, Tyler and Kling measured released offenders' employment as determined by non-zero unemployment insurance earnings and measured released offenders' quarterly earnings as shown by unemployment insurance wage records.

The results of Tyler and Kling's (2006) study showed over the first three years post-release, the GED completers had earnings significantly greater than the uncredentialed released offenders. The differences in the first, second, and third years

were $181, $180, and $109 in mean quarterly earnings, with the difference gradually declining over the three years post-release. Most of the earnings differences between the GED completers and the other two groups of released offenders was for nonwhites compared to whites. The earnings of white releasees were not significantly different between GED completers and those without a GED for any of the three years. Released non-white GED completers had higher earnings than nonwhites without prison-based GED-related education for the first two years, but the difference between the nonwhite GED completers and the nonwhite GED attempters and nonparticipants became close to zero in the third year post-release. In addition, Tyler and Kling reported the GED completers overall did not recidivate at a significantly lower rate than those who did not earn a GED while in prison.

An interpretation of the finding of Tyler and Kling (2006) was offered by Passarell (2013), who suggested minority released offenders with a GED may find employment more easily than those without the GED, but the upward mobility of minority releasees is limited. Over time, more minority released offenders without a GED find work. As a result, due to the lack of upward mobility for minority released offenders, after three years, the difference in wages between the two groups gradually declines.

A second study whose results call into question whether prison-based GED education programs reduce recidivism, conducted by Zgoba, Haugebrook, and Jenkins (2008), investigated the effect of earning a GED degree in prison among 403 offenders who were released from state prisons in New Jersey in 1999 and 2000. Of these offenders, 250 did not have a high school diploma and had earned the GED degree while in prison, and 153 had no high school diploma and had not earned the GED while

incarcerated. The researchers learned the GED group had less recidivism than the non-GED group. However, for released offenders who did recidivate, the presence of a GED earned while incarcerated had no effect on future recidivism rates. The researchers concluded GED education was not a strong predictor of lower recidivism. Zgoba et al. determined other factors predicting decreased recidivism included being of greater age when arrested, serving a shorter sentence, being Caucasian, and being married, while length of an offender's history of criminal activity increased the chance of recidivism.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review provided an overview of incarceration and recidivism in the United States. Statistics cited show incarceration to result in substantial costs to taxpayers, the offender's family, and the offender. The high rates of recidivism for released offenders increases these costs greatly. It is thus important to identify strategies for making significant reductions in recidivism rates.

In the second section of the review, research on several strategies for reducing recidivism were reviewed. These are programs to assist offenders to have a better chance of gaining employment or finding adequate housing post release, as well as substance abuse and mental health programs for offenders in need of such services. The review of studies examining how such programs are associated with recidivation rates revealed mixed results for each type of program.

The third section of the review focused on research conducted to determine what effects on recidivism, if any, prison-based educational programs may have. In particular, the review focused on the effects of prison-based secondary education and GED preparation programs. Such research is sparse and the review of several studies showed

results are mixed on whether prison-based secondary education programs reduce recidivism. Studies by the New York State Department of Correctional Services (1989, 2001, 2010), Gordon and Weldon (2003), Shermer and Day (2013), Davis et al. (2013), Aos et al. (2006), and Armstrong et al. (2012) all reported educational programs, including GED programs, reduced recidivism.

Not all studies investigating prison-based secondary education reported such programs reduce recidivism. Studies by Tyler and Kling (2006) did not find GED preparation in Florida prisons reduced recidivism significantly, and Zgoba et al. (2008) reported prison-based GED preparation reduced recidivism only for those who were released from prison the first time. For those who did return to incarceration, there was no later recidivism-reducing effect of GED preparation. These inconsistent research findings may be partly due to the use of inconsistent methodologies, and in some cases weak methodologies, as indicated by Gaes (2008), who conducted a meta-analysis and who made several suggestions for establishing more accurate and reliable research results in quantitative studies.

Most of the reviewed studies about the effects of secondary education programs were quantitative. The only qualitative study was conducted by Shermer and Day (2013, which appeared to have a relatively weak methodology with only three interviewees. The present qualitative study examined the perceptions of former community supervision officers and addressed the question of whether secondary education achievement in the form of a high school degree or a GED certificate affects released offenders' chance of recidivating. While previous research has produced contradictory findings, this study used a new perspective, which may provide new insights.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter reports the methodology used for the study and is divided into 10 main sections following this introduction. The first section reiterates the study's problem, purpose, and research questions. The second section explains the research design for the study. The third section reports on the selection of participants, while the fourth discusses research relationships and the fifth lists the interview questions for the study. The sixth section details the interview procedures used, and the seventh explains how results were analyzed. The eighth section focuses on the issue of validity, while the ninth explains the ethical considerations that guided the study. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

Problem, Purpose, and Research Questions

The problem addressed in the study was the high rate of recidivism characterizing correctional systems in the United States (Durose et al., 2014). To address this problem, I examined the issue of whether completion of secondary education either before or during incarceration reduces recidivism rates. The purpose of the study was to interview a sample of 10 rural community supervision officers employed by the Georgia Department of Corrections to determine their experiences and observations in regard to parolees who had a high school diploma or GED versus those who did not.

Maxwell (2013) identified three dimensions used to develop qualitative research questions: general vs. specific, instrumentalist vs. realist, and variance vs. process. The

general-specific dimension concerns how general in contrast to particular the research questions are. The instrumental-realist dimension concerns whether the research questions are restricted to what is observable or measurable in contrast to what may be inferred based on what is observed, measured, or reported. The variance-process distinction is about questions asking whether there exist differences or correlations, in contrast to questions about the significance events and activities have for the people involved in them.

In regard to the first of these three dimensions, the research questions for the study focused on learning about the particular experiences and perceptions of community supervision officers related to post-release offenders' behavior, depending on whether the offenders did or did not have a secondary education. For the second dimension, the research questions were instrumental because the interviewees' experiences and observations about post-release offenders' behavior were addressed. In regard to the third dimension, the research questions were variance questions asking whether interviewees, based on their experiences, had perceived a difference between post-release offenders who did or did not have a secondary education; however, they were also process questions because they asked the interviewees to interpret and report on the meanings of their experiences with post-release offenders with different educational levels.

The study had four research questions:

RQ1: What have been the experiences of rural Georgia community supervision officers working with post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?

RQ2: What have been the observations of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding how education at the secondary level affects compliance with parole conditions and recidivism among offenders on post-incarceration release?

RQ3: What factors do rural Georgia community supervision officers attribute to any differences between post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?

RQ4: What are the views of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding the provision to offenders of secondary education classes during or after incarceration?

Research Design

This was a qualitative study. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research by not being limited to gathering and analyzing numerical data (Runciman, 2002). Qualitative research typically deals with textual data, including data collected in interviews. Qualitative methodology is useful for understanding complex human activities because it enables the exploration of multiple facets of those activities, as well as exploration from multiple perspectives, and may add depth to understanding (Runciman, 2002).

The qualitative method used for the study was applied thematic analysis, which can be used to examine and analyze the experiences and perceptions of informants in some area of interest (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). The applied thematic analysis method was appropriate for the study because it enabled the analysis of first-person data about the experiences and perceptions of informants who may have had unique insights into the value of secondary education for released offenders. The informants were former

community corrections officers who were asked to comment on their experiences and perceptions pertinent to how secondary education is related to recidivism and the post-release behavior of offenders. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Use of applied thematic analysis then enabled identification of textual themes present in interview responses (see Qualitative Analysis section for additional details).

Participant Selection: Rationale and Procedures

Due to having been involved in community corrections issues for many years in the central region of Georgia, I, as the researcher, was especially interested in the opinions and perceptions of community supervision officers who worked in that region. While serving in the Georgia State Legislature from 1981 through 2002, I was actively involved in setting state corrections policy including for probation and parole. Since becoming involved in education in my post-legislative career, I have taught and administered tests in correctional facilities including local, state, and federal sites. I conceived and founded the Philemon Institute, a non-profit organization, to offer college classes to inmates. The organization is currently presenting courses in two state correctional facilities.

I chose this study to help fill the gap of available data regarding what may work to stem recidivism in Georgia and nationwide. I chose to interview community supervision officers because of their unique experience in dealing with parolees. This experience may have allowed them to detect and reflect on factors that increase or reduce recidivism. In this study, the possible factor that was of particular interest was offenders' having or not having completed secondary education in the form of a high school degree or a GED certificate. I believe community supervision officers have a perspective unlike any other

and offer valuable resources for information on how having a secondary education may affect offender recidivism.

Thus, the sample for this study was a convenience sample consisting of 10 community corrections officers who worked in the central region of Georgia for the Georgia State Department of Community Supervision (formerly the Georgia Department of Corrections). The first step in selecting the sample was to obtain a list containing the names, addresses, and phone numbers of at least 20 Georgia community corrections officers from the Department of Community Supervision, which had agreed to provide such a list. The list of names and addresses was subjected to a randomization procedure, and I then contacted by phone individuals in order of their appearance on the randomized list beginning with the first individual listed. In the phone calls, I explained to each officer the nature of the study and invited him or her to participate in the study. I continued this way until 10 community corrections officers had agreed to participate. For each officer who agreed to participate in the study, I arranged a location, date, and time convenient for the officer to conduct the interview.

Research Relationships

In qualitative research, the relationship of the researcher to the participants is an important element to take into account (Maxwell, 2013). In relation to this study, my past dealings with Georgia correctional system issues and personnel resulted in my being familiar with many of the types of duties and experiences of the interviewees. My history was expected to help in establishing rapport with interviewees and in ensuring they responded to the interview questions honestly and fully. My experience was also

expected to help me in understanding the interviewees' responses to questions and in constructing follow-up questions if necessary.

My familiarity with the community supervision function and my experiences with correctional education initiatives posed some threat to validity due to a possible bias in favor of providing secondary education as needed to incarcerated individuals. To counteract any possible bias, I took great care not to influence interviewees' responses either in asking questions or in making any remarks about the interviewees' responses. I understood the purpose of the study was to determine the interviewees' experiences and perceptions about the post-release attitudes and behaviors of offenders depending on their education, and I did not insert my opinions into interviews.

Interview Questions

To answer the four research questions, I asked six interview questions of each participant.

IQ1: What were your experiences in working with released offenders who had a secondary education, in comparison with working with offenders who had not reached that education level?

IQ2: In your experience, how did having a secondary education affect released offenders' compliance with parole conditions?

IQ3: In your experience, how did having a secondary education affect released offenders' likelihood of recidivism?

IQ4: If the interviewee indicated having a secondary education had an effect on released offenders' compliance with parole conditions or likelihood of recidivism, then I asked: In

your opinion, why did having a secondary education have an effect on [repeat the interviewee's attribution(s)]?

IQ5: In your experience, were there any other differences between working with released offenders who had a secondary education compared to working with released offenders who did not?

IQ6: What is your opinion about providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration?

Interview Procedures

Interviews were held at a location and time convenient for each participant. Before interviews begin, participants were furnished a Consent Statement information sheet (see Appendix B) providing information about the interviews, the confidentiality and anonymity of the study, and the participant's rights. The participant was asked to read the Consent Statement and ask for any clarifications.

The interview began with my recording the participant's gender and asking for and recording the participant's age range, race, and years of service as a community service officer. The remainder of the interview consisted of my asking each participant six open-ended questions and appropriate follow-up questions suggested by the participant's answers or needed to clarify the participant's responses. The interviews were audio recorded, and each interview was expected to about 60 minutes. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transported to my office, where they were kept in a locked file cabinet. The audio recordings were then professionally transcribed for analysis.

Qualitative Analysis

Transcriptions of the interviews were qualitatively analyzed using the applied thematic analysis method described by Guest et al. (2012). Analysis was aided by use of the Atlas.ti (atlasti.com) software qualitative analysis program, which is intended to help researchers conduct systematic qualitative analysis of unstructured data such as interviews. The actual analysis is conducted by the researcher using the program. The program is used to display and explore the data and provides tools to help the researcher identify and specify codes and code families, flag quotations, create notes, and determine links between segments of text.

Analysis began by first examining each transcript separately to identify and code key words, phrases, and both explicit and implicit ideas in the transcript. Special attention was paid to words, phrases, and ideas repeated by the participant in answer to the interview questions. The 10 coded transcripts were then compared with one another to determine which codes were repeated in several of the transcripts and were pertinent to addressing the study's four research questions. These repetitions served to establish which themes appeared in the interview responses, with responses being interpreted in the light of these themes.

Based on the themes identified in the participants' responses, the research questions were then answered. In particular, I constructed a detailed thematic interpretation of the participants' experiences and observations for each research question. In addition, I developed an overall interpretation of the participants' reported views regarding the impact secondary education may have on offenders after their release from incarceration.

Validity

Maxwell (2013) stated for qualitative studies, two main kinds of threat to validity are researcher bias and reactivity. In regard to researcher bias, Maxwell held bias is impossible to eliminate, but it is important for researchers to be aware of any potential biases they may have and how those may influence the study. My history of working on Georgia State correctional policies and on education projects for offenders may have tended to produce personal biases. In the study, I took care to identify any of my ideas, values, or preconceptions related to the objectives of the study and took care not to let any such considerations affect the interviews or the analysis of data.

The reactivity threat to validity mentioned by Maxwell (2013) is the possibility the researcher's behavior influences responses of interview participants. To counteract the reactivity threat, I took care in the interviews to ask only open-ended questions and to make no comments suggesting my own ideas or expectations of a certain kind of answer.

According to Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), for qualitative research, credibility and integrity are two primary criteria for ensuring validity. In the present study, credibility was strengthened by the fact the interview questions were straightforwardly designed to address the research questions directly. Credibility was also strengthened by making determined efforts to provide an interview context in which participants felt free to express their views openly and fully. I did this by emphasizing the confidentiality and anonymity of the study to participants. I also sought to establish rapport with each participant before and during the interview to help ensure the interviewee was honest and open in his or her responses to the questions. My being a former state legislator was expected to help in establishing rapport.

A third method for helping establish both the credibility and integrity of the study was to use a form of member checking to help validate the study's results. Member checking has been cited as a method for supporting the credibility of a qualitative research project (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Two ways in which member checking can be done are by providing interviewees with copies of interview transcripts or providing them with a summary of the themes and patterns revealed after analyzing transcripts (Creswell, 2009). In this study, I used the second method of member checking, which was considered to be preferable to the first method by Creswell (2009). In particular, after the transcripts were analyzed and themes determined, I developed a summary of those results and mailed or e-mailed the summary to each of the study participants, asking them to read the summary of the interviews and provide any feedback they wished to provide. Any comments suggesting concerns about the study or suggested theme revisions were noted in the following chapter reporting study results, along with any additions or alterations made due to the feedback.

Finally, the credibility and integrity of the study was strengthened by the presence of a clear and detailed description of the methodology. This description will help readers form clear concepts of the various parts of the methodology used, including the selection of participants, the interview questions, the interview procedures, and the method of qualitative analysis. The description will also assist any other researchers who want to replicate this study or perform a similar study to understand the steps involved.

Ethical Considerations

Interview participants remained anonymous for the study. All names and personally identifying information about the interviewees was kept confidential. The only

information about the participants available to the public was their gender, age range, race, and status as a Georgia community supervision officer. The participants were identified in the research as Interviewee 1, 2, and so on through Interviewee 10.

Participants were given a Consent Statement to read (see Appendix B). In the Consent Statement, participants were told the title and purpose of the study, and they were informed of my identity. They were assured their identity would remain anonymous, with any identifying information kept confidential. They were advised the interview would be audio recorded and then transcribed, with the audio recordings destroyed after transcription, and the transcripts destroyed after three years. They were assured their participation was totally voluntary and were told of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

When they were given the Consent Statement to read, they were also advised that if they needed further information about the study, they could ask me for clarification at that time. The statement contained my contact information and contact information for the Institutional Review Board in the event the participant had questions later. Only after a participant had been provided ample opportunity to read the Consent Statement and ask any questions did the interview proceed.

I applied to the University Institutional Review Board for permission to conduct the study after the proposal was complete and accepted by my committee. I did not begin enlisting participants or conducting interviews until permission was received (see Appendix A).

Summary

This chapter explained the methodology used in the study. After reiterating the problem, purpose, and research questions addressed by the study, the next several sections of the chapter explained the qualitative research design, selection of participants, research relationship, and interview questions. The sixth section explained the procedures I used to interview the 10 community supervision officers. The chapter's seventh section explained the qualitative analysis methodology—applied thematic analysis—used to analyze interview responses. How threats to validity were addressed was the focus of the eighth section. The ethical guidelines of the study were then explained.

The next chapter reports the results of the study. Themes reflected in the participants' responses are reported, along with how these themes provide answers to the research questions. The final chapter of the dissertation provides a discussion of the results.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of the study and is divided into four main sections following this introduction. The first section provides a demographic profile of the interviewed community supervision officers. The second section reports the results of the thematic qualitative analysis of the officers' responses to the interview questions. The chapter's third section furnishes answers to the study's four research questions based on the themes identified in the officers' responses. The fourth section provides a summary of the chapter.

The purpose of this study was to interview a sample of rural community supervision officers currently working for the Georgia Department of Corrections in the central region of Georgia to determine their experiences and observations in regard to parolees who have a high school diploma or GED in comparison to those who have not achieved that educational level. The study had four research questions:

RQ1: What have been the experiences of rural Georgia community supervision officers working with post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?

RQ2: What have been the observations of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding how education at the secondary level affects compliance with parole conditions and recidivism among offenders on post-incarceration release?

RQ3: What factors do rural Georgia community supervision officers attribute to any differences between post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?

RQ4: What are the views of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding the provision to offenders of secondary education classes during or after incarceration?

To answer these research questions, I surveyed 10 community supervision officers about their observations and views regarding the issues mentioned in the questions. The officers' responses to several open-ended interview questions were audio recorded and then transcribed. A thematic qualitative analysis of the officers' transcribed responses to the interview questions was then conducted to determine any repeated themes reflected in the responses. These identified themes were then used to provide answers to the four research questions.

Demographic Profile of the Community Supervision Officers

I interviewed 10 currently active community supervision officers in the fall of 2017. At the time, all interviewees were serving as community supervision officers in counties within the central region of the State of Georgia. These individuals included six males and four females. Ages ranged from 29 to 59 years, with a mean age of 44.8 years. The officers' length of service as a community supervision officer ranged from three to 35 years, with a mean length of service of 21 years. The race and ethnicity of the sample consisted of one African-American officer, one Hispanic officer, and eight Caucasian non-Hispanic officers. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic data for the sample.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Years of service
1	Male	53	White	30
2	Male	59	White	35
3	Female	43	White	18
4	Male	46	Hispanic	24
5	Male	52	White	28
6	Female	40	White	18
7	Male	44	White	23
8	Female	29	White	3
9	Female	45	Black	20
10	Male	37	White	11

Results of the Qualitative Thematic Analysis

I asked the community supervision officers six interview questions. To answer Research Question 1, I asked the following interview question:

- What were your experiences in working with released offenders who had a secondary education, in comparison with working with offenders who had not reached that education level?

To answer Research Question 2, I asked the following two interview questions:

- In your experience, how did having a secondary education affect released offenders compliance with parole conditions?
- In your experience, how did having a secondary education affect released offenders' likelihood of recidivism?

To answer Research Question 3, I asked the following interview question:

- In your experience, were there any other differences between working with released offenders who had a secondary education, compared to working with released offenders who did not?

To answer Research Question 4, I asked the following interview question:

- What is your opinion about providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration?

Near the end of the interview I asked the following interview question:

- Does anything else come to mind about the topic that you would like to add?

In some cases, I asked one or two follow-up questions to help clarify the interviewees' responses. These mainly included follow-up questions to clarify responses relevant to Research Question 2. The following are examples of these questions:

- In your opinion, why did having a secondary education have an effect on their compliance with conditions, and maybe not so much an effect on recidivism?
- So, a non-sex offender would, in your opinion, probably have a better chance of complying if they had a secondary school education?
- Why did having a secondary education have an effect on their ability to support themselves, and to move on?

- When you say they are able to take care of their own needs or family, just elaborate on that. How would they be able to do that?
- In your opinion, why did having a secondary education have the effect on recidivism that you just discussed?
- How did that [having a secondary education] help them to do the things they needed to do, not to get re-entangled with the system?
- Turning away from their bad behavior, did a secondary education help them to stay on a better path?

I asked the following question to clarify a response relevant to Research Question 3:

- Other than what we have discussed, is it different working with someone who's been released that has the secondary education than those who do not?

The qualitative thematic analysis of the interview responses was carried out by first coding the officers' responses to the interview questions to discover comments reflecting the same or very similar observations and ideas expressed by several officers. In qualitative research, there is no rigid criterion for how many times an observation or idea must occur for a theme to be identified or defined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers may use terms such as "many" or "numerous" occurrences constituting a theme, but the decision of how many occurrences are needed is left to the judgment of the researcher and may vary (Braun & Clarke, p. 83). For example, a study by Amon (2017) on women's experiences in traditionally male-dominated occupational fields defined a theme by using the criterion of at least 25% of participants referring to a coded category. In this research, I judged that if an observation or idea was repeated by at least five of the 10 interviewees (50%), it was a theme present in the officers' responses.

A total of 10 themes were identified:

1. Secondary education helps released offenders in getting a better job.
2. Job prospects for released offenders without a secondary education are limited.
3. Secondary education helps in compliance with sentence and parole conditions.
4. Released offenders with a secondary education are better able to understand the conditions of their sentencing and parole.
5. Having at least a secondary education reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders.
6. Factors other than having a secondary education can help determine released offenders' success.
7. Having a secondary education provides additional benefits to released offenders and others.
8. Providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration is beneficial.
9. Substance abuse is a major risk factor for offenders.
10. Many incarcerated offenders do not have a secondary education.

The most often repeated observation found in the officers' responses was that secondary education benefits released offenders by providing them improved opportunities for getting a job after being released compared to offenders who had not reached the education level of either a high school degree or a GED certificate. With nine of the 10 officers (all except Officer 8) making this observation and several of the officers making the observation more than once, the following theme was identified as being present in the officers' responses to the interview questions:

Theme 1: Secondary education helps released offenders in getting a better job.

Officers' comments supporting Theme 1 included the following.

- Officer 1: "If they have education, they're going to get a better job, and they're going to have a better chance of obtaining a better job. If I refer them to any kind of temp service and they've got education, they're going to be moved to the top of the list."
- Officer 2: "Over the years, the first thing I've noticed with those that had a secondary education is once they're released from prison, and come out to parole/probation, they have a better ability to obtain better employment."
- Officer 4: "Those offenders that have at least a secondary education were easier to work with as far as them maintaining a job, or the likelihood of them getting a job if they were to lose their job."

One exception to the idea that secondary education helps released offenders to obtain a job was noted by Officer 1, who explained he dealt mostly with released sex offenders. He stated that for the most part, having a secondary education did not enable released sex offenders to get a better job because of restrictions on where sex offenders can work and liability issues. The officer agreed, however, that for property and drug offenders, having a secondary education did help them to get a better job than if they did not have that education.

In contrasting released offenders who have achieved a secondary education to those who have not, five of the 10 officers specifically mentioned that having no secondary education limits offenders' job prospects. Based on this commonality, a second theme was identified.

Theme 2: Job prospects for released offenders without a secondary education are limited.

Examples of officer comments supporting Theme 2 are the following.

- Officer 2: "As opposed to those who are getting out who do not have a high school diploma primarily find themselves working at fast food restaurants, or helping in some of the rural areas with raking pine straw or doing some odd and end jobs like that. The opportunity is just better for those that have at least a high school education in my opinion."
- Officer 3: "So many times these people have no GED, they have nothing, and it makes it much more difficult for them to be able to obtain jobs where they make more than minimum wage."
- Officer 6: "I couldn't imagine not being able to even apply for a certain job because of not having a GED or a high school diploma. It just makes everything so limited. Like we say around here, it just really narrows the job field for a lot of people."

A third theme concerned how having a secondary education affected the compliance of released offenders with their release conditions. In their responses to the interview questions, nine of the 10 officers (all except Officer 9) commented that released offenders with a secondary education were better able to comply with the conditions of their parole or probation compared to those without a secondary education. Detection of this commonality in the responses resulted in identifying the third theme:

Theme 3: Secondary education helps in compliance with sentence and parole conditions.

The following two comments by the officers provide examples in support of Theme 3.

- Officer 5: "I would say the compliance with the conditions was positive [for those with a secondary education], when compared to the ones that did not have it, who looked at it as being sort of a negative things, things that they could not do, things that would end them up in jail. Rather than these are the conditions that will allow me to be successful, to get off parole, probation early, and so forth like that."
- Officer 7: "Typically, they seem to if they had completed their secondary education, they typically were a little bit more likely to follow and successfully complete their probation conditions and be successful on probation."

Several of the officers expressed the opinion that compliance with parole conditions was improved by a released offender being able to find a job. These comments revealed a connection between Themes 3 and 1. These responses include the following.

- Officer 3: "When you're able to obtain gainful employment because of your secondary education, I think that just makes everything in their life transition smoother…. there's no issue with them coming in and there is no issue with them paying the parole fees."
- Officer 6: "… as far as a condition of parole, they have to maintain employment, so it [having a secondary education] made it a whole lot easier for them to find employment. Especially in our area where employment is, you know, it's very scattered."

- Officer 10: “I think they were able to maintain more compliance with high school education and above, simply because they could get a little bit better job than the average bear, and with that slightly better job, they get a little bit more money, its more stable…. if they had a decent job, and they were able to continue to make some kind of payments, and see that we’re willing to work with them, that was a big motivator for them to maintain compliance….”

Additional insight into why the officers generally believed that released offenders with a secondary education were better able to comply with sentence and parole conditions was provided by a further commonality in the responses. This recurrence, which was found in six of the 10 officers’ answers, concerned the ability of offenders with a secondary education to understand their sentencing conditions and formed the fourth identified theme.

Theme 4: Released offenders with a secondary education are better able to understand the conditions of their sentencing and parole.

Officers’ comments supporting this theme include the following:

- Officer 4: “Also, education plays a key component in being able to communicate with a person, especially when you are going over legal jargon, legal information. They are more likely to understand the actual conditions of the sentence and what’s going on.”
- Officer 5: “I would say that the offenders that have completed their secondary education were better able to understand their conditions of probation.”
- Officer 8: “Their ability to understand and process what’s even going on is totally different. You can tell who has an education and who does not, based on how they

act in court, if they understand their sentence, and how they behave face-to-face, and when they come to report, how they behave and dress."

Two officers also remarked on the difficulty they sometimes had of explaining sentence conditions to offenders without a secondary education.

- Officer 5: "If you cannot read and write and understand the conditions or the rule of probation or parole, or do simple arithmetic, then you're going to have a problem paying your fines and understanding what is required of you."
- Officer 6: "You have to take more time to relate to them [offenders without a secondary education] as far as this is what you need to do on probation or parole, this is what we expect…. Sometimes I've had them bring a family member in just to actually sit there with them to make sure that they understood exactly what was going on with the situation."

A fifth idea present in all 10 of the officers' responses to the interview questions was that released offenders with a secondary education are less likely to return to prison than those without a secondary education. The recurrence of this idea led to the identification of a fifth theme:

Theme 5: Having at least a secondary education reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders.

Community supervision officers' comments supporting the fifth theme include the following:

- Officer 4: "I think it's [secondary education] a key component to having a positive effect on recidivism. It's like when then the professionals always say, the more educated a person is, the more opportunities there for them to succeed."

- Officer 5: “I would say not having an education did affect the likelihood that they would be back in the system. The recidivism rate has been so high among the probation and parole people that did not have a high school education or a GED, that the prison facilities have now mandated that they all have GEDs.”

Qualitative thematic analysis also showed that Theme 5 was connected to Theme 1 given the responses of three of the officers, whose comments suggested that the most important way having a secondary education reduces recidivism is by improving the job prospects of released offenders. Two examples of such comments are the following.

- Officer 2: “My opinion has always been, there’s two things that are important with keeping an offender out of trouble. Number one, I think, is an education, minimum high school education ... without the education, you are very limited as far as employment. And those two things in my opinion, are contributing factors that either increase or reduce recidivism.”
- Officer 7: “It [having a secondary education] definitely had an impact on their ability to gain a job. Not having a job seems to be one of the biggest risk factors for recidivism ... ”

Various officers mentioned other particular ways that having a job might help reduce the recidivism rate of released offenders. Three officers commented that by having a job, an offender is better able to pay any fines owed, pay back child support, or support a family. In addition, three officers mentioned that having a job helped the offender stay busy and out of trouble. These two types of comment are illustrated by the following quotations.

- Officer 3: "When you're able to obtain gainful employment because of your secondary education, I think that just makes everything in their life transition smoother…. there is no issue with them paying the parole fees. And, I think, in general when people are…content on the inside, when we're able to provide for—when people are able to provide for their families, then they are just generally going to do better overall…. They want to be able to take care of that family, and a lot of times without gainful employment, that leaves them to commit new crimes, stealing, you know, burglarizing, because they want to feel like they can take care of their family….and… the child support…. because it's just such a big issue with a lot of our offenders coming out of prison."
- Officer 6: "A lot of times when they stay employed, they stay out of trouble. They're not on the streets, especially going up and down the streets with people they're not supposed to be with. Getting new charges, things like that. It helps some…. if you've got something to do, if you keep your hands busy, you know, it keeps you more out of trouble, so I feel like it does help some on the recidivism.

A sixth commonality in responses was reflected in comments by six of the 10 officers who mentioned factors other than having a secondary education that can affect the success of released offenders in dealing with sentencing requirements or out in the world. This finding led to the identification of a sixth theme in the officers' responses:

Theme 6: Factors other than having a secondary education can help determine released offenders' success.

Other success factors mentioned by officers include the offender's lifestyle, how he or she was brought up, the offender having made a bad decision, and how far the offender is willing to push himself or herself. For example:

- Officer 10: "I think a lot of it is personality and development there in your own personal being, along with the cultural environment that you grow up in and maintain throughout the years."

One officer stated his belief that there was one thing inside the person that helped him to both achieve a secondary education and be successful on probation.

- Officer 7: "I'm not 100% convinced that it's the education that is completely responsible for the person doing better on probation, as much as it may be a person who has the propensity to complete their secondary education also has a better propensity to do what they're supposed to do on probation."

Another officer, while admitting that a secondary education can increase the likelihood a released offender will get a better job, also stated that offenders with a drug abuse issue are more likely to be unsuccessful whether or not they have a secondary education. That officer also stated that for those who have been incarcerated for committing a more serious crime, such as armed robbery, it is harder to find employment, which leads to their being more likely to recidivate.

- Officer 10: "…the more addicted they are to a substance or whatever, the harder it is for them to break that chain, and it doesn't matter what positive attributes they have in their life, education, family, that kind of stuff. Until they hit that rock bottom point where they decide to change, it just didn't matter to them…. There again, those folks that have the unfortunate chances of being part and party to say,

an armed robbery, burglary, that kind of stuff, they're going to be more detrimentally affected to it, and have a harder time getting another job, which … leads to more recidivism …."

Factors other than secondary education that affect released offenders' chances of success include factors that help determine whether the offender even completes a secondary education. Several officers remarked on such determinants. These factors include an offender not being interested in taking advantage of the opportunity for a secondary education, offenders who complete part of GED requirements but are released before they can complete all requirements, and offenders who are unable to complete the GED due to the cognitive difficulty of doing so. Comments reflecting these factors include the following.

- Officer 8: "Most of the time they probably won't take it, because sometimes people just don't care, but I think it's good to have it as an option for them."
- Officer 10: "I can't tell you how many offenders have come out with part of their GED test done, and they never get the rest of it done, because they don't bring in proof that they went to the class and did it, and we require that they bring that proof in…."
- Officer 6: "We see that a lot of our offenders have a really hard time making it through the regular paperwork, and you know just the regular teaching of the GED, much less getting through the tests…. They do have a hard experience with it. We've had a few that their last condition of their probation was that they get a GED, and we've actually had to take it back in front of the judge and let the judge

decide was he going to dismiss that condition, because they just could not make it through the GED classes."

One officer remarked that family support was an important factor in motivating an offender to get a secondary education:

- Officer 5: "I would say that the offenders that had a secondary education also had the family support that they needed. That family support is a big part of your secondary education, because if the family is not behind you, then what's the purpose of getting it?"

A seventh theme was identified when the analysis revealed that eight out of the 10 officers remarked on benefits of having a secondary education other than helping released offenders get a better job, helping them comply with and understand sentence and parole conditions, or reducing their likelihood of recidivating. This seventh theme was the following:

Theme 7: Having a secondary education provides additional benefits to released offenders and others.

Additional benefits mentioned by the officers that come from released offenders having a secondary education include the following.

- Increases motivation for success (Officers 1, 2, and 9)
- Makes securing housing and living independently easier (Officer 2)
- Results in offender dressing and acting better (Officer 8)
- Enables entry into technical school after release (Officer 6)
- Strengthens learning from mistakes and making better decisions (Officer 8)
- Favorably impresses parole board by offender taking education classes (Officer 3)

- Increases offender's participation in substance abuse classes (Officer 4)
- Achieving high school degree or GED shows offenders they can be successful (Officer 5)
- Creates positive effects on the community and economy (Officer 5)

An eighth theme was revealed in the officers' responses to the interview question asking them to state their opinion about the value of providing secondary education to offenders during or after incarceration. Ten out of the 10 officers expressed positive opinions about the provision of such classes. Therefore, the following theme was identified in the officers' comments:

Theme 8: Providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration is beneficial.

The following examples of officers' comments about providing a secondary education to offenders reflect this theme.

- Officer 1: "I think it's very positive. I would agree to it, even on the sex offenders, because, you know, nothing is 100%. If you've got one sex offender that, you know, can gain positive employment because of it, then I think you've succeeded."
- Officer 3: "I am all for any type of programs that offenders can have while they are incarcerated. Particularly those that don't even have a GED."
- Officer 7: "I think it's extremely necessary. There are just very few jobs out there these days that you can get without a GED or high school diploma…. So, I think that it should definitely be provided. The opportunity for GED should definitely be provided. Either while incarcerated or after."

It should be noted that while approving the idea of providing a secondary education for offenders, Officer 6 also mentioned having "mixed feelings" about the idea. Expanding on this, the officer clarified her view that provision of educational classes should be limited to secondary education, saying: "… as long as it's a secondary education. Anything beyond that, I think that they should be held responsible as far as getting out and actually taking that initiative…."

An additional commonality, present in the responses of six of the 10 officers, was a reference to substance abuse offenses or offenders' problems with substance abuse. This finding resulted in the identification of a ninth theme:

Theme 9: Substance abuse is a major risk factor for offenders.

Comments supporting this theme include the following.

- Officer 2: "We deal with people that have substance abuse issues. They come from broken families, they come from just some of society's misfits…."
- Officer 6: "We have a residential treatment facility that they go to for nine months, and part of that is they can get their GED while they're in there. So, they'll get their GED and they'll come out with the substance abuse classes and, you know, the aftercare classes, and then they'll come out with their GED so that's helped some too."
- Officer 10: "… the easiest one obviously is your drug users and stuff like that, because they are more frequent…. and we've experienced some of that here as well, where the more addicted they are to a substance or whatever, the harder it is for them to break that chain…."

Qualitative thematic analysis detected a final commonality present in the responses of five of the 10 officers. This the recurrence of the idea that many incarcerated offenders do not have a high school diploma or GED certificate. Therefore, a tenth theme was identified:

Theme 10: Many incarcerated offenders do not have a secondary education.

Comments supporting this theme include the following.

- Officer 3: "To begin with, it's very few that have that secondary education . . .. "
- Officer 6: "We see more and more every day, people who are not reaching, even getting through high school."
- Officer 10: "My experience with that is, when I was in the Augusta area, working over there, the majority of the offenders that I came into contact with did not have a secondary education…. when I finished that I think it was about 250 cases. I'd probably say close to 200, 180, around there, 200, didn't have it."

Table 2 provides a summary of the 10 themes identified in the community supervision officers' responses to interview questions.

Answers to Research Questions

Based on the 10 themes identified in the interviewed community supervision officers' responses and other comments made by the officers, the study's research questions can be addressed. This section of the chapter provides answers for each of the four research questions.

Table 2

Summary of Identified Themes

Theme	Number of officers repeating
1: Secondary education helps released offenders in getting a better job.	9
2: Job prospects for released offenders without a secondary education are limited.	5
3: Secondary education helps in compliance with sentence and parole conditions.	9
4: Released offenders with a secondary education are better able to understand the conditions of their sentencing and parole.	6
5: Having at least a secondary education reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders.	9
6: Factors other than having a secondary education can help determine released offenders' success.	6
7: Having a secondary education provides additional benefits to released offenders and others	8
8: Providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration is beneficial.	10
9: Substance abuse is a major risk factor for offenders.	6
10: Many incarcerated offenders do not have a secondary education.	5

The first research question was:

> RQ1: What have been the experiences of rural Georgia community supervision officers working with post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?

The officers reported a number of experiences and observations relevant to answering this question. Most of the 10 officers reported they had experienced better compliance to sentencing and parole conditions with offenders who did have a secondary education compared to those who did not. In general, these officers found offenders with a secondary education to be easier to communicate and deal with than those without. Some of the officers pointed to specific difficulties they had experienced with explaining sentence requirements to released offenders without a secondary education. Officer 5 mentioned that offenders with a secondary education were better able to read and understand their sentence conditions, while those without a secondary education had to rely on their memory after being told what the conditions were. Officer 6 remarked: "I've had offenders who cannot read or write at all … you have to take more time to relate to them as far as, this is what you need to do on probation or parole, this is what we expect."

There were two exceptions to this commonality of views in the officers' experiences with released offenders. One exception was expressed by Officer 9, who said it was easier to work with released offenders who did not have a secondary education. Officer 9 remarked:

> "… for me, the ones that did not have the degree, they had a tendency to want to pay attention more, want to ask more questions about their conditions, want to make sure that they understand at a layman's level what is expected of them."

When asked how, in her experience, having a secondary education affected released offenders' compliance, Officer 9 responded:

> "In my experience, I believe that it made it a little more difficult … because of the fact that they [offenders with a secondary education] felt like it was beneath them or they should not be under sentence, or that they knew more than the judge and system. They shouldn't have been there. They were beyond that."

Despite these remarks about her experiences working with released offenders who did, versus those who did not, have a secondary education, Officer 9 believed that having a secondary education reduced the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders. Also, when asked her opinion on providing secondary education before or after incarceration, she commented:

> "I believe that it is a must…. because in this age and time, education matters. As far as employment wise, retirement wise…. the further your education goes, the greater off you will be at surviving in society today."

A second exception to the idea that released offenders with a secondary education were easier to work with in the officer's experience was expressed by Officer 1, who reported working mostly with sex offenders. This officer stated that in his experience, it did not matter whether the offender did or did not have a secondary education because of the particular nature of the sex offender. Officer 1 stated:

> "I don't think secondary education … has anything to do positive or negative…. you send them [sex offenders] to treatment, they attend treatment for two to three years, and they can do well in the treatment, but basically they know how to play the game. Some of them will do better, of course, than others, but basically there's going to be recidivism eventually. I'd say in 75% of the cases."

Further elaborating on his view, Officer 1 added, "My experience for 27 years has been with the sex offenders, and if I got somebody that's well educated, I have to watch them a lot closer."

Despite these comments, Officer 1 believed that secondary education should be offered to sex offenders. He commented, "I would say most percentages it [secondary education] doesn't [help], but there is a small percentage that it will help, and that's a small percentage we can help, then that definitely needs to be done if possible."

The second research question was the following:

> RQ2: What have been the observations of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding how education at the secondary level affects compliance with parole conditions and recidivism among offenders on post-incarceration release?

The answer to RQ2 is shown by Themes 3 and 5. The majority of the interviewed officers reported that in their experience, having a secondary education has a positive effect on released offenders' compliance with parole conditions. All of the officers also remarked that having a secondary education reduces the likelihood of recidivism, a belief reflected in Theme 5. A comment by Officer 5 suggests that the connection between secondary education and reduced recidivism is recognized and taken seriously by at least some prison officials:

> "The recidivism rate has been so high among the probation and parole people that did not have a high school education or a GED, that the prison facilities have now mandated that they all have GEDs."

The officers mentioned several factors they viewed as helping explain why having a secondary education leads to better compliance and reduced recidivism. These factors are identified next in the answer to the third research question.

Research Question 3 was the following:

> RQ3: What factors do rural Georgia community supervision officers attribute to any differences between post-incarceration offenders who have versus have not achieved the secondary education level?

A main reason officers gave for believing a secondary education improves compliance is that it increases the offender's ability to understand what the parole conditions are, a view expressed in Theme 4. This increased understanding was also cited as a reason for reduced recidivism by one officer (8), who commented, "Understanding what's going on and you understand the consequences and all your conditions on probation or parole, then maybe you are less likely to be a recidivist."

In addition to having a greater understanding of parole conditions and consequences of their actions, the officers commented on a number of other factors affecting the association of having a secondary education with greater sentence compliance and reduced recidivism. One main factor cited by the officers was that a secondary education improves released offenders' likelihood of getting a better job, a view reflected in Theme 1. Getting a job that pays a living wage helps the offender comply with parole conditions in several ways. For one thing, he or she is better able to

fulfill any parole condition that requires finding employment. The offender is also better able to pay any fines or back child support, find suitable housing, and provide any necessary family support. For these same reasons, officers noted that getting a job paying a livable wage makes the offender less likely to return to criminal activity, thereby reducing recidivism.

Two circumstances that negatively affect the factor of being better able to get a job with a secondary education were mentioned by officers. One circumstance is the type of offense that was committed. Officer 1 mentioned that it can be difficult for a sex offender to obtain employment, even with a secondary or higher education, while Officer 10 commented that it can be more difficult for a released offender to secure a job if he has committed a serious offense such as armed robbery. The second circumstance that can negatively affect a released offender's likelihood of finding a job even with a secondary education, also mentioned by Officer 10, is substance addiction.

Other mentioned factors related to how having a secondary education is associated with a released offender's success are those identified in Theme 6 in the previous section. These factors include the following:

- The offender's lifestyle and cultural environment, and how he was brought up.
- The psychological makeup of the offender that determines how far he is willing to push himself or herself. One officer's comment suggested that a degree of inner fortitude can help an offender to both achieve a secondary education and be successful on probation.
- Factors that determine whether the offender takes advantage of the opportunity to get a secondary education. Such factors mentioned by the officers include the

offender's parents taking him out of school as a minor to work before high school graduation, as well as the offender's interest in and motivation to get a secondary education, his cognitive ability, and his family support.

The fourth research question was the following:

RQ4: What are the views of rural Georgia community supervision officers regarding the provision to offenders of secondary education classes during or after incarceration?

All 10 of the interviewed community supervision officers agreed with furnishing a secondary education to offenders while they are incarcerated or after. The benefits of such an education for helping offenders understand their sentencing conditions and obtaining a job, and thereby increasing compliance and reducing recidivism, were specifically mentioned by a number of the officers.

Finally, it is of interest to examine the responses of the interviewed officers when they were asked at the end of the interview whether they had any further comments to add. Eight of the 10 officers did make further comments, all of which agreed with their prior responses. In addition, one of the officers commented about the value of postsecondary education, and another mentioned the value of technical education programs that help inmates develop a skilled trade to be applied in the community after the offender's release. These are technical education programs funded by Georgia Correctional Industries. The officer also mentioned that not all inmates who apply are able to enter such a program. The responses to the question asking officers if they had any comments to add are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Supervision Officers' Additional Comments

Officer	Comment (years of service)
1.	Interpreters should understand it is different supervising sex offenders rather than the general population. When sex offenders get out, they have a couple of strikes against them right away due to restrictions on where they can work. Education does not really help a sex offender that much with compliance. (30 years)
2.	Regarding post-secondary education, as offenders get older, those with education beyond high school tend to look at things differently, realizing they should start focusing on career or family. Education is important. (35 years)
3.	The more education, the more likely offenders will succeed. The main cause for re-offending is lack of money, or their families don't have food. With no education to fall back on, they commit new crimes, in a repeated cycle. If we could get them in school or technical colleges and give them a skill, they could rely on that and not their criminal knowledge. (18 years)
4.	If a person is educated, they are much more likely to succeed than if they are not. This is clear from statistics. (24 years)
5.	Self-made people without an education are few. There is a strong correlation between success and being educated. (28 years)
6.	Not having a GED or a high school diploma really narrows the job field. Before long, a secondary education will be necessary for practically every job. (18 years)
7.	Education is not a magic bullet solution to recidivism, but it is definitely an important piece. (23 years)
8.	No additional comment (3 years)
9.	No additional comment (20 years)
10.	The state-funded technical education programs offered by Georgia Correctional Industries are really good for incarcerated offenders who learn skilled trades very valuable in the community. Unfortunately, demand is so high and the programs so limited that not everyone gets the opportunity to go through a program. (11 years)

Summary

This chapter began by providing a demographic profile of the 10 interviewed community corrections officers. Results of the qualitative analysis of the officers' responses to interview questions were then reported, revealing 10 themes reflected in the officers' remarks. Comments made by the officers in support of these themes were furnished.

Overall, the officers mentioned several positive ways having a secondary education affects the released offenders they deal with. These positive results include improving the offender's job prospects after release, improving compliance with parole conditions, and reducing recidivism. The officers' responses are further discussed in the following chapter, where implications of the findings are identified and recommendations for further research are made.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into three sections following this introduction. The first section consists of a summary of the study. In the second section, conclusions are drawn from the results of the study. The third section provides several recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Summary of the Study

The problem addressed by this study was the high rate of prison recidivism in the United States. In this study I sought to provide a better understanding of whether offenders' having completed a secondary education in the form of a high school degree or a GED certificate before or during incarceration reduces the likelihood of their returning to prison. Ten rural community supervision officers from the Georgia Department of Corrections were interviewed to determine their experiences and observations in regard to parolees who have a high school diploma or GED versus those who do not. Audio-recordings of the interviews were transcribed and then qualitatively analyzed to determine patterns and themes within the interviewees' responses to questions. The study has the potential to provide information that could reduce the high recidivism rates adding to the U.S. prison population and thereby provide economic benefits and reduce societal harm.

The study's literature review included information about the recidivism rate, the financial cost of recidivism, and prior studies on the effect of secondary education

on released offenders' likelihood of recidivating. It was reported that the recidivism rate in the U.S. was high, exceeding 50% during the three years following offenders' release from incarceration (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014), with each individual who returns to incarceration costing the state or federal government an estimated $33,000 annually (USDOJ, 2013). One key strategy for reducing this high rate of recidivism is investments in correctional education programs to provide knowledge and skills to help incarcerated offenders gain employment after their release (James, 2015). The most frequent type of education program for incarcerated individuals is high school and GED programs (Stephan, 2008). Studies of the effect of such programs on recidivism have produced mixed results. Results of studies by the New York State Department of Correctional Services (1989, 2001, 2010), Gordon and Weldon (2003), Davis et al. (2013), and Armstrong et al. (2012) suggested that secondary education programs for incarcerated offenders do reduce recidivism. On the other hand, findings of studies by Tyler and Kling (2006) and Zgoba et al. (2008) suggested that completing a secondary education program while incarcerated has no or little effect on recidivism rates among released offenders. These mixed findings suggested the need for further research on whether and how providing secondary education to incarcerated individuals may affect the likelihood of released offenders returning to prison.

This qualitative study consisted of a convenience sample consisting of 10 community supervision officers who worked for the Georgia State Department of Community Supervision. After being given a consent statement to read assuring them

of the anonymity and voluntary nature of the study, participants were asked six open-ended questions with follow-up questions as appropriate. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Transcribed interviews were analyzed using applied thematic analysis to determine themes reflected in the participants' interview responses (Guest et al., 2012). The Atlas.ti software analysis program was used to facilitate the qualitative analysis.

The qualitative analysis revealed 10 themes reflected in the community supervision officers' responses to the interview questions. These were:

1. Secondary education helps released offenders in getting a better job.
2. Job prospects for released offenders without a secondary education are limited.
3. Secondary education helps in compliance with sentence and parole conditions.
4. Released offenders with a secondary education are better able to understand the conditions of their sentencing and parole.
5. Having at least a secondary education reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders.
6. Factors other than having a secondary education can help determine released offenders' success.
7. Having a secondary education provides additional benefits to released offenders and others.
8. Providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration is beneficial.
9. Substance abuse is a major risk factor for offenders.
10. Many incarcerated offenders do not have a secondary education.

Conclusions

This study included several notable findings based on themes identified in the community supervision officers' interviews. These findings pertained to how having a secondary education affects released offenders' (a) job opportunities, (b) likelihood of recidivism, and (c) compliance with sentencing and parole conditions. A fourth notable finding consisted of the interviewed officers' agreement that secondary education should be provided to offenders during or after their incarceration.

The first notable finding was that the officers almost unanimously (nine out of 10) remarked that having a secondary education helped released offenders by providing them greater opportunities for obtaining a job in comparison to offenders with no high school degree or GED certificate. In addition, five of the 10 officers remarked that there are only limited job prospects for released offenders without a secondary education, and five commented that employers today are requiring at least a high school degree or a GED certificate.

These officers' comments reflected their understanding that obtaining steady gainful employment after their release from incarceration may be one of the most pressing challenges facing offenders. One reason finding a job is such an important challenge is that employers are often hesitant to hire someone who has been incarcerated. This hesitancy may increase if the released offender was convicted of theft or a violent crime, as one officer remarked. Another reason finding a steady job can be a major challenge for released offenders is that available employment in rural sections of Georgia is very limited, with jobs often being only seasonal, as pointed out by at least one of the interviewed officers. A third reason finding steady, gainful employment is a serious

challenge for offenders is that their ability to deal successfully with other financial challenges they encounter after being released depends on their being able to secure gainful employment, as indicated by several of the officers. These other challenges may include obtaining livable housing, paying any fines or fees they owe the criminal justice system, paying for personal expenses and for family expenses if the released offender has a family to support, and paying possible child support fees if the offender is separated or divorced and has children. In order to deal with these financial challenges successfully, the offender needs to find a steady job soon after his release from incarceration.

Several of the community supervision officers remarked that the kind of employment open to released offenders increases if the offender has a secondary education. These remarks included pointing out that without a secondary education, released offenders are restricted to finding relatively menial jobs that pay only minimum wages. Being able to work only at such jobs makes it difficult for released offenders to pay for adequate housing, family expenses if they have a family, or any required child support.

The perception of most of the interviewed officers believed that having a secondary education helps released offenders secure a job is in agreement with the findings of Duwe and Clark (2014). These researchers found that among offenders released from incarceration in 2007 and 2008, those who had earned a secondary certificate while incarcerated were significantly more likely to find employment after being released. James (2015) noted that a lack of education reduces a released offender's likelihood of finding employment after release.

One exception to the finding that having a secondary education helps released offenders find a living-wage job was mentioned by one of the interviewed officers. This exception occurs if the offender has been convicted of a sex crime. In such cases, even if the offender has a secondary education, employment prospects continue to be seriously limited due to employers having a policy of not hiring convicted sex offenders, which may be due to liability issues. Employment is also restricted due to the offender not being able to work in certain locations, such as within proximity to a K-12 school. However, the officer who made these remarks also admitted that in a small percentage of cases, having a secondary education can increase a sex offender's ability to locate a steady job after his release from incarceration.

The second notable finding of the study is that all 10 of the officers believed that having a secondary education reduced the likelihood of recidivism for released offenders. This finding is directly related to the problem this study addressed—the high rates of recidivism that plague correctional systems in the United States. With prior research resulting in mixed findings about the effect of secondary education on recidivism, the study sought the insights of community supervision officers who were uniquely placed to observe how having a secondary education may affect the probability of released offenders being returned to prison. The consensus among the interviewed officers was that having a secondary education does reduce the likelihood of recidivism, and this consensus provides further evidence that secondary education predicts reduced recidivism rates.

The officers agreed that a major reason secondary education reduces recidivism is the improved employment prospects it provides to released offenders. The increased

opportunity for adequate employment creates a smoother transition from incarceration to outside society and helps the offender to achieve stability, which reduces the likelihood of committing another crime. On the other hand, lack of education may result in the offender being unable to earn enough money to pay for housing or for personal or family expenses. As a result, he may be tempted to obtain what's needed through theft or other illegal means. If he does that, he puts himself at risk for being apprehended and returned to the criminal justice system. In addition, several of the officers commented that having a job helps the offender stay busy and out of trouble, which helps reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

The finding that the interviewed officers believed secondary education reduces recidivism is in agreement with two studies conducted by the New York State Department of Corrections (1989, 2001). Findings from these studies indicated that among offenders who entered the prison system without a secondary education, those who completed the GED program while incarcerated were significantly less likely to recidivate. The present study's results are also in agreement with the findings of Armstrong et al. (2012), who investigated the effect on released offenders of an adult basic education program, which included GED preparation. The researchers reported the greater the number of hours an offender spent in an education program, the less likely the offender would recidivate after release. In addition, these findings are in agreement with the Re-entry Policy Council (2004), an organization partly funded by the U.S. Departments of Justice, Labor, and Health and Human Services. The Council reported that obtaining and maintaining employment reduces recidivism.

An exception to the view that having a secondary education reduces recidivism was provided by the officer who mostly worked with sex offenders. The officer commented that even with a secondary education, there was a strong likelihood, estimated at 75%, that a sex offender would recidivate. The officer's remarks suggested that he believed this was the case because of continuing psychological deviance for many of sex offenders. While the officer believed the recidivism-reducing effect of a secondary education was less for sex offenders than for other offenders, he also believed that for other types of offenders, having a secondary education decreased the likelihood of recidivism.

A third notable finding from this study was that having a secondary education helps improve released offenders' compliance with the sentencing and parole conditions set by the criminal justice system. This view was expressed by nine of the 10 community supervision officers. The officers cited several reasons for this improvement. One reason was that having a secondary education improved communication between the officer and released offenders by helping offenders understand the conditions of their release. In addition, one officer commented that released offenders with a secondary education tend to have a more positive attitude toward the conditions of their release. This officer remarked that while released offenders without a secondary education tend to view sentencing conditions in a negative light as conditions that could send them back to prison if they do not abide by them, those with a secondary education tend to view the conditions as opportunities that could allow them to be successful in shortening the time of their parole or probation.

Two of the officers commented on the difficulty they sometimes faced in dealing with released offenders without a secondary education. One officer remarked that offenders unable to read, write, or do simple arithmetic have difficulty understanding what is required of them. Another officer commented that sometimes a family member must come in with a released offender with no secondary education in order for the officer to explain the probation or parole requirements so the family member can ensure that the offender understands the requirements.

In regard to compliance with sentencing conditions, several of the officers noted that such conditions may include obtaining employment, paying fines or fees, or making child support payments. They pointed out that insofar as obtaining a secondary education helps the offender find a job, it also helps the offender fulfill such parole conditions. If the offender cannot fulfill the condition of finding employment, he may be returned to incarceration. Likewise, without a job with a living wage, released offenders may find it difficult to fulfill other conditions that require money. Failure to make satisfactory payments may then lead to the individual being returned to incarceration and thus recidivating.

An exception to the view that secondary education leads to better compliance with sentencing conditions was noted by the supervision officer who mostly dealt with sex offenders. This officer stated that released sex offenders tended to have a difficult time complying with parole conditions even with a secondary education. The officer's comments suggested that this was because the offender's psychological deviance usually continued even after secondary education, and so the offender had difficulty fulfilling sentencing restrictions on access to pornography.

A fourth notable finding of the study was that all 10 of the interviewed community supervision officers believed that providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration was a beneficial undertaking. Most of the officers seemed very positive about the value of providing secondary education for offenders, and they provided various reasons why providing such education was valuable. Most mentioned increased job opportunities as a main benefit of providing secondary education to released offenders. Other benefits mentioned by the officers included increased motivation for success, enabling entry into technical school after release, helping offenders learn from their mistakes and make better decisions, increasing offenders' participation in substance abuse classes if they are needed, showing the offender he can be successful, and creating positive results for the community and the economy.

The finding that the interviewed officers believed, based on their experience, that secondary education programs are beneficial suggests there would be value in continuing and expanding secondary education programs for inmates in the State of Georgia. Currently, all state and private correctional facilities are required to have adult education instructors and to offer general education programs ranging from literacy to adult basic education to GED preparation (Georgia Department of Corrections, 2015). In addition, inmates without a secondary education are encouraged to enroll in a GED program, and having a high school degree or GED certificate is a condition of parole in many instances (Southern Center for Human Rights, 2015). However, funds for correctional institution education are seriously limited in Georgia. As a result, GED classes in Georgia prisons are not adequate for the need and there are always waiting lists to get in to a GED

program. Also, prison GED programs in Georgia are targeted to students who are most likely to graduate with the least amount of work. This targeting may help keep costs down, but it may also result in those most in need of secondary education finding it harder to obtain while incarcerated.

The need for secondary education programs in Georgia prisons is made evident by a recent report by the Georgia Department of Corrections (2018) on the educational achievement of inmates entering the Georgia prison system in 2017. The report described several measures of new inmates' educational preparation and proficiency. Measures included highest educational achievement and standardized test scores for reading, math, and spelling.

Table 4 presents the educational achievement figures, which show that 5,572 of 11,266 entering males (49.5%) and 569 of 1,336 entering females (42.6%) had an educational achievement below the twelfth grade and had not earned a GED. The mean grade achievement for males was 11.07, while the mean grade achievement for females was 11.37. The figures indicate that nearly one-half of newly incarcerated males and over two-fifths of newly incarcerated females did not complete their high school education. These individuals are in need of earning a high school diploma or GED certificate to demonstrate to potential employers upon their release that they have accomplished their secondary education, a requirement in Georgia for an increasing number of jobs according to several study participants.

Further evidence of the need for education is presented in Table 5, which shows the estimated reading education level of a large portion of 2017 entering prisoners based on reading scores on the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT). Of 13,467 males

Table 4

*Educational Achievement of Inmates Entering Georgia Prisons in 2017**

Highest grade completed	Males		Females	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Grade 1	3	0.03	0	0
Grade 2	1	0.01	3	0.22
Grade 3	8	0.07	1	0.07
Grade 4	16	0.14	0	0
Grade 5	13	0.12	0	0
Grade 6	58	0.51	9	0.67
Grade 7	151	1.34	17	1.27
Grade 8	562	4.99	68	5.09
Grade 9	1,235	10.96	119	8.91
Grade 10	1,640	14.56	169	12.65
Grade 11	1,885	16.73	183	13.70
Grade 12 or GED	4,621	41.02	521	39.00
Some tech school	79	0.70	28	2.10
Completed tech school	36	0.32	15	1.12
College, 1 year	357	3.17	69	5.16
College, 2 year	367	3.26	86	6.44
College, 3 year	105	0.93	23	1.72
Bachelor's degree	112	0.99	19	1.42
Master's degree	10	0.09	4	0.30
Ph.D. degree	4	0.04	0	0
Law degree	3	0.03	2	0.15

*11,266 of 15,259 (73.8%) males and 1,336 of 1,977 (67.6%) females reporting.

Source: Georgia Department of Corrections. (2018). *Inmate statistical profile: Inmates admitted during CY2017.* Retrieved from the Georgia Department of Corrections website, http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/themes/gdc/pdf/Profile_inmate_admissions_CY2017.pdf

Table 5

*Estimated Reading Grade of Inmates Entering Georgia Prisons in 2017**

Estimated grade level	Males		Females	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0.1 to 0.9	144	1.07	1	0.06
1.0 to 1.9	188	1.40	4	0.23
2.0 to 2.9	385	2.86	10	0.57
3.0 to 3.9	948	7.04	32	1.82
4.0 to 4.9	1,239	9.20	50	2.85
5.0 to 5.9	1,068	7.93	52	2.96
6.0 to 6.9	1,348	10.01	81	4.62
7.0 to 7.9	532	3.95	33	1.88
8.0 to 8.9	1,011	7.51	63	3.59
9.0 to 9.9	459	3.41	40	2.28
10.0 to 10.9	1,017	7.55	86	4.90
11.0 to 11.9	1,561	11.59	202	11.51
12.0 to 12.9	3,561	26.44	1,101	62.74
13	6	0.04	0	0

* Estimated grade level based on Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) reading score, with 13,467 of 15,259 (88.3%) males' and 1,755 of 1,977 (88.8%) females' WRAT scores reported.

Source: Georgia Department of Corrections. (2018). *Inmate statistical profile: Inmates admitted during CY2017.* Retrieved from the Georgia Department of Corrections website, http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/themes/gdc/pdf/Profile_inmate_admissions_CY2017.pdf

taking the test, 6,863 (51.0%) had below an estimated ninth grade reading level; while of 1,755 females, 326 (18.6%) had below a ninth grade reading level. Many of today's jobs require competent verbal and reading skills, and providing secondary education opportunities to inmates is likely to increase their reading proficiency and make them more employable. Additional WRAT testing showed that for math, 8,240 of 13,465 new male inmates tested (61.2%) had scores indicating math ability at below the eighth grade level, while 1,097 of 1,756 females tested (62.5%) had scores indicating below eighth grade math ability. Again, many of today's jobs require proficiency in basic mathematics at least at the eighth grade level. Provision of secondary education classes for incarcerated inmates lacking a secondary education is likely to help raise their math skills and increase the likelihood of their obtaining gainful employment after release.

Given the limitation on the monies available for education in correctional facilities, expansion of secondary education programs in Georgia prisons may be thought to be cost prohibitive. However, the cost of such programs can be weighed against the value they provide in reduced recidivism. An examination of 17 evidence-based studies by Aos et al. (2006) found an average 7% reduction in crime for general education prison programs. The researchers calculated the cost of such programs to be an average of $962 per participant, while the savings to taxpayers and potential crime victims, due to reduced crime and recidivism, was $10,669 per participant. This more than 10-fold difference between program cost and program financial benefits suggests that allocating increased revenue for the expansion of secondary education programs to offenders during or after their incarceration would be a financially prudent undertaking for the State of Georgia.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the interviewed community supervision officers overwhelmingly agreed that having a secondary education leads to beneficial results in regard to recidivism, job opportunities, and compliance. This is not to say that they believed secondary education guaranteed success, and they mentioned other factors relevant to how well offenders do after release. These factors included the offender's lifestyle, how far he is willing to push himself, how he or she was brought up, and family support. Several officers also mentioned factors that lessen the likelihood of success, including having a drug abuse problem, being convicted of a serious crime such as armed robbery, and being cognitively unable to complete GED requirements. However, all 10 officers identified benefits resulting from offenders having a secondary education, and all 10 were in favor of providing such an education to offenders before or after their release due to its positive effects on job opportunities, recidivism, and compliance.

Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made on the basis of the study results. These include recommendations for further research and recommendations for practice and policy.

One recommendation for further research is to conduct a quantitative study of the three-year or five-year recidivism rates for released offenders in the State of Georgia who have a secondary education, compared to those who do not have a secondary education. Such a study could provide a quantitative understanding of how valuable having a secondary education is for reducing recidivism among offenders in Georgia.

A second recommendation for further research is to conduct a quantitative study to determine what jobs released offenders find depending on whether they do or do not have a secondary education. Such a study could also measure how long it takes offenders in each group to find a job, how much the offenders are paid, and whether the jobs include the chance of the offender being promoted. Similar to the first recommendation, this study could provide valuable quantitative information about to what degree having a secondary education may increase the opportunity for released offenders to obtain a steady job that pays a living wage.

A third recommendation for further research is to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of providing a secondary education to offenders based on the findings of the first study recommended above. Such a cost-benefit analysis could be done in five steps.

- First, quantitatively determine whether and how much having a secondary education reduces the three-year or five-year recidivism rate.
- Second, determine the annual cost of incarcerating an individual.
- Third, determine the annual savings Georgia would experience if the recidivism rate was reduced by as much as shown by Step 1.
- Fourth, determine the cost of providing an offender an education that results in his earning a GED.
- Fifth, determine the difference between the annual savings that would accrue from recidivism reduction and the total cost of ensuring a GED education to all offenders before or after incarceration.

The fifth calculation could indicate whether, and to what degree, providing expanded secondary education opportunities for offenders during or after incarceration is financially worthwhile.

A fourth recommendation for further research is to investigate the recidivism-reducing effects of completing other educational programs, including post-secondary education classes. It may be that completing post-secondary courses, especially those focused on preparing offenders for some type of technical career after release, provides a strong motivation for released offenders to "make it" in the outside world and has a powerful effect on reducing recidivism. Learning to what degree post-secondary classes reduce recidivism might show that the positive effects of providing education to offenders extend beyond secondary education to higher education or technical education.

One recommendation for policy and practice is for Georgia to invest increased resources in secondary education opportunities for incarcerated offenders. The interviewed community corrections officers in this study overwhelmingly believed that secondary education has positive effects, including reducing recidivism, and they unanimously favored providing secondary education opportunities for offenders. However, funds available for such education are limited and as a result, offenders often must wait to be allowed to pursue a GED. By providing increased funds for instructors and classes, the positive effects of having a secondary education can be expected to increase.

A second recommendation for policy and practice is for the Georgia correctional system to institute incentives for offenders to complete education programs in prison or

after release. Such incentives might include early termination of parole or restoration of some rights.

Summary

This study interviewed a group of informants—community supervision officers—whose position placed them in an exceptional position to observe how having a secondary education affects the probability of released offenders being returned to prison. The officers were also well positioned to report other possible effects having a secondary education may have on released offenders. The 10 informants were unanimous in their belief that having a secondary education reduced the likelihood of recidivism and unanimously agreed that providing secondary education to offenders during or after their incarceration was beneficial. The majority of the officers also expressed belief that having a secondary education improves offenders' chances of obtaining a good job after their release and their compliance with sentencing and parole conditions.

These results support those of other studies that have found that having a secondary education in the form of a high school diploma or a GED certificate reduces the likelihood of recidivism among released offenders. The findings also suggest that it would be of value for the Georgia correctional system to expand secondary education opportunities for incarcerated offenders.

References

Allred, S. L., Harrison. L. D., & O'Connell, D. J. (2013). Self-efficacy: An important aspect of prison-based learning. *The Prison Journal, 93*(2), 211–233. doi: 10.1177/0032885512472964

Amon, M. J. (2017). Looking through the glass ceiling: A qualitative study of STEM women's career narratives. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8,* 236. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00236. Retrieved from the Frontiers in Psychology website: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00236/full

Anglin, M. D., Prendergast, M., Farabee, D., & Cartier, J. (2002). *Final report on the Substance Abuse Program at the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF-SAP) and state prison at Corcoran.* Sacramento, CA: California Department of Corrections, Office Substance Abuse Programs,

Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006). *Evidence-based public policy options to reduce future prison construction, criminal justice costs, and crime rates* (Report No. 06-10-1201). Retrieved from Washington State Institute for Public Policy website: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/952/Wsipp_Evidence-Based-Public-Policy-Options-to-Reduce-Future-Prison-Construction-Criminal-Justice-Costs-and-Crime-Rates_Full-Report.pdf

Aos, S., Phipps, P., & Barnoski, R. (2005). *Washington's Drug Offender Sentencing Alternative: An evaluation of benefits and costs* (Report No. 05-01-1901). Retrieved from Washington State Institute for Public Policy website: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/895/Wsipp_Washingtons-Drug-Offender-Sentencing-Alternative-An-Evaluation-of-Benefits-and-Costs_Full-Report.pdf

Armstrong, G., Giever, D., & Lee, D. (2012). *Evaluation of the Windham School District correctional education programs.* Huntsville, TX: Sam Houston State University. Retrieved from Windham School District website: http://www.wsdtx.org/images/PDF/other/WSD_Rider6_Response.pdf

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Berk, J. (2007). *Does work release work?* Unpublished manuscript, Brown University, Providence, RI.

Bohmert, M. N., & Duwe, G. (2011). Minnesota's Affordable Homes Program: Evaluating the effect of a prison work program on recidivism, employment, and cost avoidance. *Criminal Justice Policy Review, 23*(3), 327-351. doi: 10.1177/0887403411411911

Borden, C., Richardson, P., & Meyer, S. J. (2012). Establishing successful postsecondary academic programs: A practical guide. *The Journal of Correctional Education, 63,* 6-26.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology 3*(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2008). Number of inmates, employees, and inmate-to-staff ratios in correctional facilities under state or federal authority, June 30, 2000, and December 30, 2005 [Table]. Retrieved from Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities 2005 website: http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1684

Burke, C., & Keaton, S. (2004). *San Diego County's Connections Program Board of Corrections final report.* Retrieved from San Diego Health Archive website: http://sandiegohealth.org/ sandag/sandag_pubs_2009-7-25/publicationid_1099_3391.pdf

Carson, E. A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014* (NCJ248955). Retrieved from Bureau of Justice Statistics website: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p14.pdf

Carson, E. A., & Golinelli, D. (2013). *Prisoners in 2012: Trends in Admissions and Releases 1991-2012 (Revised)* (NCJ243920). Retrieved from Bureau of Justice Statistics website: https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4842

Carter, M. M., Gibel, S., Giguere, R., & Stroker, R. (Eds.). (2007). *Increasing public safety through successful offender reentry: Evidence-based and emerging practices in corrections.* Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjresearch/forecastresearchworkgroup/resources/svori_cepp.pdf

Council of State Governments Justice Center. (2015, November). *Reducing recidivism and improving other outcomes for young adults in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.* Retrieved from https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Transitional-Age-Brief.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-130.

Daley, M., Love, C. T., Shepard, D. S., Petersen, C. B., White, K. L., & Hall, G. F. (2004). Cost-effectiveness of Connecticut's in-prison substance abuse treatment. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation 39*(3), 69-92.

Daniel, A. E. (2007). Care of the mentally ill in prisons: Challenges and solutions. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 35*(4), 406-410.

Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., & Miles. J. N. V. (2013). *Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education: A meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults.* Retrieved from Rand Corporation website: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html

Durose, M. R., Cooper, A. D., & Snyder, H. N. (2014). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010* (NCJ244205). Retrieved from Bureau of Justice Statistics website: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf

Duwe, G. (2010). Prison-based chemical dependency treatment in Minnesota: An outcome evaluation. *Journal of Experimental Criminology 6*(1), 57-81. doi:10.1007/s11292-010-9090-8

Duwe, G., & Clark, V. (2014). The effects of prison-based educational programming on recidivism and employment. *The Prison Journal, 94*(4), 454-478. doi: 10.1177/0032885514548009

Duwe, G., & Clark, V. (2015). *Moving On: An outcome evaluation of a gender-responsive, cognitive-behavioral program for female offenders.* St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Corrections.

Eisenburg, M. (1991). *Five-year outcome study: Factors associated with recidivism.* Austin, TX: Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Epperson, M. W., Wolff, N., Morgan, R. D., Fisher, W. H., Frueh, B. C., & Huening, J. (2014). Envisioning the next generation of behavioral health and criminal justice interventions. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 37,* 427-438. doi:10.1016/j.ijlp.2014.02.015

Erisman, W., & Contardo, J. B. (2005). *Learning to reduce recidivism: A 50 state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy.* Retrieved from The Institute for Higher Education Policy website: http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/learningreducerecidivism.pdf

Farabee, D., Bennett, D., Garcia, D., Warda, U., & Yang, J. (2006). *Final report on the Mental Health Services Continuum Program of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation–Parole Division*. Retrieved from California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation website: https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/MHSCP%20Final%20Report%20(3).pdf

Fontaine, J., Gilchrist-Scott, D., Roman, J., Taxy, S., & Roman, C. (2012). *Returning prisoners: Outcomes and impacts of the returning home—Ohio Pilot Project.* Retrieved from Urban Institute Justice Policy Center website: http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412632-Supportive-Housing-for-Returning-Prisoners-Outcomes-and-Impacts-of-the-Returning-Home-Ohio-Pilot-Project.PDF

Gaes, G. G. (2008). *The impact of prison education programs on post-release outcomes.* Unpublished manuscript, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.

GED Testing Service. (n.d.). Programs and services: FAQs. Retrieved from http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/2014-faqs#about

Gehring, K. S., Van Voorhis, P., & Bell, V. R. (2010). *"What works" for female probationers? An evaluation of the Moving On program.* Retrieved from University of Cincinnati website: https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/womenoffenders/docs/MOVING%20ON.pdf

Georgia Department of Corrections. (2015). *Education and programs.* Retrieved from http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/files/pdf/Research/Fact_Sheets/Info_Sheets_Education_Programs.pdf

Georgia Department of Corrections. (2018). *Inmate statistical profile: Inmates admitted during CY2017.* Retrieved from http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/themes/gdc/pdf/Profile_inmate_admissions_CY2017.pdf

Gordon, H. R. D., & Weldon, B. (2003). Impact of career and technical education programs on adult offenders: Learning behind bars. *Journal of Correctional Education, 54*(4), 200-209.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis.* New York, NY: Sage.

Hammond, C., & Feinstein, L. (2005). The effects of adult learning on self-efficacy. *London Review of Education*, *3*(3), 265-287.

Hughes, T., & Wilson, D. J. (2004). *Reentry trends in the United States.* Retrieved from Bureau of Justice Statistics website: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/reentry.pdf

James, N. (2015). *Offender reentry: Correctional statistics, reintegration into the community, and recidivism.* Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from National Institute of Corrections website: https://nicic.gov/offender-reentry-correctional-statistics-reintegration-community-and-recidivism

Klein, S., Tolbert, M., Bugarin, R., Forrest- Cataldi, E., & Tauschek, G. (2004). *Correctional education: Assessing the status of prison programs and information needs* (EDS43577). Retrieved from ERIC website: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED543577.pdf

Latessa, E.J., Lowenkamp, C. T., & Bechtel, K. (2009). *Community corrections centers, parolees, and recidivism: An investigation into the characteristics of effective reentry programs in Pennsylvania: Final report.* Retrieved from University of Cincinnati website: https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ccjr/docs/reports/project_reports/PA_Reentry_executivesummary.pdf

Lowenkamp, C. J., & Latessa, E. J. (2004). *Evaluation of Ohio's community based correctional facilities and halfway house programs: Final report.* Retrieved from The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County website: http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/AdultProbation/docs/Ohio_CBF_study.pdf

Lutze, F. F., Drapela, L. A., & Schaefer, R. L. (2015). *Washington State Correctional Industries: An outcome evaluation of its effect on institutional behavior, employment, and recidivism.* Retrieved from Washington Correctional Industries website: http://www.washingtonci.com/skin/frontend/WACI/primary/docs/content/about-ci/wsu-research-report.pdf

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nally, J. M., Lockwood, S., Ho, T., & Knutson, K. (2012). The post-release employment and recidivism among different types of offenders with a different level of education: A 5-year follow-up study in Indiana. *Justice Policy Journal, 9*(1), 1-29.

National Institute of Justice. (2015). *Offender reentry.* Retrieved from http://www.nij.gov/topics/corrections/reentry/pages/welcome.aspx

New York State Department of Correctional Services. (1989). *Follow-up study of a sample of offenders who earned high school equivalency diplomas while incarcerated* (ED326737). Retrieved from ERIC website: https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Follow-up+study+of+a+sample+of+offenders+who+earned+high+school+equivalency+diplomas+while+incarcerated&id=ED326737

New York State Department of Correctional Services. (2001). *Follow-up study of a sample of offenders who earned high school equivalency diplomas (GEDs) while incarcerated in DOCS.* Retrieved from Prison Policy website: http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/ny_ged.shtml

New York State Department of Correctional Services. (2010). *Follow-up study of offenders who earned high school equivalency diplomas (GEDs) while incarcerated in DOCS.* Retrieved from New York Department of Correctional Services website: http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Research/Reports/2010/GED_evaluation.pdf

Office of Research and Evaluation, Federal Bureau of Prisons (1991). *Post release employment project: Summary of preliminary findings* (NCJRS135685). Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service website: https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/135685NCJRS.pdf

Passarell, D. A. (2013). *The effect earning a GED while incarcerated has on recidivism rates: A research synthesis* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from the Digital Commons website: https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1184&context=ehd_theses

Raelin, J., Reisberg, R., Whitman, D., & Hamann, J. (2007, October 10-13). *Cooperative education as a means to enhance self-efficacy among sophomores (with particular attention to women) in undergraduate engineering.* Paper presented at the 37th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference, Milwaukee, WI. doi: 10.1109/FIE.2007.4418055

Re-entry Policy Council Steering Committee. (2004). *Report of Re-entry Policy Council.* Retrieved from https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Report-of-the-Reentry-Council.pdf

Rhodes, W., Pelissier, B., Gaes, G., Saylor, W., Camp, S., & Wallace, S. (2001). Alternative solutions to the problem of selection bias in an analysis of federal residential drug treatment programs. *Evaluation Review*, *25*(3), 331-369.

Richmond, K. M. (2009). *Factories with fences: The effect of prison industries on female inmates* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Research Gate website: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277147811_Factories_with_Fences_The_Effect_of_Prison_Industries_on_Female_Inmates

Runciman, W. B. (2002). Qualitative versus quantitative research—balancing cost, yield and feasibility. *Quality and Safety in Health Care, 11*(2), 146-147. doi: 10.1136/qhc.11.2.146

Saylor, W. G., & Gaes, G. G. (1992). The post-release employment project: Prison work has measurable effects on post-release success. *Federal Prisons Journal, 2*(4), 33-36.

Saylor, W. G., & Gaes, G. G. (1997). Training inmates through industrial work participation and vocational apprenticeship instruction. *Corrections Management Quarterly, 1*(2), 32-43.

Saylor, W. G., & Gaes, G. G. (1998). *A summary of findings from the post release employment project (PREP): The effects of prison work experience, vocational and apprenticeship training on long term recidivism of federal prisoners.* Retrieved from National Correctional Industries Association website: http://www.nationalcia.org/wp-content/uploads/Summary-of-Findings-from-the-Post-Release-Employment-Project-PREP.pdf

Seiter, R. P., & Kadela, K. R. (2003). Prisoner reentry: What works, what does not, and what is promising. *Crime & Delinquency, 49*(3), 360-388. doi: 10.1177/0011128703049003002

Shermer, A., & Day, M. R. (2013). *The relationship between prison-based educational programs and recidivism.* Retrieved from University of Wisconsin website: https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/61504/17Angela%20Shermer%20final%20draft.pdf?sequence=16

Southern Center for Human Rights. (2015). *Parole handbook* (4th ed.). Retrieved from https://www.schr.org/files/post/Parole%20Handbook%202015.pdf

Staley, E. M. (2001). *Follow-up study of a sample of offenders who earned high school equivalency diplomas (GEDs) while incarcerated in DOCS*. Retrieved from Prison Policy Initiative website: https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/ny_ged.shtml

Stephan, J. (2008). *Census of state and federal correctional facilities, 2005* (NCJ222182). Retrieved from the Bureau of Justice Statistics website: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/csfcf05.pdf

Stevens, D. J., & Ward, C. S. (1997). College education and recidivism: Educating criminals is meritorious. *Journal of Correctional Education, 48*(3), 106-111.

Subramanian, R., Henrichson, C., & Kang-Brown, J. (2015). *In our own backyard: Confronting growth and disparities in American jails*. Retrieved from Vera Institute of Justice website: http://archive.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/incarceration-trends-in-our-own-backyard.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2010). *Collateral costs: Incarceration's effect on economic mobility.* Retrieved from The Pew Charitable Trusts website: http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2010/collateralcosts1pdf.pdf

Travis, J., Cincotta, E., & Solomon, A. L. (2003). *Families left behind: The hidden costs of incarceration and reentry.* Retrieved from The Urban Institute website: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/50461/310882-Families-Left-Behind.PDF

Turner, S., & Petersilia, J. (1996). *Work release: Recidivism and corrections costs in Washington State.* Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service website: https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/163706.pdf?ref=klasshop.com

Tyler, J. H., & Kling, J. R. (2006). Prison-based education and re-entry into the mainstream labor market. In S. Bushway, M. Stoll, & D. Weiman (eds.), *Barriers to Reentry? The Labor Market for Released Prisoners in PostIndustrial America* (pp. 227-256). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2012). *ESD + TVET: Promoting skills for sustainable development.* Retrieved from UNESCO website: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002162/216269e.pdf

U.S. Department of Justice. (2013). *Smart on crime: Reforming the criminal justice system for the 21st century.* Retrieved from U.S. Department of Justice website: http://www.justice.gov/ag/smart-on-crime.pdf.

Vacca, J. S. (2004). Educated prisoners are less likely to return to prison. *Journal of Correctional Education, 55*(4), 297-305.

Warren, R. K. (2007*). Evidence-based practice to reduce recidivism: Implications for state judiciaries*. Retrieved from National Institute of Corrections website: http://static.nicic.gov/Library/023358.pdf

Waul, M., Travis, J., & Solomon, A. L. (2002). *Background paper: The effect of incarceration and reentry on children, families, and communities*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., & Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research 11*(4), 522-537.

Willison, J. B., Roman, C. G., Wolff, A., Correa, V., & Knight, C. R. (2010). *Evaluation of the Ridge House residential program: Final report*. Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service website: https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/230741.

Zgoba, K. M., Haugebrook, S., & Jenkins, K. (2008). The influence of GED obtainment on inmate release outcome. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 35*(3), 375-387. doi: 10.1177/0093854807311853

Zhang, S. X., Roberts, R. E. L., & McCollister, K. E. (2009). Therapeutic community in a California prison: Treatment outcomes after 5 years. *Crime & Delinquency 57*(1), 82-101. doi: 10.1177/0011128708327035

APPENDIX A

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

IRB EXEMPTION REPORT

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants
PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 03486-2017

INVESTIGATOR: Mr. Roger Byrd

SUPERVISING FACULTY: Dr. James L. Pate

PROJECT TITLE: *Secondary Education and Offender Recidivism in Middle Georgia.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2.** You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of this research study all compiled data (transcripts, email & data lists, etc.) are required to be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) for a minimum of 3 years.*
- *As part of the informed consent process, audiotaped interviews must include the Researcher reading aloud the consent statement to participants. Transcripts must document the reading of the consent – as this will be the only documentation that the researcher informed participants.*
- *In order to maintain confidentiality participants should be reminded not to identify themselves or others during the audio taped interviews and/or focus group sessions.*

☒ ***If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth W. Olphie *5/25/2017*

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.

Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised: 06.02.16

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT STATEMENT

CONSENT STATEMENT

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "Secondary Education and Offender Recidivism in Georgia: An Analysis of Perspectives of Community Supervision Officers," which is being conducted by Roger C. Byrd, a student. The purpose of this study is to interview rural community supervision officers employed by the Georgia Department of Corrections to determine their experiences and observations in regard to parolees who have a high school diploma or GED versus those who do not. The interviews will be audio taped in order to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. The transcripts will be destroyed after three years. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any question that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview will serve as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Roger C. Byrd at rogercbyrd@charter.net. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5405 or irb@valdosta.edu.