

NO ADULT LEFT BEHIND: AN EXAMINATION OF
THE PERCEPTION OF PAROLEES TOWARD
THE GED AND ITS POSSIBLE
IMPACT ON RECIDIVISM

by

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ABSTRACT

NO ADULT LEFT BEHIND: AN EXAMINATION OF
THE PERCEPTION OF OFFENDERS
TOWARD THE GED

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The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of offenders toward a general education degree. The data is compiled using a 27-question survey of offenders currently on parole and reporting to the Fort Worth II District Parole Office in Fort Worth, Texas. The research found that there are statistically significant differences between offenders who are on parole for the first time and those who have been on parole more than once. In general, offenders who have been on parole more than once perceive the concept that acquiring a general education degree while they are incarcerated is more important than those offenders who are on parole for the first time.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the most fundamental goals of society is the enculturation of all of its citizens with shared values. It is through this process that human beings share the things they have learned in ages past that are of the most importance for future generations. It is one of the ways of identifying ourselves as uniquely human. The process of enculturation is completed in a variety of ways, with different learning modalities from the time the very spark of life flares up in the womb of the mother to the point in which we take our last breath (Shimahara, 1970). Every society throughout history is judged on how well this fundamental task is accomplished (Shimahara, 1970). Those societies that have succeeded greatly are highly admired by many of the succeeding generations and those that fail many times are doomed to be more or less forgotten as time passes.

Enculturation within society could be accomplished through education, and access to educational benefits is a major factor in the success or failure of society (Shimahara, 1970). Education is not an unlimited resource that is shared equally with every member of society. Since there are costs involved with educating members of the society that must be borne by the producing members of that society, education is rationed out to those who are favored either by income or other factors.

In 2004, the College Board published a large study entitled Education Pays (Baum, Payea and Steele, 2004, p. 6). This wide ranging study made two very critical findings. The first is that education, without a doubt, allowed an individual to earn more money over their working lifetime, than they would without education (Baum, Payea and Steele, 2004, p.6). The second finding is even more critical. In addition to merely allowing an individual to make more income, there is a whole host of additional benefits to not only the individual but to society as a whole by.

encouraging citizens to gain more education (Baum, Payea and Steele, 2004, p.6). These additional benefits are critical to the ultimate success of our whole society. The study also found that there are persistent gaps to access both in education and to the benefits of education for some members of society (Baum, Payea and Steele, 2004, p. 6). Other benefits related to receiving higher education noted in this study are higher tax payments, there are differences in employee benefits with an increase, there is an increase in voter participation (Baum, Payea, and Steele, 2004). The study's final conclusion is that: "the indicators included here confirm the conclusions...if educational opportunities were equally available to all individuals and groups; society would be both more equitable and more efficient, enjoying more of the benefits available to our society as a whole" (Baum, Payea, and Steele, 2004, p. 6).

Correctional education is "the educational activities undertaken by persons who are under the supervision of the judiciary" (Lauferweiler & McAnelly, 1999, p. 113). Activities are focused on the perceived educational needs and interests of those under supervision of the judiciary and include literacy and basic education, academic studies, vocational education and training. Opportunities to develop personal skills may enable participants to act in a socially acceptable manner and form and/or maintain relationships and vocational skills to gain and keep employment (Lauferweiler & McAnelly, 1999, p. 113). The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine whether or not offenders who are on parole for the first time perceive the importance of obtaining a general education degree differently than offenders who have been on parole more than once. Chapter two will examine the history of general education degree programs in the correctional system and past research.

CHAPTER 2
PAST AND PRESENT RESEARCH

2.1 Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions offenders who have been on parole once and those who have been on parole more than once have toward obtaining a general education degree. There are factors which contribute to criminal behavior and in an effort to implement various models some risk factors identified include biological, psychological, medical and social factors (Katsiyannis, Ryan, Zhang, & Spann, 2008). This study will focus on the impact of academic achievement of offenders prior to leaving prison and a corresponding decrease in recidivism. One of the benefits of this study will focus on how a change in academic programs may affect recidivism as well as employment opportunities.

It is part of the intent to use this study as a starting point with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to possibly implement changes within the correctional system that would mandate completion of a general education degree if the offender does not have a high school diploma or a general education degree prior to incarceration, before they can be considered for parole.

2.2 History

The Walnut Street Jail was an American prison built in 1791 in Philadelphia (Johnson, 2002, 36-38). The objectives of this prison were to ensure public security and reformation of prisoners. A school was added to the prison in 1798 so that inmates could learn the basics of reading, writing and math (Johnson, 2002). The general public opinion was that prisons should be used to not merely punish individuals but to also rehabilitate offenders and return them changed to society. Those who could not be rehabilitated were expelled from society through social isolation. Many of these individuals were moved physically to remote areas such as the

West or to faraway places like Australia. This ability to change social location allowed many ex-offenders to reform their ways and find a place where they could start over, or form a new life (Johnson, 2002).

In the early 1820's, the Auburn, New York system was begun because the views in society had changed and punishment of offenders was the main focus (Johnson, 2002). When this system began, education of offenders was given little attention and rehabilitation was rarely a factor in the actual operation of the correctional system (Johnson, 2002).

In the late nineteenth century, the Superintendent of the New York State Reformatory at Elmira, Zebulon Brockway, became known for his use of education and training in prisons (Johnson, 2002). In the reformatory, Zebulon Brockway had the education of offenders handled by full-time professional teachers (Johnson, 2002).

After World War II in the mid-twentieth century a subtle change in the correctional system took place nationwide. Slowly and sometimes painfully changes began to be made that focused back on rehabilitation and education. By the mid 1960's a number of innovative programs were begun and were beginning to show results, however societal events were moving along that would seriously overshadow these events. Returning veterans as well as a new generation of college students began delving into the drug scene and arrests and incarcerations for drug possession/sales began to skyrocket. These new groups of offenders swamped the system and quickly stressed an already decentralized penal system. This resulting stress on the system effectively changed public opinion in regard to rehabilitation and education of offenders. By the mid 1980's, public opinion was clearly in the area of punishment and moving away from programs that were considered beneficial to offenders. While these feelings were shortsighted, more importantly they were highly counterproductive to the needs as well as to the benefit of society as a whole (Johnson, 2002).

Throughout history, when rehabilitation of offenders was encouraged, the education programs flourished, however, when punishment of offenders was encouraged, the education

programs fell apart (Johnson, 2002). The education of offenders is not only affected by the mood of rehabilitation or punishment but is also affected by the economy. When there are budget cuts to prisons, the education area receives the brunt of the cuts which does not allow for full-time teachers, books or supplies needed to teach these already undereducated adults (Johnson, 2002).

2.3 Literature Review

For well over a hundred years, behavioral researchers have attempted to understand the relationship between crime and academic achievement. In the early part of the 1900's, there was an effort to develop and implement educational programs for adult offenders (Johnson, 2002). This was a time when the philosophy of rehabilitation was gaining acceptance and had strong advocates (Johnson, 2002). Then the change from rehabilitation toward deterrence occurred due to society's observation that the law was too soft on criminals and they should be punished for crimes committed (Johnson, 2002). At the same time, the prison population was expanding and the public wanted the punishment of criminals. Later in the 1900's the change from deterrence and punishment back towards rehabilitation was occurring (Johnson, 2002).

Throughout the years, many theories have been introduced to explain the relationship between academic performance and crime. Some of these theories include differential association theory, school failure theory, social control theory, containment theory and susceptibility theory (Johnson, 2002). The literature is replete with reports of studies that were designed to prove the effectiveness of educational programs for adult offenders. Some of the studies reviewed link education and achievement; while others attempt to show the impact of education on recidivism rates.

Antonio Gramsci's social theory was based on historical materialism from Karl Marx's writings (Mayo, 2008). Gramsci's role of education on a person's life could not be fully understood without understanding that the core of his thoughts came from the term "Hegemony, a social situation in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by or supportive of a single

class” (Mayo, 2008, p. 419). Gramsci believed that “adult education has an important role to play in a ‘war of position’ both at the level of adult education within movements challenging the established state of affairs or at the level of individuals and enclaves operating in and against the state” (Mayo, 2008, p. 422). Gramsci “helped create a prison school at Ustica where he not only taught but learned” (Mayo, 2008, p. 424). Gramsci stood as a model with his efforts at engaging in projects and carving out spaces for adult learning both during his active years in the public domain and during moments of incarceration. It is not only various projects that adult educators need to turn to gain inspiration but to the various theories derived from insights in which he has made a contribution to modern social and educational history (Mayo, 2008).

In 1994, nearly one and a half million individuals were housed in adult correctional facilities in the United States (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1994). The Department of Justice reported that the typical offender is undereducated, unemployed and living in poverty before incarceration (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1994). Additionally, “19% of adult offenders are illiterate, and up to 60% are functionally illiterate. Rates of recidivism in the United States are extraordinarily high, ranging from 41% to 71%” (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1994, p. 3). In 1997, the Correctional Education Association conducted “The Three State Recidivism Study” for the United States Department of Education. Over 3600 persons, released more than three years earlier, were involved in a longitudinal study in Maryland, Minnesota and Ohio (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1994, p. 3). Using education participation as the major variable, the study shows that “simply attending school behind bars reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration by 39%” (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1994, p. 3).

An examination of the history of correctional education in Florida from 1800-1970 is examined by Laufersweiler and McAnelly in 1999 (Laufersweiler & McAnelly, 1999). The prison system in Florida realized a need for the education of young offenders and in “1949, the First Section High School in the State Prison was started in Raiford with an aim to afford every offender a chance to equip himself with a basic training that will be of value to him when

released from prison” (Laufersweiler & McAnelly, 1999, p. 114). The correctional education programs were improving through the years graduating offenders in their programs and in “1960, the Florida Correctional Education Association was organized with a purpose to promote the standards of penal education and provide for a greater exchange of ideas between the various educators and counselors in the state correctional system” (Laufersweiler, et al, 1999, p. 116). By 1970, 3000 offenders enrolled in academic classes, 991 offenders graduated by passing the GED test, 2416 offenders in college courses and five offenders earned an Associate of Arts Degrees (Laufersweiler, et al, 1999).

Continuing the history of correctional education in Florida, Laufersweiler and McAnelly examined the corrections system from 1970 to 1999. The prison system’s educational programs have progressed and improved through the years. By 1995 “2,232 GED diplomas and 2,448 vocational certificates had been awarded and enrollment for the 1995-1996 fiscal year was as follows: 16,647 offenders in academic programs and 6,687 offenders in vocational programs” (Laufersweiler, et al, 2000, p. 176). The Office of Education and Job Training stated their mission to provide educational services to Florida’s offenders to aid offenders in becoming productive and law-abiding citizens (Laufersweiler, et al, 2000).

Similarly, an article by James Keeley titled “the metamorphosis of juvenile correctional education: incidental conception to intentional inclusion” the history of education for juvenile offenders was discussed (Keeley, 2004). Keeley (2004) states that “education for incarcerated juveniles has evolved from a foster care system to punitive and treatment oriented institutions” (Keeley, 2004, p. 290). The study concluded that society and offenders will benefit from education opportunities and an increase in public safety could materialize (Keeley, 2004).

John Linton, the state director of correctional education at the Maryland Department of Education presented an update to the United States Department of Education in June, 2008. In this update he states that the “passage of the ‘Second Chance Act’ by Congress is making rehabilitation a central goal of the federal justice system” (Linton, 2008, p. 65). Linton (2008)

states that the “Incarcerated Individuals Program gives the education staff more flexibility in selecting programs and other items but it will still restrict sex offenders and persons convicted of murder in participating in educational programs” (Linton, 2008, p. 194).

A study performed in 2001 by Haulard, titled “adult education: a must for our incarcerated population, found “recidivism rates were inversely related to educational program participation while in prison, offenders who completed one or more education programs had a recidivism rate of 35.5% compared to 44.1% for those not participating in educational programs” (Haulard, 2001, p. 158).

Most offenders enter prison with less than an 8th grade education and Haulard (2001) found that there were several other obstacles to educating the incarcerated students. These obstacles are: “a) lack of a physical plant; b) lack of basic teaching supplies; c) the hiring of qualified faculty and staff; d) a high turnover of students; e) multi-agency involvement in the education within a facility, and finally f) the scheduling of classes” (Haulard, 2001, p. 158-159).

In a 1998 article, John Linton states that “offender education makes sense” (Linton, 1998, p. 18). At the governor’s state of the state address the consensus is that budget cuts have forced states to cut expenses including prison schools and libraries and other governors reporting eliminating all high school and occupational courses and only providing academics up to the eighth grade level (Linton, 1998). Linton (1998) reported that citizens as well as politicians support some level of education for offenders (Linton, 1998). Linton (1998) answers the question, “why educate offenders” by stating, “offenders are educated in prison so that they will be something other than offenders during subsequent phases of their lives and so that an offender has a higher regard for self, others and institutions” (Linton, 1998, p. 18). Linton (1998) responds again with the answer with a quote from an offender, “I didn’t think that I could learn. Now I know that I can. I’m setting new goals for myself” (Linton, 1998, p. 18).

A 2003 study by Nuttall, Hollmen and Staley titled “the effect of earning a general education degree on recidivism rates”, compared recidivism rates between offenders who

earned their general education degree, while incarcerated in the New York State Department of Corrections with offenders who were released with no degrees. In addition, the authors took into consideration those offenders who were under 21 at the time of their release as opposed to those that were over 21 years of age on release. The study found that in all categories offenders who earned a GED while incarcerated were far less likely to return within three years. They further state “for those under 21 the return rate was 40% as opposed to 54%, those over 21 the rates were 30% to 35% and for all offenders the rates were 32% versus 37%” (Nuttall, Hollmen & Staley, 2003, p. 93).

In a 2005 article, “overcoming barriers to employment” Roger Hayes states there are “all kinds of barriers some real but most imagined which stop a person from going forward” (Hayes, 2005, p. 68). This article is based on the theory of Abraham Maslow’s theory of the “Hierarchy of Needs” if the basic needs of an individual are not met they are unable to move forward to the next level (Hayes, 2005). In this article he examines barriers that offenders in jail and prison contend with. Hayes (2005) states that “education is a stepping stone to a successful transition into the job market and without the basic skills of education an offender is unable to move forward and learn common technology such as how to use a computer” (Hayes, 2005, p. 69).

In 2003, Gordon and Weldon studied the “impact of career and technical education programs on adult offenders: learning behind bars”. At the completion of the study the authors found, “offenders who completed vocational classes had a recidivism rate of only 8.75% while those who completed both vocational and educational programs had a recidivism rate of only 6.71%, and those offenders who completed neither had a recidivism rate of 26%” (Gordon & Weldon, 2003, p. 205). While there is no generally accepted agreement about the goals of offender education, the authors also identified five more goals of correctional education: “a) to provide offenders with basic academic and vocational skills; b) to provide offenders with an opportunity to change their personal behavior, attitudes and values: c) to reduce the recidivism

rates; d) to provide passive control of offender behavior; and e) to support the operational needs of correction institution's operational units, such as food service, grounds keeping, maintenance, etc" (Gordon & Weldon, 2003, p. 207).

In another study, Lichtenberger (2006) addressed a slightly different slant on correctional education. According to this article, "evaluation is an important part of the formula used to justify correctional education ... more than just pre-release information such as completion rates, participation, and availability of courses are commonly used" (Lichtenberger & Ogle, 2006, p. 230). The author suggested that post-release outcomes other than merely recidivism should be used to evaluate correctional education programs. Items such as employment, earnings, further education/training as well as other unique data should be used as part of the evaluation process (Lichtenberge & Ogle, 2006, p. 238).

In October 2006, the Secretary of the United States Department of Education, Margaret Spellings, assigned an expanded role for correctional education (Linton, 2006). A number of new post secondary initiatives were begun by the department with heavy emphasis on technology. These programs were designed to assure that incarcerated persons can have access to industry recognized credentials. Linton (2006) states, "this new emphasis on credentialing is a relatively new trend that is highly encouraging" (Linton, 2006, p. 245).

In a 2008 article, DelliCarpini discusses professional development and applies researched-based approaches to teacher professional development within correctional contexts (DelliCarpini, 2008, p. 219). Legislation passed in 2001, "No Child Left Behind", has put a greater focus on teachers and continuing education and more standards for teachers earning and maintaining their certification (DelliCarpini, 2008, p. 219). Research has demonstrated when the focus of the professional development activities on student learning and comprehension styles are on teachers' knowledge of their subject matter, and alignment with the actual conditions of the classroom, there is an impact on the student's achievement (DelliCarpini, 2008). DelliCarpini (2008) concludes with a very important statement, "programs

must create and implement an evaluation plan that collects both qualitative and quantitative data that is used in the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and learning where the benefits to the teachers, the program, the facility and most importantly the students will be evident” (DelliCarpini, 2008, p. 228).

Thom Gehring’s 2007 article, titled “the organization of correctional education services” outlines how correctional educators are gradually gaining authority over decisions regarding correctional education (Gehring, 2007, p. 323). Gehring (2007) points out correctional educators have had very little authority over the curriculum, the education budget and personnel matters such as hiring and firing educators (Gehring, 2007). There are four areas of correctional teaching: “1) subjective which is personal rationale or motivation for teaching prisoners; 2) objective which is classroom strategies and outcomes for teaching/learning; 3) cultural, the correctional education school of thought; networking to support correctional education and finally 4) social, the human and material resources to support correctional education” (Gehring, 2007, p. 329). The study further reports, the models of how correctional education administration services are delivered should be pursued because of the “direct influence on instruction, professional development and the teacher’s subjective rationale for being engaged in correctional education” (Gehring, 2007, p. 334).

Listwan, Cullen and Latessa conducted a study in 2006 on the re-entry programs and how to keep offenders from failing. “There is little dispute that an offender’s re-entry is a potentially serious social problem that can longer escape attention” (Listwan, Cullen & Latessa, 2006, p. 19). Between “2.1 and 3.0 million adults are currently serving time in American prisons, approximately 650,000 of these are released yearly to return back to the communities, parolees is growing at approximately 3% per year with 17 states seeing increases from 25% to 50% per year” (Listwan, et al, 2006, p. 21). What is even more troubling is that “two-thirds of those released currently return to prison within three years and less than 25% of parolees complete their paroles” (Listwan, et al, 2006, p. 21). In 1976, “65% of releases were discretionary,

providing a heavy emphasis in participation in rehabilitative services” (Listwan, et al, 2006, p. 22). By 1996, the discretionary releases had dropped to less than 24%, which caused a huge drop in participation in prison rehabilitation and educational services.

Upon looking at these re-entry programs the authors found that “effective programs typically share certain features such as using behavioral and cognitive approaches, occur in the offender’s natural environment, are multi-model and intensive enough to be effective, encompass rewards for pro-social behavior, and matching learning styles and the abilities of the offenders” (Listwan, et al, 2006, p. 24). The study found that “many offenders found education an important first step in their reintegration process and that less than 40% of offenders had a high school diploma” (Listwan, et al, 2006, p. 24). “Without this basic education finding meaningful employment upon release is much harder and the jobs that are located are usually much lower paying and much less stable” (Listwan, et al, 2006, p. 25).

A study conducted in 2007 by Kevin Warner suggests that the purposes of prison education are: “life-long learning geared to the whole person” (Warner, 2007, p. 170). The themes at the Council of Europe for correctional education are that “the education of prisoners must, in its philosophy, methods and content be brought as close as possible to the best adult education in society outside and the education should be constantly seeking ways to link prisoners with the outside community and to enable both groups to interact with each other as fully as constructively as possible” (Warner, 2007, p. 171-172). Warner believes that “the heart of good adult education, whether the learner happens to be in prison or not, and good penal policies is recognition of people’s full humanity, their individuality, autonomy and potential, and acceptance of them as full members of the larger society” (Warner, 2007, p. 181).

Steven Klein and Michelle Tolbert conducted a study in 2007 based on correctional education (Klein & Tolbert, 2007). This study examined the lack of policy-relevant data comparable across states of correctional education (Klein & Tolbert, 2007). Through this study the Correctional Education Data Guidebook and website were developed (Klein & Tolbert,

2007). The “Correctional Education Data Guidebook and website contain information related to the educational needs of offenders, the educational and employment outcomes, costs, staffing and the services which are provided” (Klein & Tolbert, 2007, p. 290). The guidebook and website were developed by “correctional administrators from 12 states consisting of California, Florida, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Vermont and representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Prisons and Bureau of Justice Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education with advice given by administrators from Arizona, Connecticut, Minnesota, Oregon, and Mississippi” (Klein & Tolbert, 2007, p. 290). This guidebook will “allow states to share information regarding education programs, improve reporting to policymakers about the benefits of correctional education programs and make it easier to provide a clear link between correctional education and recidivism” (Klein & Tolbert, 2007, p. 291).

In 2007, Nancy Nelson described a correctional education program which was started by five African American offenders in an article titled, “the design and implementation of an education program for African American offenders” (Nelson, 2007, p. 262). The article described the African American Literature Program which was proposed and initiated by five African American offenders at the Airway Heights Correctional Facility in Airway Heights, Washington. The five offenders began this program because they were concerned about “the revolving door of offenders, the number of younger men under 18 coming into the institution, how the younger men were extremely violent and the reports of young African Americans who were dying outside of prison” (Nelson, 2007, p. 263). The program has been in existence since January, 2001 and the curriculum consists of discussing African American history, issues and literature, discussions of current events, etiquette training, applying for employment, presentations by offenders and offender poetry competitions. The success of this program led to the development of a literature program for Asians and Pacific Islander offenders and another for Latino offenders (Nelson, 2007).

A research project conducted in 2004 titled “disentangling the effects of correctional education: are current policies misguided: an even history analysis”, examined studies over time that had investigated the relationship between prison education programs and recidivism rates (Batiuk, Lahm, McKeever, Wilcox & Wilcox, 2005). This study found that many studies that were conducted in the past had put all education programs in prisons under the same heading of correctional education. Batiuk, et al. (2005) points out that the previous studies failed to clarify which educational programs affected recidivism. This study reviewed the education programs on an individual basis to find out which of the programs showed a reduction in the recidivism rates. The findings of this study are very useful in the fact that it shows that post-secondary education for offenders could reduce recidivism rates (Batiuk, Lahm, McKeever, Wilcox & Wilcox, 2005). The findings also demonstrate that there is a small effect on recidivism among offenders who had completed vocational, high school or GED educational programs (Batiuk, Lahm, McKeever, Wilcox & Wilcox, 2005).

A research study titled “financial literacy curriculum: the effect on offender money management skills”, Koenig (2007) considers a course for offenders who will teach them financial skills so that they are successful once they are released (Koenig, 2007). This study had several main goals “to examine the financial experiences of offenders, identify areas where offenders are lacking financial knowledge and to better prepare the offender to live successfully post-release” (Koenig, 2007, p. 45). This study was conducted using “17 offenders who volunteered to participate in the study, ranging in age from 20 to 61 from various ethnic backgrounds” (Koenig, 2007, p. 46). The subjects were given both a pretest post-test to measure their financial knowledge (Koenig, 2007). Koenig (2007) stated that the limitations of this study were several including “truthfulness of the offenders, difficulty of some offenders to remember their life before incarceration, the mix of volunteer offenders with some showing no interest in learning and the small number of participants may not represent the population of the incarcerated offenders” (Koenig, 2007, p. 53). This study, according to Koenig, “illustrates the

need to continue educating offenders in financial literacy and that teachers must do their part in equipping the offenders in making wise decisions for themselves when they are back in the community” (Koenig, 2007, p. 54).

Thom Gehring’s article in 1997 was “an historical inquiry of post-secondary education for offenders in North America” (Gehring, 1997, p. 46). The history he covers begins in 1834 when “thirty tutors from Harvard Divinity College worked weekly with offenders from Massachusetts State Prison through 1997” (Gehring, 1997, p. 47). Gehring ends his inquiry by stating that “correctional educators should be proud of a long history of advocacy and program improvement by persons associated with colleges and universities” (Gehring, 1997, p. 53).

In a 2007 article, Denise Wills goes inside a Vermont prison and provides an account of the life of a correctional education teacher. This article examines the life of a previous middle-school teacher who taught troubled students in Milwaukee and has moved to Vermont to teach offenders at the Northwest State Correctional Facility (Wills, 2007). The education that the offenders receive from Hagen is not only the basics, but it is also life skills, such as how to handle everyday problems or teaching offenders the information they need to work in and be certified in the food service industry. Hagen believes in the education she is able to provide to these offenders that she had turned down promotions to Assistant Superintendent.

In a 2005 study, Sunny Schwartz examined the “Life Skills Project” for the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department (Schwartz, 2005, p. 115). The Life Skills Project is designed as a restorative justice program to teach life skills to offender so they can successfully re-enter the workforce and community when they are released. The program has several services available for offenders both during and after incarceration. Some of the programs include: “case management, exit planning, fatherhood, employment services, facilitator training, mentoring and probation” (Schwartz, 2005, p. 117). Schwartz concludes with the following observation: “to achieve the full benefits of the program, city and county agencies must share knowledge and

resources, and all persons working on the program must be part of a unified solution to have change and to begin the restoration process” (Schwartz, 2005, p. 122).

A study conducted in 2007 by Ellis, McFadden and Colaric, “investigated factors which influence the organizational design, establishment, administration, and governance of correctional education for females” (Ellis, McFadden & Colaric, 2008, p. 198). This study concentrated on six areas of interest to the authors: “1) correctional education; 2) collaboration between leadership; 3) organizational structure; 4) research and literature; 5) resources and operations; and 6) expectations, outcomes, assessment and the future of correctional education for females” (Ellis, McFadden & Colaric, 2008, p. 198). This research was a case study analysis approach to provide an in-depth analysis of the education received at a female correctional institute (Ellis, McFadden & Colaric, 2008, p. 204). In conclusion, the authors reviewed several guidelines to have a successful program. They state “communication between agencies and all levels of administration is crucial, organizational structure that defines the roles and responsibilities of all the participants with a distinct mission, vision, goals and objectives as well as training on the unique characteristics of offenders, policy and procedures will contribute to the success of the program” (Ellis, McFadden & Colaric, 2008, p. 215).

Lewis (2006) suggested that the models which have been used in previous studies to evaluate educational programs for offenders have been used incorrectly (Lewis, 2006, p. 294). He further states that the “traditional model for evaluating correctional education with its dependency on macro-level and misconceptualized variables, does not reflect the true impact of correctional education on the individual, his/her family, or the community” (Lewis, 2006, p. 295). For this reason he believes that correctional education is only promising due to the fact that a model has not been correctly used for evaluating the efficacy of correctional educational programs.

Barbara Wade (2007) reviewed thirteen studies to examine the types of program evaluations and the analysis techniques that researchers used. Wade believes that the

“premise of correctional education is threefold” (Wade, 2007, p. 27). The first area “as offenders gain knowledge and skills, they should be qualified for employment upon their release into the community; second, education in prison should serve as a mechanism that enables offenders to learn to think more responsibly; and third, this combination could make it less likely that they will return to prison” (Messemer & Valentine, 2004, p.68). Wade’s (2007) findings reflect that recidivism should not be the only variable but that how much the offenders gain in the learning should be also be considered. Wade (2007) did find in her research that there is support for correctional educational programs due to the fact that offenders who have participated in these programs have a lower recidivism rate on average.

A research study, by Anne Costelloe (2007) titled “researching correctional education: why we must advance from research on to research on and for, and ultimately to research on, for and with” is concerned with issues regarding research into correctional education (Costelloe, 2007). Costelloe states that “the researcher must recognize that correctional education is a unique discipline operating within an exceptional educational setting with an exclusive set of factors acting on it” (Costelloe, 2007, p. 207). Research to evaluate correctional educational programs has to look at education in a different context and venue because it is different and must be treated differently from elementary, middle school or high school (Costelloe, 2007).

A study was conducted in 2007 by Lauren O’Neill and David Bierie which “evaluated the differences between education programs at two Maryland State Correctional Facilities for short-term incarceration” (O’Neill & Bierie, 2007, p. 311). One of the facilities is a small facility with a military atmosphere, the offenders are separated from the general prison population and there is a strong focus on rehabilitation and treatment. There other facility is a large facility and the offenders are integrated in the prison population. This study address two issues: “ in comparison to the control group, did the offenders in the boot camp make greater or conversely lesser gains in educational achievement; and whether there were differences in the number of offenders in the different facilities who actually entered the educational program and attended

classes” (O’Neill & Bierie, 2007, p. 313). O’Neill and Bierie (2007) reported that traditional prisons need more resources and the military style prisons can provide a viable learning environment for offenders who have been recognized as having potential for success.

In 2008, “an overview of school performance reports in correctional education” was conducted by Silverberg, Dowdell, and Sikula. These reports are essentially a school’s report card and are an effective way of evaluating correctional education programs. This study was a “qualitative study in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Correctional Education. An informal survey was mailed to all 50 state Directors of Correctional Education (Silverberg, Dowdell & Sikula, 2008). Twenty-six out of 50 states responded and only eight volunteered to be interviewed” (Silverberg, Dowdell & Sikula, 2008, p. 43). This study found that there are “eight system-wide goals for school improvement: 1) Student Attendance Rates; 2) GED Test Pass Rate; 3) Number of GED’s awarded; 4) Basic Literacy Program Completion Rate; 5) Intermediate Literacy Program Completion Rate; 6) Advanced Literacy Program Completion Rate; 7) Occupational Program Completion Rate and 8) Overall Correctional Education Drop-Out Rate” (Silverberg, Dowdell & Sikula, 2008, p. 37).

The study found that “school report cards are a meaningful way to track and to improve the effectiveness of correctional education and is an important assessment to better realize school improvement, program accountability and the advancement of best practices in correctional education” (Silverberg, Dowdell & Sikula 2008, p. 45).

Joseph Oxley, President of the American Jail Association believes that “an important facet of operating a jail is providing programs and resources to keep offenders occupied as well as offer opportunities to learn skills that will enable them to pursue lawful employment upon their release” (Oxley, 2006, p. 89). Some of the programs, he reports, that will teach offenders skills to re-integrate back into a productive society are “Offender Labor Work Program, Life Skills Program, GED, How to Write a Resume, Parenting classes, Job Fairs for qualified offenders prior to their release, as well as college courses” (Oxley, 2006, p. 90). Oxley believes

that extra work is required to make these programs work but in the end they are beneficial for all involved from the offenders to the community they will be living in (Oxley, 2006).

In an article, Zaro (2007) attempted to empower and challenge correctional educators, in an article titled, "teaching strategies for the self-actualized correctional educator: the inside person vs. the outside person" (Zaro, 2007, p. 27). Zaro (2007) specifically believes that there are four cognitive skills in which deficits in these key skill areas is characteristic of a criminal lifestyle. These cognitive skills are: "1) responsibility; 2) controlling impulsiveness; 3) anger management; and 4) empathy" (Zaro, 2007, p. 27). Zaro (2007) reports along with the classes to change attitudes and increase skills, offenders need to be taught "thinking skills" (Zaro, 2007, p. 28). Education for offenders should be taught for recidivism prevention and helping offenders to learn how to lead a life free of incarceration (Zaro, 2007).

In 2001, Bruce Porter was invited to teach a semester of Journalism at the New York State Correction Facility at Woodbourne as part of the Bard College Prison Initiative, (Porter, 2006, p. 26). As part of his class, Porter set out to make his class "newspaper reporters." Porter gives a picture through his article of a person beaming with pride because they have gotten a group of offenders to realize that they are able to excel in other arenas besides committing crimes. But he also shares with the reader that a teacher who teaches so that students can learn also becomes the student and can learn from their students.

Correctional education in the state of Texas is provided by the Windham School District which was created in 1969 and was the nation's first correctional school district (Fabelo, 2000). The Windham School District operates three different programs for offenders, educational, vocational and life skills training (Fabelo, 2000). According to this update, in "1998 there were 89,183 offenders in the Texas prison system that had less than a high school education, 69.5% of all offenders. Included in this number 27,746 had less than 9th grade education and 61,437 had between a 9th to 11th grade education and from 1997-1998 there were 30,207 offenders released from Texas prisons and only 10,214 had participated in a Windham School District

Academic Program” (Fabelo, 2000, p. 3). The Windham School District is monitored by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and their goals are to reduce recidivism (Fabelo, 2000, p. 4). Enrollment in a Windham program depends on the following criteria: “1) an assessment process is used to target and appropriately place students, this is called an Educational Assessment Test and gives the offender an Educational Assessment (EA) Score; 2) an offender may participate in more than one Windham program during the incarceration period; and 3) factors such as program capacity and offender location may impact program participation” (Fabelo, 2000, p. 5). The following chapter examines the research design and methodology for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

The focus of this study is to examine the perceptions of offenders toward the general education program. This study was approved by the University of Texas at Arlington Institutional Review Board. The method of data collection used in this study is a 27-question survey. This method of data collection was chosen since it offers the most efficient and available means to gather the data.

The Fort Worth II District Parole Office was chosen for the convenience of this researcher who works as a parole officer in this office. The Parole Supervisor for the Fort Worth II Parole Office, Latitia Murff, provided written permission for the survey given to offenders during their June, 2010 office visit.

A detailed survey was developed with three target areas. The first target area is the offender's life prior to their entrance into the criminal justice system including their occupation and income prior to incarceration, offense and sentence. The offenders are also asked to reflect on their views of the education system when they were growing up and whether education was important to them or not. A second target area is the offender's experiences while incarcerated in a penal institution which may include any educational programs they did or did not participate in, the reason or reasons for not participating, whether being rewarded with different items such as increased or decreased good time or visitation hours would increase their chance of participating and completing an educational program and how important education is to them since their incarceration. The third target area asked for the offender's demographic information such as age, race, gender, how many times they have been on parole, their highest level of

education completed and their family status. The respondents had the opportunity to have the questions read to them if they are unable to read or understand the questions.

The survey consists of 27 questions and was given to the offender to complete on a voluntary basis. The respondents were assured that participating by completing the survey or non-participation in completing the survey is confidential and will not have an impact on their parole in any way (see Appendix B).

A motivation for this study emulates from the challenges that offenders demonstrate as they report to the parole office with the same education and work skills they had when they entered the criminal justice system, without any material changes. These struggles are intensified when the offender begins applying for jobs and are told the job requires a high school diploma or a general education degree. So along with trying to find employment to support themselves and/or their families, they have to find the time for general education degree preparedness classes and then the money to take the general education degree exams.

The workload of the parole officer is another motivation. A parole officer is required to ensure that the offender is attending general education degree preparedness classes (if they do not already have a general education degree or high school diploma), seeking employment, and following other conditions that are established by the parole board for the offender. Along with these requirements, the parole officer then hears from the offender they cannot attend classes or cannot go to this or that because they have no transportation, their employer says they have to work and cannot attend classes as well as other excuses the offender comes up with. These types of excuses would not exist in a penal institution because the offender's do not need transportation to attend classes and work schedules could be easily adjusted to accommodate educational as well as vocational training classes.

3.2 Research Design

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional research design where data is collected at one point in time (Bachman & Schutt, 2007). Prior to the June, 2010 office visits,

2,000 questionnaires were divided between the 43 parole officers currently working at the Fort Worth II District Parole Office. The division of these questionnaires is based on the current caseload of each officer. Of the 2,000 questionnaires, 485 were completed by offenders during their June, 2010 office visit. Many of the questions were in Likert-type questions based on a scale from “strongly agree to strongly disagree.” Other questions asked were used for demographic, educational level, occupation and income levels prior to incarceration. All information on the questionnaire was derived from experience dealing with offenders in the position of a District Parole Officer.

The questions on the survey were coded by converting data items into numerical codes, known as quantitative analysis. The codes then became part of the codebook which “is a document that describes the locations of variables and lists the assignments of codes to the attributes composing those variables. The codebook serves two purposes: 1) it is the primary guide used in the coding process, and 2) it is the guide used for locating variables and interpreting codes in the data file during analysis” (Babbie, 2005, p. 418). Analysis of the information coded was completed using t-test, which was determined due to the homogeneity of variance in the groups or equality in the test results and there was not a wide difference in the independent scores of responses (Cone & Foster, 2006, p. 198)... “A t-test is a special case of analysis of variance that compares the means of two variables” (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2008, p. 132). For this study it was determined that the test variable is, “how many times have you been on parole.” All statistics were performed using the SPSS version 18 for Windows. Statistical significance was assumed if $p < 0.05$.

The purpose of this research study is to determine the perceptions of offenders to education. The research design also involves the offenders demonstrating how much of the decisions made while they were incarcerated have to do with whether the offender would receive a reward for their participation or whether they are participating to increase their chances of parole. The survey is designed to increase the understanding of the mindset of an

offender so that programs can be considered to enable offenders to become productive citizens. Analysis was performed considering offenders who are on parole for the first time versus those offenders who have been on parole for the first time. It is believed that offenders on parole for the first time do not have the same perceptions of the significance obtaining a general education degree as offenders who are on parole more than one time.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

The findings in the research study are based on 485 respondents who participated in completing the survey questionnaire. There were a total of 2,000 surveys distributed between the parole officers in the Fort Worth II District Parole Office providing a 24% return rate. There are three categories of variables. The first category is demographics; the second category is the overall responses; and finally the third category is the t-test findings.

4.1 Demographics

Table 4.1 demonstrates the five demographic variables in this research study. These demographic variables are based on the diverse population of the Fort Worth II District Parole Office.

A demographic variable to be discussed is age. Initially on the survey the offender was asked to write in their age and then for simplicity purposes, the age category was recoded into the following: 1=19-29, 2=30-39, 3=40-49, 4=50-59, 5=60-69 and 6=70-79. When this variable was recoded, the findings listed in table 4.1, demonstrates that 11% of offenders are between the ages of 19 and 29, 16% of offenders are between the ages of 30 and 39, 12% of offenders are between the ages of 50 and 59, 4% of offenders are between the ages of 60 and 69, 1% of offenders are between the ages of 70 and 79 and the majority of offenders 22% are between the ages of 40 and 49. Of the 485 offenders who responded to the survey, approximately 34% of offenders chose not to report their age.

Another variable to be discussed is gender which is divided into female and male. The findings, listed in table 4.1, show there are 17% of the offenders responding are female and 80% of the offenders responding are male. Out of the 485 offenders who responded to the survey, there were approximately 3% of offenders who chose not to report their gender.

Race, another variable, is divided into six attributes which are Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, and Middle Eastern. According to the findings listed in table 4.1, there are 32% of offenders who consider themselves Caucasian, 54% consider themselves African American, 8% consider themselves Hispanic, 1% consider themselves Asian, 1% consider themselves American Indian and .2% consider themselves Middle Eastern. Similar to the other variables there were approximately 3.8 % of offenders who chose not to report their race. These findings reveal the majority of respondents are African American.

The highest level of education completed is another variable of importance. According to the findings listed in table 4.1, revealed there are 5% of offenders who have an education level of 8th grade or less. The findings also reveal 19% of offenders completed some high school and 41% graduated from high school or have a GED; 27% of offenders attended some college and 5% college graduates. According to the findings, the majority of offenders responding either graduated from high school or received a GED. Upon asking offenders if they completed a GED when was it completed 26% of offenders reported completing a GED prior to incarceration, 32% of offenders completed a GED during a period of incarceration and 6% completed a GED after incarceration. Similar to the previous variables there were approximately 3% out of 485 offenders chose not to report their highest level of education completed.

Family status is another variable and is divided into five attributes. The five attributes are single, married without children, married with children, divorced or widowed. The findings as listed in table 4.1 reveal that 58% of offenders are single, 7% are married without children, 16% or married with children, 16% or divorced and 1% or widowed. As in the previous variables there were approximately 2 % out of 485 offenders chose not to report their family status.

Table 4.1 Demographics

Variable		Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Age	19-29	55	11
	30-39	76	16
	40-49	105	22
	50-59	59	12
	60-69	20	4
	70-79	5	1
	Missing	165	34
TOTAL		485	100%
Gender	Female	84	17
	Male	386	80
	Missing	15	3
TOTAL		485	100%
Race	Caucasian	157	32
	African American	263	54
	Hispanic	37	8
	Asian	5	1
	American Indian	7	1
	Middle Eastern	1	.2
	Missing	15	3.8
TOTAL		485	100%
What is the highest level of education you have completed?	8 th grade or less	24	5
	Some high school	94	19
	High school graduate or GED	201	41
	Some college	131	27
	College graduate	24	5
	Missing	11	3
TOTAL		485	100%
What is your family status?	Single	279	58
	Married without children	32	7
	Married with children	78	16
	Divorced	76	16
	Widowed	7	1
	Missing	13	2
TOTAL		485	100%

4.2 Background Information

The next variables to be discussed give background information on each of the respondents. These are variables which do not fit into the other two categories; however they are important in understanding an offender's history and perceptions prior to, during and after incarceration. The research findings for these variables are found in table 4.2.

The variable "what was your offense that caused you to be incarcerated" is divided into thirteen attributes. According to the findings 4% of offenders were incarcerated for murder, .4% of offenders were incarcerated for aggravated murder, .2% of offenders were incarcerated for homicide, 1% of offenders were incarcerated for manslaughter, 6% of offenders were incarcerated for robbery, 6% of offenders were incarcerated for aggravated robbery and 6% of offenders were incarcerated for assault. According to the findings, 15% of offenders were incarcerated for some type of burglary, 37% of offenders were incarcerated on drug charges ranging from possession to distribution, 9% of offenders were incarcerated for driving while intoxicated (DWI), 7% of offenders were incarcerated for sex-related offenses, 6% of offenders were incarcerated for theft such as identity theft and 2% of offenders were incarcerated for weapons offense. These findings reveal that a majority of offenders have been incarcerated on some type of drug charge. Approximately .4% out of 485 respondents chose not to report the offense for which they were incarcerated.

The next variable, "what is the length of the sentence you received" is divided into seven attributes. According to the findings, 1% of the offenders received a sentence of less than one year, 59% of offenders received a sentence ranging from one year to ten years, 21% of offenders received a sentence ranging from 11 to 20 years, 10% of offenders received a sentence ranging from 21 to 30 years, 4% of offenders received a sentence ranging from 31 to 40 years, 2% of offenders received a sentence ranging from 41 to 50 years and 3% received a sentence ranging from 51 years to life. According to the findings, a majority of offenders received a sentence ranging from one to ten years. Approximately less than 1% of respondents chose not to report the length of their sentence.

The variable “how much of your sentence were you incarcerated” is divided into six attributes. According to the findings, 17% of offenders were incarcerated up to one year, 24% of offenders were incarcerated up to two years, 14% of offenders were incarcerated up to three years, 8% of offenders were incarcerated up to four years, 7% of offenders were incarcerated up to five years, and 28% of offenders were incarcerated longer than five years. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents were incarcerated longer than five years. Approximately 2% of respondents chose not to report how much of their sentence they were incarcerated for.

The variable “before you were incarcerated, what was your employment status” is divided into six attributes. According to the findings, 50% of offenders were employed full-time, 9% of offenders were employed part-time, 4% of offenders were employed by a temp agency, 4% of offenders were employed as day laborers, 27% of offenders were unemployed and 5% of offenders were disabled. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents were employed full-time prior to their incarceration. Approximately 1% of respondents chose not to report their employment status prior to incarceration.

The offender’s occupation is another variable that is divided into nine attributes. According to the findings, 22% of offenders worked in construction, 6% worked in landscaping, 13% worked in food service, 6% worked as mechanics, 2% worked as barber or beautician, 2% worked in the computer field, 1% worked in graphics or printing field, 2% worked in the heating, air conditioning or refrigeration field and 29% worked in the business field. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents reported their occupation was in the business field. Approximately 17% of respondents chose not to report their occupation prior to incarceration.

Another variable, “what was your income level before incarceration” is divided into six attributes. According to the findings 41% of offenders reported their income level was between \$0 and \$10,000, 23% of offenders reported their income level was between \$10,001 and \$20,000, 18% of offenders reported their income level was between \$20,001 and \$30,000, 6% of offenders reported their income level was between \$30,001 and \$40,000, 5% of offenders reported their income level was between \$40,001 and \$50,000 and 4% of offenders reported

their income level was greater than \$50,001. The findings reveal the majority of offenders reported their income level was between \$0 and \$10,000. Approximately 3% of respondents chose not to report their income level prior to incarceration.

Educational program participation is another variable and it is divided into six attributes. According to the findings 12% of offenders reported participating in adult basic education courses, 40% of offenders reported participating in GED classes, 11% of offenders reported participating in college courses, 1% of offenders had participated in English as a second language classes, and 14% of offenders reported participating in vocational training classes. The findings reveal that the majority of offenders had participated in GED classes while incarcerated. Approximately 22% of respondents either chose not to answer this question or they had not participated in any educational programs.

The following groups of variables cover whether offender's wanted to or could not participate in any educational programs and the reasons why. In this group is the variable "while you were incarcerated, did you ask to take educational classes but you were not allowed" is divided into two attributes. According to the findings 36% of offenders asked to take educational classes and were not allowed, compared to 62% who did ask to take educational classes and were allowed. The findings reveal that a majority of the respondents had asked to take educational classes and were allowed to take them. Approximately 2% of respondents chose not to answer this survey question.

The next variable in this group "if you were not allowed to participate, and a reason was given, what was it" is divided into four attributes. According to the findings, 19% of offenders reported they were not allowed to participate in education classes because the classes were full, 8% of offenders report they were too old, 10% of offenders report they were required to work and 3% of offender reports the reason as other, however, there was no reason reported, it was left blank. The findings reveal that a majority of the respondents who were not allowed to take educational classes were denied because the classes were full. Approximately 60% of

respondents chose not to answer this survey question or they did not ask to participate in any education programs.

Another variable in this group, “while incarcerated, if you DID NOT participate in any programs, which of the following were the reason(s)” is divided into eight attributes. According to the findings, 7% of offenders reported a lack of interest in the classes offered, 2% reported problems with the instructor(s), 6% of offenders reported they did not feel courses were needed, 7% of offenders reported the staff did not feel they needed course(s), 1% of offenders reported frustration with earlier classes, 2% of offenders reported educational classes interrupted their free time, 2% of offenders reported they resented mandatory enrollment, and 9% of offenders reported classes that interested them were not offered. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents reported classes that were offered did not interest them. Approximately 64% of respondents chose not to answer this survey question because they did not want to participate in any educational programs.

In this group another variable, “I wanted to participate in an educational program because” is divided into five attributes. According to the findings 9% of offenders wanted to participate because it was required, 7% of offenders reported they wanted to participate because they were bored or to fill their time, 62% of offenders reported they wanted to participate because it was an opportunity for self improvement, 3% of offenders reported wanting to participate because it would increase the possibility of them getting earlier release, and 8% of offenders reported participating would enhance their chance of not committing crime after their release. The findings reveal a majority of respondents wanted to participate in educational programs in order to achieve self improvement. Approximately 11% of the respondents chose not to answer this survey question because they did not want to participate in any educational programs.

Another variable “during which of the following decades did you enter the criminal justice system” is divided into three attributes. According to the findings 20% of offenders entered the criminal justice system prior to 1990, 34% entered in the 1990's and 43% entered in

the 2000's. The findings reveal that a majority of the respondents entered into the criminal justice center during the 2000's. Approximately 3% of respondents chose not to report what decade they entered the criminal justice system.

Table 4.2 Background Information of Respondents

Variable		Frequencies	Percentages (%)
What was your offense that caused you to be incarcerated?	Murder	17	4
	Aggravated Murder	2	.4
	Homicide	1	.2
	Manslaughter	4	1
	Robbery	29	6
	Aggravated Robbery	30	6
	Burglary, Burglary of a Building, Burglary of a Habitation	71	15
	Assault	30	6
	Possession, Manufacture or Distribution of Drugs	179	37
	DWI	44	9
	Sex-related offense	32	7
	Identity Theft	27	6
	Weapons offense	9	2
Missing	10	.4	
TOTAL		485	100%
What is the length of the sentence you received?	Less than 1 year	6	1
	1-10 years	286	59
	11-20 years	100	21
	21-30 years	46	10
	31-40 years	18	4
	41-50 years	9	2
	51 years-Life	14	3
	Missing	6	<1%
TOTAL		485	100%
How much of your sentence were you incarcerated?	1-12 months (up to 1 year)	81	17
	13-24 months (up to 2 years)	118	24
	25-36 months (up to 3 years)	69	14
	37-48 months (up to 4 years)	38	8
	49-60 months (up to 5 years)	32	7
	Greater than 5 years	135	28
	Missing	12	2
TOTAL		485	100%
Before you were incarcerated, what was your employment status?	Employed full-time	241	50
	Employed part-time	42	9
	Employed by temp agency	18	4
	Day labor	19	4
	Unemployed	132	27
	Disabled	23	5
	Missing	10	1
TOTAL		485	100%

Table 4.2 cont.

Before you were incarcerated, what was your occupation?	Construction	105	22
	Landscaping	31	6
	Food service	63	13
	Mechanic	29	6
	Barber/Beautician	9	2
	Computer field	8	2
	Graphics/printing	3	1
	Heating, air conditioning, refrigeration	8	2
	Business field	142	29
	Missing	87	17
TOTAL		485	100%
What was your income level before incarceration?	0-10,000	198	41
	10,001-20,000	110	23
	20,001-30,000	86	18
	30,001-40,000	31	6
	40,001-50,000	22	5
	Greater then 50,001	21	4
	Missing	17	3
TOTAL		485	100%
While incarcerated what educational programs, if any, did you participate in?	Adult Basic Education	57	12
	GED	196	40
	Post-secondary Education (college courses)	55	11
	English as a Second Language	3	1
	Vocational training	66	14
	Missing	108	22
TOTAL		485	100%
While you were incarcerated, did you ask to take educational classes but you were not allowed?	Yes	176	36
	No	299	62
	Missing	10	2
TOTAL		485	100%
If you were not allowed to participate, and a reason was given, what was it?	Classes are full	93	19
	Age, too old	38	8
	Required to work	46	10
	Other	12	3
	Missing	296	60
TOTAL		485	100%

Table 4.2 cont.

While incarcerated, if you DID NOT participate in any programs, which of the following were the reason(s)?	Lack of interest in the classes offered	36	7
	Problem with instructor(s)	9	2
	Did not feel courses were needed	29	6
	Staff did not feel I needed course(s)	36	7
	Frustration with earlier classes	7	1
	Competition with free time	8	2
	Resent mandatory enrollment	9	2
	Classes of interest not offered	44	9
	Missing	307	64
TOTAL		485	100%
I wanted to participate in an educational program because:	Required	41	9
	Bored/to fill time	34	7
	Opportunity for self improvement	301	62
	Possibility of getting earlier release	14	3
	Enhance chance of not committing crime after release	39	8
	Missing	56	11
TOTAL		485	100%
During which of the following decades did you enter the criminal justice system?	Prior to 1990	98	20
	1990's	166	34
	2000's	206	43
	Missing	15	3
TOTAL		485	100%

4.3 Comparisons

A t-test was performed by comparing two variables, on parole for the first time and on parole more than once. These variables give the offender's perception toward education and whether education is helpful in obtaining employment and preventing recidivism. The variable "how many times have you been on parole" was recoded in order for the t-test to be conducted. The original question's answers were numbered one through four and the fifth answer was more than five times. These answers were recoded to the following: 1=1, 2=8, 3=8, 4=8, and 5=8, where eight stood for paroled more than once. The test value 1.00 was used for the t-test. The findings of the t-test are seen in table 4.3 and will be discussed further.

The variable comparison of "while I was growing up, attending school was a waste of my time and would not help me out later in life", the T-test suggested that there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant differences between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. According to the results, 1% of the respondents agree strongly and 4% agree that attending school was a waste of their time. On the other end of the spectrum, 58% of respondents disagree strongly and 31% disagree and perceive attending school as good use of their time while growing up. There were 5% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 1% of respondents did not answer this question.

In another variable comparison, with regards to the question "graduating from high school will not improve my chances for employment", the T-test suggested that there is a 99% confidence level that the findings were not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. On average, more respondents on parole for the first time perceived that high school graduation would

improve their chances of gaining employment. According to the results, 7% of the respondents agree strongly and 2% agree graduating from high school will improve their chance of securing employment. On the other end of the spectrum, 60% of respondents disagree strongly and 24% disagree and perceive graduating from high school will increase their chance of securing employment. There were 5% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 1% of respondents did not answer this question.

The variable comparison, with regards to the question “no GED, no parole would be enough incentive for me to participate and complete a GED”, the T-test suggested that there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. According to the results, on average more respondents on parole more than once would participate in a general education degree if they were given an incentive to be paroled if they completed a general education degree. According to the results, 26% of the respondents agree strongly and 19% agree that no GED, no parole would be enough incentive to participate and complete a GED. On the other end of the spectrum, 18% of respondents disagree strongly and 14% disagree and perceive no GED, no parole would be enough incentive to participate and complete a GED. There were 15% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 7% of respondents did not answer this question.

Another variable comparison, with regards to the question “I would participate and complete an educational program if I was given double good time credit”, the T-test suggested there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. The findings reveal respondents who are on parole more than once would complete an educational

program such as a general education degree if they were given double good time credits. According to the results, 46% of the respondents agree strongly and 21% agree that an incentive of double good time credit would make them want to participate in a GED or other educational program. On the other end of the spectrum, 6% of respondents disagree strongly and 9% disagree and perceive no GED, no parole would be enough incentive to participate and complete a GED. There were 16% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 2% of respondents did not answer this question.

The next variable comparison, with regards to the question “I would complete an educational program if I was told I would lose good time for failing or not completing the program”, the T-test suggested there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. The findings reveal that respondents who are on parole more than once would complete an educational program such as a general education degree if they would lose good time for failing and not completing the program. According to the results, 44% of the respondents agree strongly and 28% agree that they would complete an educational program if they would lose good time for failing or not completing the program. On the other end of the spectrum, 7% of respondents disagree strongly and 11% disagree they would complete an educational program if good time was lost for failing or not completing the program. There were 14% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 2% of respondents did not answer this question.

Another variable comparison, with regards to the question “I would complete an educational program if I was given a reward of extra visitation hours”, the T-test suggested there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant

from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once.

According to the findings, respondents who are on parole more than once would complete an educational program if they were given increased visitation hours. According to the results, 38% of the respondents agree strongly and 23% agree that they would complete an educational program if they would lose good time for failing or not completing the program. On the other end of the spectrum, 5% of respondents disagree strongly and 10% disagree they would complete an educational program if good time was lost for failing or not completing the program. There were 21% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 4% of respondents did not answer this question.

In the variable comparison, with regards to the question “I believe that participating and completing an educational program will reduce my chance of returning to prison”, the T-test suggested there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. Findings in this study reveal respondents who are on parole more than once perceive educational programs as a way of increasing their chance of not returning to prison. According to the results, 49% of the respondents agree strongly and 27% agree that participating and completing an educational program will reduce their chance of returning to prison. On the other end of the spectrum, 4% of respondents disagree strongly and 8% disagree that participating and completing an educational program will reduce their chance of returning to prison. There were 11% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 1% of respondents did not answer this question.

The next variable comparison, with regards to the question “I believe that completing an educational program will assist me in getting a job when I am released”, the T-test suggested there is a 99% confidence level that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant difference between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean

of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once.

According to the results, 56% of the respondents agree strongly and 29% agree that completing an educational program will assist them in getting a job when they are released. On the other end of the spectrum, 1% of respondents disagree strongly and 3% disagree that completing an educational program will assist them in getting a job when they are release. There were 9% of the respondents who did not agree or disagree with this statement and 2% of respondents did not answer this question.

Another variable comparison, with regards to the question "I feel that it is important for an inmate to participate in and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released", the T-test suggested that we are 99% confident that the finding was not due to error and there was found to be statistically significant differences between paroled once and paroled more than once. The mean of responses offered by offenders who have been paroled only once is statistically significant from the responses given by those offenders who have been paroled more than once. According to the results, 68% of respondents perceive that it is very important for an inmate to participate and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released and 23% of respondents perceive that it is important for an inmate to participate and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released. On the other end of the spectrum, .4% of respondents perceive that it is not at all important for an inmate to participate and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released and 2.2% of respondents perceive that it is unimportant for an inmate to participate and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released. There were 14% of the respondents who remained neutral with this statement and 2% of respondents did not answer this question.

Table 4.3 Comparisons

Variable	Means		P-value
	Paroled Once	Paroled more than once	
While I was growing up, attending school was a waste of my time and would not help me out later in life.	4.40	4.01	.000**
Graduating from high school will not improve my chances for employment?	4.32	4.00	.000**
No GED, No Parole would be enough incentive for me to participate and complete a GED.	2.79	2.85	.000**
I would participate and complete an educational program if I was given double good time credit.	2.06	2.09	.000**
I would complete an educational program if I was told I would lose good time for failing or not completing the program.	2.13	2.26	.000**
I would complete an educational program if I was given a reward of extra visitation hours.	2.20	2.54	.000**
I believe that participating and completing an educational program will reduce my chance of returning to prison.	1.88	2.06	.000**
I believe that completing an educational program will assist me in getting a job when I am released.	1.61	1.75	.000**
I feel that it is important for an inmate to participate in and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released.	1.41	1.47	.000**

*Statistical Significance at .05 level

**Statistical Significance at .01 level

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The original foundations of this study have been examined thoroughly and found to be statistically valid. The research reveals, as viewed previously in chapter four, that there are statistically significant differences between the perceptions toward education in regards to offenders who are on parole for the first time and those offenders who are on parole more than once. This change in perception between the two groups represents an incredibly important paradigm shift; in that human beings tend to pursue those things in which they invest value in. The offender, who is the chief change agent, must change their behavior to effect change within the system.

The findings of this research indicates that the perceptions of offenders who are on parole for the first time invest little concern or worth in education or in the possibility of receiving an education. They do not appear to make the connection that education is a key factor in improving their success rates of securing employment and reforming a life style that will enhance their efforts to remain out of incarceration in the future. On the other hand, those offenders who are on parole more than once demonstrate an increased value and understanding in reference to this core issue. They indicate also an increased desire and willingness to participate in educational programs regardless of whether such programs are required or offered as a reward within the correctional system.

5.1 Policy Implications

In relation to the policy implications relative to this study three primary groups are targeted: criminal justice professionals, legislators and educators. Based on the findings of this study the following implications are offered for each identified group of professionals. In relation to criminal justice professionals, all offenders coming into the Texas criminal justice system

should at a very basic level be evaluated and identified in relation to their levels of educational skills, such as a lack of a high school diploma or the lack of a general education degree. Initial testing as well as follow-up testing should be conducted. The follow-up testing is due to the fact when an offender enters the prison system it is a very stressful time and could lead to a negative impact on the initial testing that is conducted (Piccone, 2006).

Once offenders are initially identified there should be a pre-designed and developed group of tracks leading the offender into the proper educational track. Tracks should especially include general education degree and English as Second Language classes for those inmates who cannot speak English, basic reading classes for those who cannot read or write and special needs classes for those who are identified with special learning needs such as dyslexia, hearing or visual deficiencies. There should be a clearly established goal that no person in the future should be released from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice without the basic foundational ability to read and write in English, as well as speak and comprehend English even if their native language is other than English. It would be a very simple, easy task to implement policy change to the current parole policy to incorporate such requirements in order to be considered for placement on parole. These foundational skills are so fundamentally important to successful interaction in the current society that it is clearly a failure waiting to happen to re-enter society without them. These skills may not ensure success but the lack of them will virtually assure failure.

The primary role of legislators is to enact statutes and give directions to where the majority of society believes our best interests should be headed. It is through our elected representatives that the corporate will and wisdom of American politics is expressed. With the huge number of individuals who will travel through the correctional systems of the future, it is fundamentally critical that the legislature be not only reactive but highly proactive in charting where the correctional system is now. More importantly the legislators also need to know where the correctional system is going to go in the future. Based on the results found in this study, legislators should implement mandatory controlling statutes that make offenders ineligible for

parole until they have successfully completed general education degree. The legislature has already set precedent for such compulsory requirements by requiring school children throughout Texas to meet minimum educational standards as well as mandating that no child should be left behind. It is counter-intuitive to not leave any children behind yet leave million of adult Americans behind. By failing to enact compulsory directives the legislatures are failing to effectively address both current and future issues that lead to continued high rates of involvement with the criminal justice system. Measures such as denying driver's licenses and other professional certifications from those who abandon the educational process are small baby steps in this general direction.

The policy implications for educators in this study are also clear and compelling. The need for an increased presence and an increased advocacy on the part of professional educators is both essential and compelling. The vital need for foundational educational skills for offenders leaving the system is clearly demonstrated. Who better to advocate for increased educational programs than professional educators? More than mere advocacy is needed, however.

Educators through their professional organizations should be partnering with community organizations and exerting as much pressure as is possible to bring to bear on both the criminal justice system and the appropriate legislative entities. Educators should clearly advocate for the position that not only does it make much better sense to educate offenders while in custody but that it is much more cost efficient to educate than it is to incarcerate. By failing to educate, the system in all actuality is working to perpetuating an ineffectual and overloaded system that is already not servicing the needs of either the offender or society.

It is educators who must exercise their traditional and historic role in directing society on ways to improve the quality of society as a whole as well as improving the lot of the marginalized members of society. When we improve the lower rungs of society, we in fact raise the standard for our society as a whole.

5.2 Limitations of Study

One limitation to the study was the fact that the questionnaires were self-reported. Therefore, the validity of the information received from the respondents may not be honest or accurate with their true perceptions of the information requested (Schwartz & Miller, 1998). The discussion and interpretation of the data analysis was based on this information and therefore could be an impact on the statistical outcome.

The second limitation is the study was conducted at one parole office in Fort Worth. Although, this office has a diverse selection of offenders who report, this limits the number of parole officers to assist in asking offenders to volunteer to participate. Unfortunately, the number of parole officers who were willing to assist was very small which limits the number of respondents and the diversity of the respondents

Examination of both the literature and offenders reveals that education has become a significant tool in preparing offenders for re-entry into society and the establishment of a successful work search as well as other key foundational requirements for successful re-entry (Montross & Montross, 1997). The literature is clear; offenders who have completed the general education program while incarcerated have a lesser chance of returning to prison than those who do not (Montross & Montross, 1997). Through correctional education programs, individuals who become incarcerated can receive positive rehabilitation and better social integration.

“The power of a book lies in its power to turn a solitary act into a shared vision. As long as we have books, we are not alone” (Laura Bush).

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey Questions

Thank you for your time. Please complete the survey and return to your parole officer during this office visit. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated, is strictly on a **voluntary** basis and will **not** in any way affect your parole. The information obtained in this survey is strictly **confidential**.

1. What was your offense that caused you to be incarcerated?

- A. Murder
- B. Aggravated Murder
- C. Homicide
- D. Manslaughter
- E. Robbery
- F. Aggravated Robbery
- G. Burglary, Burglary of a Building, Burglary of a Habitation
- H. Assault
- I. Possession, Manufacture or Distribution of Drugs
- J. DWI
- K. Sex-related offense
- L. Arson
- M. Identity Theft
- N. Weapons offense

2. What is the length of the sentence you received?

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. 1-10 years
- C. 11-20 years
- D. 21-30 years
- E. 31-40 years
- F. 41-50 years
- G. 51 years - Life

3. How much of your sentence were you incarcerated?
 - A. 1-12 months (up to 1 year)
 - B. 13-24 months (up to 2 years)
 - C. 25-36 months (up to 3 years)
 - D. 37-48 months (up to 4 years)
 - E. 49-60 months (up to 5 years)
 - F. Greater than 5 years

4. Before you were incarcerated, what was your employment status?
 - A. Employed full-time
 - B. Employed part-time
 - C. Employed by temp agency
 - D. Day labor
 - E. Unemployed
 - F. Disabled

5. Before you were incarcerated, what was your occupation?
 - A. Construction
 - B. Landscaping
 - C. Food service
 - D. Mechanic
 - E. Barber/Beautician
 - F. Computer field
 - G. Graphics/printing
 - H. Heating, air conditioning, refrigeration
 - I. Business field
 - J. Other (please specify) _____

6. What was your income level before incarceration?
- A. 0 – 10,000
 - B. 10,001 – 20,000
 - C. 20,001 – 30,000
 - D. 30,001 – 40,000
 - E. 40,001 – 50,000
 - F. Greater than 50,001
7. While I was growing up, attending school was a waste of my time and would not help me out later in life.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
8. Graduating from high school will not improve my chances for employment?
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
9. While incarcerated what educational programs, if any, did you participate in?
- A. Adult Basic Education
 - B. GED
 - C. Post-secondary Education (college courses)
 - D. English as a Second Language
 - E. Vocational Training

10. While you were incarcerated, did you ask to take educational classes but you were not allowed?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
11. If you were not allowed to participate, and a reason was given, what was it?
- A. Classes are full
 - B. Age, too old
 - C. Required to work
 - D. Other (please specify) _____
12. While incarcerated, if you **DID NOT** participate in any programs, which of the following were the reason(s)? (Check all that apply)
- A. Lack of interest in the classes offered
 - B. Problem with instructor(s)
 - C. Did not feel courses were needed
 - D. Staff did not feel I needed course(s)
 - E. Frustration with earlier classes
 - F. Competition with free time
 - G. Resent mandatory enrollment
 - H. Classes of interest not offered
13. I wanted to participate in an educational program because:
- A. Required
 - B. Bored/to fill time
 - C. Opportunity for self improvement
 - D. Possibility of getting earlier release
 - E. Enhance chance of not committing crime after release
 - F. Other (please specify) _____

14. No GED, No Parole would be enough incentive for me to participate and complete a GED.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
15. I would participate and complete an educational program if I was given double good time credit.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
16. I would complete an educational program if I was told I would lose good time for failing or not completing the program.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
17. I would complete an educational program if I was given a reward of extra visitation hours.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly

18. I believe that participating and completing an educational program will reduce my chance of returning to prison.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
19. I believe that completing an educational program such as the GED will assist me in getting a job when I am released.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Disagree strongly
20. I feel that it is important for an inmate to participate in and complete an educational program such as the GED in order to obtain a job when they are released.
- A. Very important
 - B. Important
 - C. Uncertain
 - D. Unimportant
 - E. Not at all important
21. During which of the following decades did you enter the criminal justice system?
- A. Prior to 1990
 - B. 1990's
 - C. 2000's

Please answer the following questions about the person completing this survey.

Age _____

22. Gender

A. Female

B. Male

23. Race

A. Caucasian

B. African American

C. Hispanic

D. Asian

E. American Indian

F. Middle Eastern

G. Other (*please specify*) _____

24. How many times have you been on parole?

A. 1

B. 2

C. 3

D. 4

E. More than 5 times

25. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

A. 8th grade or less

B. Some high school

C. High school graduate or GED

D. Some College

E. College graduate

26. If you completed a GED, when was it completed?

- A. Prior to incarceration
- B. During a period of incarceration
- C. After incarceration

27. What is your family status?

- A. Single
- B. Married without children
- C. Married with children
- D. Divorced
- E. Widowed

Thank you

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to complete a survey regarding your feelings toward the GED and the possible impact on employment and recidivism and will aid in improvements for parolees in the future. The survey will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. The information being collected is for research purposes only and will not have any effect on your supervision while on parole. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Elisa Bircher at 817-536-1440. Your participation in this research is voluntary and if you choose not to participate there will not be any consequences.

Thank you for your participation in this research survey.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Elisa's academic career began in Green River, Wyoming when she graduated from Green River High School in 1979. She then became a wife and mother of two boys, and eventually became a single mother with two children working as an Emergency Room Clerk in the local hospital. In 1996, following the death of her grandmother, she and her children moved to Fort Worth, Texas hoping to start a new life together. She worked, until 2002, as an Administrative Secretary with the University of North Texas Health Science Center. In 2002, due to budget cuts, she lost her job and realized that she wanted to go to college so that she could work in a field that she would enjoy. Elisa received her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a Minor in Biology from Tarleton State University in 2007. During one summer semester at Tarleton State University she worked with one of the chemistry professors, Dr. Peter Bell on a research project. The project was to find a way to remove arsenic from drinking water, which is a major problem with the water system in Bangladesh. Her Master of Arts program began at Tarleton State, however, the long drive and starting a new job with the State of Texas as a District Parole Officer forced her to change schools. Elisa will be graduating in August, 2010 with a Master of Arts in Criminology/Criminal Justice from the University of Texas at Arlington. She plans to continue her education with Walden University and will be working to earn a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration with a specialization in Law and Public Policy. As for the future her plans are mixed, she would like to continue her employment with the State of Texas, however in a better position to work to improve how the criminal justice system in Texas works. She would also like to teach at the university or college level.