CORRECTIONAL CURRICULUM EVALUATION: AN UNCOVERING OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICES THAT REDUCE THE RATE OF PRISON RECIDIVISM IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA

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Abstract

Over 40 percent of the individuals currently incarcerated in Alabama Department of Corrections’ facilities are serving subsequent sentences. The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic case study is to uncover effective practices, which reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. The practices uncovered are based on the participants’ personal experiences; their voice and what they considered key contributors to their success in desistance from criminal activity. The theoretical framework, social learning theory supported by life course worked together in guiding this research study. Snowball sampling served as the basis for the recruitment of six individuals who participated in this study. All participants were incarcerated in a State of Alabama Correctional facility and released from incarceration within the past three years. In sharing their experiences, the participants of this study provided insight regarding key elements that have allowed them to desist from criminal activity. This information allowed the researcher to identify key practices that could reduce prison recidivism. The themes derived from this study represent a collective response from the participants that address the research questions. Moreover, the following themes represent effective practices that can reduce recidivism based on the participants’ experiences: department of corrections reintegration programming, special programs, family support, supervised release benefit and detriment, physical and social environmental factors and social services. Suggestions for practice include expanding the current Department of Corrections pre-release/re-entry program and continuing social services beyond release to include mentoring, counseling and rehabilitative services.

Keywords: ethnographic case study, life course, recidivism, social learning theory
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Recidivism is defined in many ways and has been studied from a criminological, psychological and educational point of view. From a criminology perspective recidivism measures rearrests and uses different measures such as “… felony rearrest, felony drug rearrest, reconviction, felony reconviction, felony drug reconviction, time to first arrest, time to first felony rearrest (Severson, Burns, Veeh & Lee, p. 110).” Additional criminological perspective consist of “…the imposition of a further custodial sentence within two years of release (Halsey, p. 1209)” as well as “…the ultimate measure of effectiveness of correctional programs (Benda, Toombs & Peacock, p. 65).” Similarly, a psychological perspective of criminal recidivism is “…defined as a return to the criminal justice system (Håkansson & Berglund, p. 2).” Pallone & Hennessey (1977) defines recidivism as “…membership in one of three groups 12 months after release: (a) incarcerated in a jail following subsequent conviction for misdemeanor or minor felony; (b) incarcerated in a prison following subsequent conviction for relatively more serious felony; (c) at liberty (p. 321).”

Merriam-Webster’s on-line dictionary defines recidivism as “a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior; especially: relapse into criminal behavior” (Merriam-Webster). The Bureau of Justice and Statistics defines recidivism as a tool of assessment in which “recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in the rearrests, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner’s release” (Bureau of Justice and Statistics, n.d.). Wade (2007) acknowledges “a new arrest does not necessarily mean a new conviction, or incarceration… a technical violation may occur when a probationer fails to report to a probation officer or… fails to find employment (p.
The State of Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) defines a recidivist as “an inmate who returns to ADOC jurisdiction within 3 years of release (ADOC, 2012)” it is this definition for which this study is based. Although the definitions of recidivism mentioned may vary, a commonality is the fact that they all refer to a repeated act or an event that result in re-incarceration.

The need for innovation and rigor in preparing inmates for reentry into society in the state of Alabama is evident based on an increase in the rate of recidivism of .1%. This equates to an increase of 114 inmates returning to prison for a subsequent term from September 2011 to September 2012, according to the latest Alabama Department of Corrections published documents. During Fiscal Year 2011, the annual cost to shelter an ADOC inmate was $15,789.90 or $43.26 per day. According to the American Correctional Association this is one of the lowest cost-per-day rates in the country (ADOC FAQ, n. d.) but still equates to nearly $2,000,000 in additional cost for one year. This study examines pre-release and post-release practices that reduce prison recidivism.

Statement of the Problem:

Inmates must be appropriately prepared for reentry into society if the recidivism rate is to be reduced. Here in the United States, provisions are made for almost every person in need, from free lunches in schools to Pell Grants for higher education affording everyone a chance to succeed and previously incarcerated individuals should have that chance as well. Individuals committing additional infractions have an impact on everyone. If recidivism is not curtailed, taxpayers will continue to financially support inmates, children of broken homes will continue to
be at risk of mimicking the criminal lifestyles they are exposed to and communities will continue to suffer the financial loss crime creates, weaken social bonds and jeopardize personal safety.

Unless inmates are trained, provided with marketable job skills, educated prior to release and prepared for life’s vicissitudes upon release, the rate of prison recidivism will continue to rise. And according to the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC), their mission “… is to confine, manage and provide rehabilitative programs for convicted felons in a safe, secure and humane environment, utilizing professionals who are committed to public safety and to the positive re-entry of offenders into society” (Mission). In the state of Alabama, 41.9% of the inmates incarcerated are previous incarcerations (Monthly Statistical Report, September 2012).

**The Current Pre-release Curriculum.** The State of Alabama Department of Corrections’ (ADOC) pre-release program consists of a one-to-two week program that includes: Clean and Sober; Job, Career, Communication and Financial Skills; Faith, Communication and Character Building Skills; Health Education, Screenings and Referrals; and Family Re-Integration and Law Enforcement (ADOC, n.d.) when inmates are within 30 to 90 days of release. This program would benefit the inmate upon their release and the community, provided it is revised to reflect the current needs that the inmate will be encountered upon released.

Therefore, a curriculum that properly prepares inmates for release and their return to society benefits the inmate, society and affects the generation of children who will soon lead our country is needed. Sufficient attention has not been devoted to establishing a curriculum that reflects our current societal needs and the future needs of the inmate once they return to the community. The current one-to-two week program adds value but lacks thoroughness that will prepare releases for reentry into society nor does it provide proper follow-through with parolees as they
adjust to society. If the state were to establish a curriculum for inmates that would properly prepare inmates for reentry into society, this change may decrease the prisons’ escalating rate of recidivism. This curriculum would also curtail the fallout that ensues as the new parolee manages life’s nuances after release.

In examining the current pre-release curriculum implemented by the state of Alabama, the need for innovation in preparing inmates for reentry into society is evident. This need for improvements should include educational and vocational training that reflects the community needs; community based agencies that can assist with housing and employment coupled with a mentor for moral support. A more stringent, parolee focused program may provide the parolees with a better sense of what they will face upon release and returning to their families, their communities and to the job market. The pre-release curriculum is designed for the inmate leaving prison but it can affect everyone.

**Effects of Recidivism.** A vast majority of the incarcerated individuals will be released at some time via early parole or by serving their sentence, consequently returning to society. In 2001, it was estimated that “… more than half a million people will leave prison and return to neighborhoods across the country; by comparison, fewer than 170,000 were released in 1980 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1982)… the movement from prison door to community doorstep comes at a time when traditional mechanisms for managing reentry have been significantly weakened... (Travis 2001, p. 23)” and these releases have not been properly prepared for their return home. In 2007, the total number of releases (Federal and State) increased from 604,858 in the year 2000 to 725,402 in the year 2007 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007).
It is the belief of this research that most issues parolees face can be overcome through individual motivation, connection to appropriate systems, and through community action, this should be coupled with case managers who care, mentors to help guide them along their way and current social service referrals. This research sought to provide the parolees perspective on practices and elements that caused them to desist from criminal activity. However, “… the need for pre-release discharge planning with follow through immediately after discharge, as well as housing and employment programs that target returning prisoners… (Luther, Reichert, Holloway, Roth, & Aalsma, 2011, p. 480)” is still not in place. The State of Alabama Department of Corrections’ current curriculum is insufficient based on the fact that the recidivism rate has increased nearly a full percent, an additional 431 inmates returned, in one year (Table 1). The Alabama Department of Corrections defines a recidivist as an inmate who returns to ADOC jurisdiction within three years of release; therefore, three previous years of data are presented. (Monthly Statistical Report, September 2012).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st Incarceration</th>
<th>Previously Incarcerated</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Previously Incarcerated</th>
<th>% Recidivist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19018</td>
<td>12957</td>
<td>31975</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>24.4% or 7,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>18963</td>
<td>13208</td>
<td>32171</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>24.9% or 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>18854</td>
<td>13639</td>
<td>32493</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>25.0% or 8,114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Previously incarcerated includes all inmates with previous sentences to ADOC jurisdiction.

Prison recidivism’s fallout is not limited to the convicted individual, it touches everyone from the nuclear family to the distance unknown citizen. Families of course are the most affected, especially the children of these inmates who are losing stability that is needed for their
development. Children whose fathers are incarcerated live in high-risk of mimicking what they see and experience, in some cases disruptive and damaging environment. These conditions exist in staggering numbers, “more than three million U.S. children are in daily contact with someone, overwhelmingly fathers, who were recently released from prison… (Day, Acock, Bahr, & Arditti, 2005, p. 187).” The absence of incarcerated parents also causes children to suffer emotionally; their school performance is affected as well as their general wellbeing (Day, Acock, Bahr, & Arditti, 2005).

**Significance of Research Problem**

This research is significant because the majority of the incarcerated prisoners will be released at some time once they have served their sentence, returning to society. In 2007, 11,079 inmates were released from state or federal jurisdiction in the State of Alabama, returning to our communities (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007).

This research focusing on Alabama is significant because in 2004, the State of Alabama had the largest decline of prison population in the nation. Alabama experienced a reduction of 7.3% which equates to a decrease of 2,026 inmates in the prison system from 27,913 to 25,887 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004.). However, the State of Alabama prison population has increased every year since its remarkable 2004 decline. This research will uncover factors that contribute to this rise of incarcerations in the Alabama prison system through previously incarcerated individuals’ interviews providing firsthand accounts and their experiences. This research is also significant for the State of Alabama because the educational program for Draper Prison, one of Alabama’s State facilities, was developed by John M. McKee, a leader in curriculum development for correctional education (Messemer, 2011). McKee implemented the
successful Draper Project in 1962 improving inmates’ remedial skills by 1.3 grades in a six month period, two hours per day using programmed instruction (McKee & Seay, 1966). Alabama was a landmark State in correctional education before; led the nation in prison decline and can serve as a model for correctional education and prison reduction again with a bit of ingenuity.

Overreaching themes of environmental and behavioral elements that cause inmates to recidivate will be revealed through literature along with Federal and State statistics. These elements will be used to understand why recidivism occurs and how the State of Alabama prison system can prepare inmates for reentry into society by examining different methods, data sources and techniques. Through this study, the literature will address recidivism and the effective practices that will prepare inmates for reentry into society in order to reduce prison recidivism and improve communities by reducing crime. The participants’ lived experiences will provide insight as to what enabled them to desist from criminal activity and where current programming has fallen short or was helpful.

**Positionality Statement**

Carlton Parsons (2008) views positionality as “… a concept that acknowledges the complex and relational roles of race, class, gender, and other socially constructed identifiers …” (p. 1129). These concepts can contribute to the writers’ position as well as influence the research process and presentation of the research. When writing about individuals or groups outside of one’s own group, we must be cautious and not allow our biases to impact our research, nor our findings and how these findings are presented. A researcher can remain unbiased simply by recording and presenting only the facts as they are gathered, careful not to embellish or distort
the data. Briscoe (2005) asked the question “…who should research and represent the experiences of groups who have been oppressed … (p. 24)” the oppressed or the oppressor? Both groups can research and represent the experiences of an oppressed group providing a unique perspective from both sides. The oppressor may be able to express experiences from an overall view of the oppression of many. Likewise, the oppressed may be able to express experiences of oppression from a centralized view within a limited realm, providing details and specifics.

My research topic prescribes education, training and social services as a means to decrease prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. Although I have never been incarcerated, I have taught within the correctional system in Alabama. I know releases firsthand as well as currently incarcerated inmates personally. This familiarity with correctional education, inmates and parolees coupled with my passion for education and training guided my desire to pursue this research topic. I found solace in my decision and drew support from the fact that “…the key to selecting an interest is dependent on the ability to remain objective and to narrow the focus of a practical interest to a tangible research subject without leaving behind the personal passion to follow a particular line of study (Machi & McEvoy, 2009, p. 19).”

I am passionate about decreasing prison recidivism because it leaves so many of our children fatherless and motherless; they have a tendency to fall victim to cultural capital repeating the same unnecessary cycle. This cycle is also seen as Carlton Parsons (2008) cites Coles’ Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) “…a theoretical endeavor that centralizes culture in the discussion of and research on human nature. CHAT deems culture the primary medium through which individuals mediate their interactions with each other and the physical world. Cole (1995; 1996; 1998) referred to the mediating actions taken by human beings as
activities or cultural practices. He considered these activities a subset of the vast cultural
knowledge comprising what was socially inherited. He viewed the enactment of this socially
inherited knowledge as consequences of a pattern of past successes (p. 1129)”, this is recidivism,
a seemingly cultural practice that has to be broken. Recidivism places a burden on the
immediate families, the communities and city, county and state budgets in housing repeat
offenders. If individuals are not aware of and have not been educated on the new technologies
they can expect to face and if a mentor to help guide them and help acclimate them back into
society are not in place, the possibility of recidivism increases. To employ such a program not
only benefits the individual but it benefits the state in reducing cost, and it benefits the
community in reducing the crimes that recidivism causes.

In speaking with releases prior to this study, no one was aware of any programs that
prepared the inmate for release and none of the individuals I spoke with participated in such a
program. Based on those conversations I was convinced that the state of Alabama had no such
program; this was ill advised. After searching the Alabama Department of Corrections’ website,
I discovered that a program did exist. This uncovered my first bias in which I fell victim to and
exemplifies that “…personal attachment also carries bias and opinion that can cause a researcher
to jump to conclusions rather than arrive at a conclusion after methodical scholarly work…”
(Machi & McEvoy, 2009, p. 19).” This experience caused me to realize that I had begun this
research with bias, and I also realized that “…by rationally identifying and confronting these
views, you can control personal bias, opinion, and preferred outcome, and can become open
minded, skeptical and considerate of research data … (Machi & McEvoy, 2009, p. 19).” Now
conscious of my actions and gravitating towards the ideological dimension of positionality, I can
draw on and use Briscoe’s (2005) statement that “Ideologies are largely constructed according to
one’s experiences…and…many of those in privileged positions have experiences that allow
them to develop their ability to empathize with those experiencing oppression and some choose
to do so… (p. 33)” and let this guide and provide constraints for my research.

I have also come to understand that “…just because one takes the ideological position to
end oppression, one’s discursive positioning of the other, may in fact, work against that end
(Briscoe 2005, p. 33).” Another statement that resonates with me is that “Qualitative research is
one of the methods in which the other is treated as a “you” rather than as an object and thus also
provides a means for developing theories that include the viewpoint of the other (Briscoe 2005,
p. 34).” This approach will help to alleviate bias and help in not working against my ultimate
goal. With the proper frameworks, positionality, methods and theories coupled with my passion
for reducing prison recidivism, teaching and background in technology, I feel that I am now
armed to speak on behalf of the others. Studying this particular problem, it behooves the parolee
to have someone that is outside, a part of society and eager to help prepare them for the many
vicissitudes of life they will face upon release.

Throughout the literature review, there is a myriad of terms that reference the individuals
who are the center of this study. The literature references inmates, releases, offenders, parolees
and prisoners. In maintaining the integrity of the literature and out of respect for the authors,
when referencing literature I will use the language of that author. Out of respect for my
participants I sought the advice of a friend regarding my personal language and tone for this
study and asked which references were offensive. M. Hines stated, “we don’t care what nobody
calls us; we are free (personal communication, November 21, 2013).”
Research Questions

This qualitative ethnographic case study research set out to uncover effective practices that aid parolees in maintaining their freedom from incarceration. One of the goals of this study was to uncover how the State of Alabama’s Correctional system can prepare inmates for successful reentry back into the community. Another goal of this study was to uncover post-release practices that the parolee can employ to ensure their success in the free society.

Through the research process, this study sought to capture the parolees’ voice and their views on how pre and post-release practices have helped or could have helped in them remaining free of recidivism. Regardless to how we look at recidivism (rearrests, reconvictions, re-incarcerations, violations of community supervision, and self-reported offenses, as defined by Bouffard, Mackenzie, & Hickman (2000)) it simply must be reduced and the following research questions must be addressed:

1. How has the Alabama Department of Corrections executed its re-entry program such that it achieves its mission of providing a positive re-entry for its inmates?

2. What pre-release and post-release practices do parolees view as being most effective in remaining free of criminal activity and adjusting to life after their release from incarceration?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study is the social learning theory (Akers & Jennings, 2009), supported by life course perspective (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005). Social learning theory examines the inmates’ criminal and deviant behavior and seeks to provide explanations of these behaviors (Benda, Toombs & Peacock, 2003). Life course (perspective) seeks to explain and focus on the desistance process examining informal social
control and bonds that are challenges the parolee will face once they reenter society (Bahr et al., 2005).

**Social Learning Theory.** The social learning theory was developed from Sutherland’s differential association theory and Skinner & Bandura’s behavioral psychology. This theory builds on Sutherland’s two types of definitions regarding committing a specific behavior in which, an individual can learn favorable or unfavorable definitions from others. Favorable definitions leads to the likelihood that an individual will commit the behavior whereas unfavorable definitions leads to the likelihood that an individual will not commit or rather engage in specific behavior (Sutherland, 1947). Because this theory did not receive considerable empirical support, Burgess and Akers (1966) sought to address some of its shortcomings. Therefore, the social learning theory wasn’t developed to challenge or counter Sutherland’s (1947) theory but to broaden the perspective of his theory. The behavioral learning aspect of Akers’ social learning theory draws from the classical work of B. F. Skinner, yet closely aligned with cognitive learning theories associated with Albert Bandura (1977), (Akers & Jennings, 2009).

The social learning theory received overwhelming support in the Boys Town study that consisted of approximately 3,000 surveys of 7th through 12th grade students in the Midwest. The multivariate results indicated that greater than half of the students drank alcohol and more than two thirds used marijuana as explained by the social learning. The social learning variables also influenced the probability that the students who began to use substances would participate in more serious drugs and alcohol activity. This study “…also demonstrated that the social learning variables were significantly correlated with the termination of alcohol, marijuana, and hard drug
use, with cessation being related to a preponderance of nonusing associations, aversive drug experiences, negative social sanctions, exposure to abstinence models, and definitions unfavorable to continued use of each of these substances (Akers & Jennings, 2009, p. 328).”

An Arkansas study consisting of 572 graduates of its only boot camp for adults was designed to test the social learning theories key elements; peer association, modeling, reinforcement and definitions (Benda, Toombs & Peacock, 2003). The social learning theory was selected because it was assumed to be “…the strongest predictors of recidivism among graduates of a boot camp … (Benda, Toombs & Peacock, 2003, p. 61)” which was reinforced by the findings in this study. In a follow-up study, Akers’ four elements of the social learning theory successfully predicted the recidivism of boot camp graduates. The stronger predictors of recidivism were peer associations and definitions with modeling being the weakest of the four but still a strong predictor (Benda, Toombs & Peacock, 2003).

The social learning theory can be viewed as a general theory that offers an explanation as to why parolees initially engage in crime and deviance. This theory also explains why the parolee continues to recidivate and most importantly, why the parolee chooses to desist from behavior that would cause them to recidivate. “Social learning theory also explains why individuals do not become involved in crime/deviance, instead opting to participate only in conforming behaviors (Akers & Jennings, 2009, p. 325)” which is why the social learning theory is appropriate for this study.

**Life Course.** In the early 1960’s, Glen Elders Jr., analyzed several decades of data from three studies on children conducted by the University of California, Berkeley. Intrigued by the effect of the Great Depression on individuals and families, Elders began to develop theory and
research that focused on how the family, education and work roles were affected by historical forces. During the same period, interest also grew in the experiences of ordinary people, listening to their voices as opposed to the words of an observer, thus giving way to the life course perspective (Hutchison, 2011). Life course examines how common life transitions, and social change shape people’s lives. And how culture and social institutions shape the pattern of individuals (Hutchison, 2011), focusing on both change and stability that occurs over time (Bahr et al., 2005). The life course perspective spans many disciplines; however, when considering events of a person’s life, life course draws on traditional theories of developmental psychology. The two differ however, in that psychology looks for general, expected events and pathways whereas the life course perspective focuses on how time, location and culture affect the persons experience of each life stage (Hutchison, 2011).

The life course perspective is based on five basic principles (Giele & Elder, 1998; Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2004) that can be summarized as follows:

1. *Time and place*: the individual situation of each person in historical and cultural terms affects personal experience and the ways of developing the life course.

2. *Linked lives*: the social action of individuals interacts with, and is reciprocally influenced by, relationships with others, who share similar experiences.

3. *Human agency*: people actively make decisions about their objectives in the context of the opportunities and constraints marked by history and social circumstances.

4. *Timing*: similar events and characteristics experienced at different times in life have different consequences on the lives of people.

5. *Life-span development*: life-span development can only be understood by taking a long-
term perspective, considering substantial periods in people's lives. (Verd & Lopez, n.p., 2011)

These five principles are developed through the use of three empirical indicators that will help guide this research study; trajectory, transition and turning point.

This research study will employ the three empirical indicators trajectory, transition and turning point once underway. This study sought to uncover trajectories, the long-term patterns and sequences of the parolee that may cause recidivism or their return to criminal activity (Bahr, 2005). The study set out to uncover transitions or events that are embedded in trajectories possibly employment, relationships or parenthood that may increase social bonds thereby altering the negative trajectories (Bahr, 2005). Turning point was a key component in this research study because it represents the point in the individuals’ life when they change directions, subjectively or objectively (Uggen, 2000).

Turning points of the life course perspective were emphasized in the Uggen (2000) study set out to explain behavioral change in parolees. This study set out to address the questions, “Does work cause a reduction in crime, or is the association spurious? Do work effects depend on the life-course stage of offenders, or are they uniform across age groups (p. 529).” This national experiment found that parolees that were age 27 or older reported less crime and arrest than the younger participants when employed. Employment had little effect on younger participants indicating age as a turning point (Uggen, 2000). The life course perspective is expected to be just as effective with this researchers’ study as it was with the Uggen (2000) study.
The selected theoretical framework, social learning theory supported by life course worked together in guiding this research study. Social learning theory seeks to provide an explanation of inmates’ criminal and deviant behavior. This addressed the question of environmental and behavioral as being most effective in reducing the rate of prison recidivism. Life course guided this study in examining post release factors that were effective in the parolees’ desistance from crime and improve the reentry process.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to this research study that seeks to uncover effective practices that reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. Chapter 2 of this study contains an examination of literature that discusses the key components of the theoretical framework of this study. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methods for this research study. Chapter 4 will include data collection; the parolees’ voice. Chapter 5, the final chapter, will contain a review of the data collected and how it answers the research questions.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to uncover effective practices that reduces prison recidivism and prepares inmates for reentry into society while creating a safer community. There is a significant body of scholarly literature that addresses this phenomenon for which this chapter is dedicated. There are three main themes that will be discussed: (1) causes of prison recidivism, (2) pre-release practices that reduce recidivism and (3) post-release practices that reduce recidivism. This chapter will examine the causes of prison recidivism exploring both environmental and behavioral factors that contribute to this phenomenon. Pre-release practices that reduce recidivism are also discussed with a focus on the inmates’ personal development during incarceration, taking advantage of education and training opportunities attaining job skills. Post-release practices that reduce recidivism conveyed in the literature consist of parolee follow-up, job skill training, availability of social services and community integration. This chapter will conclude with effective practices that reduce prison recidivism based on this compilation of literature.

Causes of Recidivism

In a 2012 study of prison recidivism, Iorizzo focused on prisoners with learning disabilities and states two main causes for prison recidivism or re-arrest; housing and employment. During a prisoners’ incarceration, “…one third lose their homes, two thirds lose family contacts and many are introduced to illicit substances… many offenders are released from prison without accommodation (Harding & Harding, 2006) and as a result, experience a decline in their physical and mental health (Social Exclusion Unit 2002) (p. 22).” Parolees who fall into
this category of losing their homes and substance abuse have a higher reoffending rate due to these issues after leaving prisons as well as a high recoviction rate for use of substances (Iorizzo, 2012). This study provides a foundation as to two basic issues that must be addressed for parolees in reducing recidivism, housing and employment.

Similarly, in a tape recorded study of 51 participants (22 men, 29 women) parolees participated in focus groups facilitated by a research staff skilled in qualitative research methodology. This study found that the lack of discharge planning led to poor community reentry with basic needs such as housing and employment not met. This resulted in many of them engaging in sex for money, transportation or drugs after their release. Because of the vulnerabilities of prisoners, the likelihood of falling victim to risky behavior, increases their chances of contracting and transmitting HIV, substance use, and unfortunately recidivism. This study demonstrated the need for discharge planning and focused on sexual and substance use as well as the importance of basic needs being met immediately upon release and the parolees’ community reentry (Luther, Reichert, Holloway, Roth, & Aalsma, 2011). Although the State of Alabama Department of Corrections requires a home plan prior to an inmate’s release from prison, employment is not required. In some cases, the initial home plan may be temporary, possibly causing the parolee to fall victim to illicit means to survive. Housing and employment are critical areas that must be addressed in reducing the rate of recidivism, as with environmental and behavioral factors. This study provides evidence that a plan of action is needed for inmates after they have been released from prison. Failure to provide these post-release services could result in recidivism.
This research categories the cause of recidivism into two general areas; environmental and behavioral factors both of which contribute to a parolees’ failure to end their criminal activity. These areas will be explored and effective practices in reducing recidivism cited by current scholarly literature.

**Environment Factors of Recidivism**

Housing and employment are critical; environment factors such as social networks and unstable environments can be just as harmful to the parolee recidivating. One of the many definitions of recidivism is a return to criminal behavior after release; the outfall of this repeated behavior is usually measured by rates of recidivism. This rate is determined by the following recognized factors that impact recidivism: the socioeconomic status of the inmate, the effectiveness of post-release supervision if an inmate is paroled, length of time the inmate is incarcerated, crime committed by the inmate, accessible data (which varies from state to state), and educational level of each inmate (Esperian, 2010). In an interview of 51 parolees over a period of three months after their release, and interviews of 19 parole officers who tracked each parolee for six months after release, 10 of the 51 parolees were re-incarcerated within six months after their release from prison. In this study, re-incarceration was heavily associated with socializing with friends four or more times per week, conflicted relationships in the family, family members who had been on probation or in jail, and the difficulty of staying off drugs (Bahr, 2005). Along the same lines, participating in educational programs is a means of reducing recidivism. This study identifies the benefits of social network; this positive interaction is an effective practice that should be impressed upon inmates in lessening their chances of recidivating.
Changing ones environment or network was the focus of Bui & Morash (2010) study permeated with in-depth interviews of twenty successful female parolees that examined the effects of parolee’s relationships within their networks. This study scrutinized the parolee’s relationships and networks before, during, and after incarceration for a full scope of their interactions. Pre-incarceration relationships included partner physically, emotionally, and mentally abuse. In some cases, their husbands forced them into illegal acts such as robbery, eventually causing their convictions. Inmates in a relationship with someone, who were either drug dealers or users, eventually involved the inmate in drug use or drug sales causing them to commit illegal acts. Disadvantaged or dysfunctional families to include sexual abuse by family members, abusive, alcoholic, drug users and criminal sibling, parents and grandparents also contributed to illegal and criminal behaviors. Incarceration caused a disruption in these negative relationships within their networks. The parolees’ personal efforts and supportive family members coupled with prison programming allowed these inmates to improve their social network once released. This helped them to avoid the criminal elements that caused their incarceration. Post-release programming also helped the parolee in seeking positive networks and informed them of the availability of sources that addressed their needs. (Bui & Morash, 2010) It is imperative that parolees are made aware of post-release programming. The Alabama Department of Corrections has such information posted on their website, but it does not benefit the parolee who does not have knowledge or access to this information.

Many studies have identified a variety of treatment regarding correctional education programs as effective when it comes to reducing recidivism. When assessing the methodological vigor, Lewis (2006) argues that few, if any of these studies are above reproach. In his study,
Lewis (2006) questioned the design used to gauge the effectiveness of several correctional education and vocational training programs. He argues that if the outcome variable is recidivism, as it is in most cases, the research design does not offer a true assessment of the effect of correctional education. Lewis (2006) cited numerous plausible variables that could impact outcome such as program implementation, delivery, and retention, as well as post-release variables (such as family and friends as stated earlier) are missing from the model. Lewis (2006) further justifies his position with the fact that variables are often dissimilar for each location, facility, classroom, and instructor located at the sites being studied. Lewis (2006) suggests correctional education programming should be approached from a holistic perspective when evaluating its effectiveness, beginning with the funding agencies and a diversion away from recidivism as the primary outcome variable (Lewis, 2006). Lewis presents a valid argument; however, overwhelming data supports correctional education in reducing recidivism.

The State of Alabama should examine its current program to ensure its vigor and effectiveness in addressing environmental factor such as social networks and family ties that lessen the parolee’s chances of recidivating as found in the literature. Once environmental factors are identified, the inmates’ behavioral factors that have contributed to their criminal activity should be identified.

**Behavioral Factors of Recidivism**

Taxman’s (2004) conceptual framework is based on the offender becoming an active contributor in the reentry process taking personal responsibility for their actions both pre- and post-release. Many previous studies on recidivism focused on identifying predictors of the reoccurring criminal behavior. Dissimilar to the previous criminal career approach that focuses
on the beginning and continual criminal behavior, Visher & Travis, (2003) focuses on the desistance from crime. Visher & Travis, (2003) discuss “…the similarities involved in desisting from other problem behaviors, such as illicit drug use, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence and concludes that desistance from problem behavior is the outcome of a process involving an individual decision or motivating event (often prompted by an accumulation of negative consequences), lifestyle changes including new social networks and new social roles (marriage, having a child, legitimate work), and social support for this identity and lifestyle transformation (Laub & Sampson 2001, p. 93).” Again, not focusing on the previous criminal career approach, Visher & Travis (2003) sought to explore a more expansive range of social dimensions, understanding that transitions may not necessarily lead to desistance. However, identifying various circumstances an inmate may encounter upon returning to society, may explain why some inmates commit new crimes while others do not (Travis et al., 2001). There are four stages of every prisoner’s life experiences that are critical and should be examined for positive reintegration:

- pre-prison circumstances (e.g., demographic profile, work history and job skills, criminal history, substance abuse involvement, family characteristics),
- in-prison experiences (e.g., length of stay, participation in treatment programs, contact with family and friends, prerelease preparation),
- immediate post-prison experiences (e.g., moment of release, initial housing needs, transition assistance, family support), and
- post-release integration experiences (e.g., employment experiences, influence of peers,
family connections, social service support, criminal justice supervision) (Visher & Travis, 2003, p. 94).

It has not been determined if one of the four stages has a greater effect over another regarding long-term post-prison success since most existing research has focused on recidivism. Visher & Travis (2003) notes “…these studies…are not ideal for our purposes of examining the transition from prison to the community. However, they provide an important foundation for understanding post-release patterns of behavior (p. 94)” (Visher & Travis, 2003). A parolees’ successfully reintegration examines the parolee’s pre-prison, during prison and after prison activities or behavior in sustaining desistance.

Another theoretical stance regarding behavioral factors of recidivism by Sedgley, Scott, Williams & Derrick (2010) is the Human capital theory (the abilities and skills acquired through education and training) that enhance potential income earning (Ben-Porath 1967; Becker 1968, 1993), which “…suggests that education and employment programmes might be a means to lower recidivism rates. Using a theoretical model, Lochner (2004) demonstrates that the development of human capital can raise the opportunity cost of crime, suggesting an inverse relationship between the probability of committing a crime and the level of human capital developed (Sedgley et al., 2010, p. 498).” This line of thought implies that human capital developed by inmates while incarcerated can impact the likelihood of parolees committing a crime after release, which has a direct link to a prisoners’ recidivism. Mocan et al. (2005) suggests job training and education as a way of overcoming the decline of legal human capital while incarcerated and developed a criminal and legal model of human capital. Length of incarceration was determined to lessen legal capital, however increase the probability of a
parolee’s recidivism (Sedgley, Scott, Williams & Derrick (2010)). This theory suggests, as many would assume, a lack of education and employment has a direct impact on the likelihood of recidivating.

Human capital developed through education and training are significant in reducing recidivism, however; “according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an estimated 16% of adult prisoners report having either a mental disorder or an overnight stay in a psychiatric facility (Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan & Blitz 2005, p. 1719).” That percentage roughly equates to nearly 300,000 persons who were in need of mental health care while incarcerated and after their release from prison. Unfortunately, few of the parolees who need treatment actually received it. When offenders with learning disabilities needs are not met, they are less able to access the proper services they need. People with learning disabilities who have not yet offended may also be at risk if they too, do not receive the treatment they need (Iorizzo, 2012) which is also applicable to parolees with mental health issues. Mental disabilities when unnoticed or untreated can cause a parolee to recidivate; therefore, the Alabama DOC must identify and treat disabilities in an effort to reduce recidivism.

Likewise, Pogorzelski et al. (2005) notes “It is further estimated that approximately two thirds of these individuals are under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the offense… common among all state prisoners, regardless of their mental health status (p. 1719).” Also uncovered was that near 60% of all state inmates indicated that they engaged in substance use at least one month before their offense that led to incarceration (Pogorzelski et al., 2005). When these individuals enter the criminal justice system, their risk of recidivating is heightening because their needs have not been identified, they continue to lack the support needed (Prison
Reform Trust 2010) which in turn will increase the number of inmates incarcerated along with the rate of recidivism (Iorizzo, 2012). After release from incarceration, these prisoners are still in need of treatment and the Second Chance Act of 2005 offers such support, but the parolee must be informed of these services. Drugs and Alcohol additions when untreated can cause a parolee to recidivate and must be treated during incarceration while within Alabama’s correctional facilities.

The Second Chance Act of 2005 called for an expansion of services to assist individuals returning from incarceration but not without a cost. One goal of the Second Chance Act is community reentry, or parolee reintegration into society. The purpose is to reduce recidivism and help the parolee lead a crime free life. The Second Chance Act provides the parolee with resources and opportunities that will provide them with sustainability. The cost a parolee must pay is not monetary but steeped in hurdles that must be conquered that are viewed as “…collateral consequences …’invisible punishments,’ that typically are not part of the formal sentencing process. These hurdles, apply specifically to people released from prison; they include civil restrictions, such as losing the right to vote, and conditions or bans that affect the completion of job applications… (Pogorzelski et al., 2005, p. 1718).” The Second Chance Act has helped the parolee; however, the outfall of imprisonment still affect housing, certain employment, travel and other services relevant to functioning as most citizens are able to function. The parolee’s experiences after release are limited and regulated by state and federal guides posing certain conditions and restrictions, which is a new type of punishment after prison release (Pogorzelski et al., 2005).
The inmates’ behavior often causes incarceration, some of these behaviors may be controllable by the individuals, and others may need assistance. While involuntarily confined to the penal system, the Department of Corrections has the opportunity to provide necessary assistance inmates need. Inmates should be fully aware of reentry services that were created specifically for their needs during incarceration to prevent recidivism. These services can help them modify their criminal behavior whether caused by drugs, alcohol or lack of education and training allowing them to sustain themselves. Once environmental and behavioral factors have been identified, the Alabama Department of Corrections should then focus on effective pre-release practices that research has demonstrated as reducing prison recidivism.

**Effective Pre-release Practices of Prison Recidivism**

Successful reentry begins during the inmate’s incarceration prior to release into society. Programs that contribute to a reduction in recidivism consist of training focused on job skills, social skills and behavioral modifications that aid in family and community adjustment upon the parolees return. Taxman (2004), an advocate of offenders taking personal responsibility for their actions both pre- and post-release, also contended that this preparation begins with personal development of the inmate while still incarcerated. Taking personal responsibility is the first step of personal development during incarceration. Taking advantage of education and training opportunities and attaining job skills are all factor that contributes to a successful reentry. In addition, inmate should be made fully aware of the social services that have been developed for them to ensure their success once released.
**Inmates taking Personal Responsibility**

Acceptance of responsibility was discussed in the Hall & Killacky (2008) study where a significant theme that emerged from this study was regret of prior decisions. Inmates began to reflect upon their life, and the mistakes they made to end up in prison. They all expressed regret for disappointing their children, their parents, and/or their loved ones. They also regret dropping out of school, engaging in criminal activity, and being confined in prison. Two sub themes that emerged were prior educational experiences and prior teachers. Each participant was able to identify at least two teachers who positively impacted their lives for at least a short period of time. Participants also regret the fact that those teachers' attempts to intervene in their lives were not successful early on (Hall & Killacky, 2008).

Taxman (2004) contends that the inmate is largely responsible for his/her own actions and offers a five-step process that should be followed and can lead to an inmate’s success. Effective practices suggested in this five-step process offenders must go through for successful reintegration into the community consisted of:

**Step 1: Message to the Offender.** Reentry or the successful integration of the offender into mainstream society requires a clear message to the offender on personal responsibilities.

**Step 2: Institutional Treatment (from incarceration to 90 days before release).** The process should assist the offender in learning some skills of self-diagnosis and self-awareness of behavioral patterns that affect the offender's involvement in criminal behavior.
Step 3: Intuitional/Pre-Release (from 90 days before release to release day). Offender begins planning for his or her transition into the community. Most important for the offender to address are the housing and employment plans since these concerns are basic survival needs and available services.

Step 4: Post Release (from release day to 30 days). It is critical to have the offender begin to assess the degree to which he or she is vulnerable to involvement in criminal behavior. More attention will need to be paid to the offender's survival needs and determining how these impact the offender's ability to maintain a crime-free lifestyle.

Step 5: Integration (from 30 days after release for up to two years). Maintenance and crisis management define the integration phase, during which the emphasis should rest on incremental advancements in the offender's life. As an active participant, the offender should be involved in adjusting the plan based on his/her own experiences in the community. (Taxman, 2004, pp. 33-34)

The reentry process must be directed such that it ensures that the offender assumes responsibility and control for his/her own behavior. The offender must also assume responsibility for a prosocial, crime-free lifestyle. Implementing this five-step process will prepare inmates for a more successful reentry into society (Taxman, 2004).

Visher & O'Connell (2012) explored individual, family, and situational factors that had a positive effect on inmates regarding the difficulties they may face upon returning home from prison and the result; optimism. Furthermore, “Based on theoretical suggestions that an individual's ability to change his or her behavior is partially dependent upon self-perceptions (Giordano et al., 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009), and that these perceptions are influenced
by how people see themselves fitting into a crime-free life after release, we assessed what factors influence optimism (p. 7).” Criminogenic effects of long term incarceration have been examined to determine indicators of inmate circumstances that would serve as predictors of optimism. The results indicated that longer sentences reduced inmate’s optimism and substance abuse treatment was the only prison activity found to increase inmate optimism. Visher & O'Connell (2012) contended “Treatment by its very nature is forward-looking, motivating individuals to contemplate and plan for a change in their lives after their release. The process of treatment may, in fact, change participants’ self-perceptions and assist in the development of a positive future self that is crime free (p. 7).” Situational factors such as family relationship and circumstances also appeared to have an effect on the inmate prior to returning home, with family support and children as the primary variables. Conversely, inmates who may have family members that are incarcerated or suffer from substance abuse issues were not as optimistic in returning home to dysfunctional conditions and situations. Those inmates returning to neighborhoods that were not safe environments, conducive to their plight of remaining crime free, also caused inmates to become less optimistic (Visher & O’Connell, 2012).

The Alabama Department of Corrections should capitalize on the time of an inmate’s incarceration to impress upon them that release is a second chance to succeed. Incarceration is a time to assist the inmate in moving forward in accepting and understanding their behavior to ensure a successful reentry urging them to accept responsibility for their actions and prepare for release from prison. When the inmate has taken ownership of their behavior that led to their incarceration, they can then focus on their personal development and positive behavior that will allow them to refrain from criminal activity.
Inmates Personal Development

Pogorzelski et al. (2005) notes that nearly two thirds of offenders were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they committed their offense and nearly 60% engaged in substance use at least one month before their offense. (Pogorzelski et al., 2005; Belenko, S., Foltz, C., Lang, M.A. & Sung, 2004) all agree that drug and alcohol use and abuse are likely to increase the rate of recidivism in parolees once released from incarcerations when left untreated. The parolee must choose not to use drugs either by their personal will or by successfully completing an alcohol and drug treatment program, if not, the correctional system will continue to be inundated with a high number of these offenders. Along the same lines, in the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) study conducted by Blenko et al. (2004) the effects of digression was assessed in a residential treatment program for felony drug offenders with drug sales charges and facing incarceration. Participants of this study spent up to 24 months in residential treatment residences that were intense and semi-secluded. The incentive for participants who completed the program was the dropping of all charges against them. Participants who did not complete the program were returned to court and incarcerated. “The diversion to long-term residential treatment of prison-bound drug sellers resulted in significant reductions in recidivism, over a multiyear post-treatment period (p. 124).” The results of this study found a reduction in the rate of recidivism and a delay in time of the first arrest when compared to similar offenders. This treatment resulted in reduced court costs, improved public safety, decrease the cost to house prisoners, which also reduced overcrowded correctional facility (Blenko et al., 2004).
Another area that will be considered in this study is an offender’s predisposition to crime and criminal activity. Ross & Hoaken (2011) connote “…evidence from large populations of offenders support the notion that longer sentences (Gendreau, Goggin, and Cullen 1999) and harsher confinement conditions (Chen and Shapiro, 2007) have little to no effect on the likelihood of reoffending and may actually increase recidivism rates (Ross & Hoaken, 2011, p. 378).” The researchers conducted a study consisting of 95 participants that tested the offenders executive cognitive functioning (ECF) which is a process that regulates goal-directed behavior. This study compared first term inmates to inmates who had recidivated. The results of this study showed that the inmate who recidivated had a more severe and widespread patterns of executive dysfunction. Researchers offered two possible explanations for these results: “the executive functioning of first timers has not yet degenerated to the level of that of return inmates… and …significant individual differences between first timers and return inmates that affect their criminogenic path (p. 391).” The results suggest that focus on improving ECF deficits of offenders may result in decreasing recidivism (Ross & Hoaken, 2011).

Although seemingly common knowledge, researchers also suggests that offenders with substance abuse problems, especially hard-drug users, are unemployed or employed less than half time. This can increase the number of incarcerated offenders. Employment is paramount in successful rehabilitation of drug users and these offenders must be connected to programs that will help in preventing both relapse and re-incarceration. Controlling drug addiction for the incarcerated may have a significant impact on an inmate making a successful transition from prison to the community, increasing public safety Chamberlain (2012).
Chamberlain (2012) explored the criminogenic necessities of offenders focusing on two types of criminogenic needs: dynamic and static. Dynamic needs, such as substance abuse and employment, are criminogenic needs that are manageable using programmatic intervention, unlike static needs, such as criminal history, that cannot be changed by implementing treatment. Dynamic criminogenic needs, when dealt with, can result in a decrease in criminal behavior and should be intervened. Chamberlain (2012) states “…the ‘big eight’ risk factors associated with criminal behavior are antisocial attitudes, antisocial associates, history of antisocial behavior, antisocial personality pattern, problematic circumstances at home (e.g., family or marriage), problematic circumstances at school or work, problematic leisure circumstances, and substance abuse (p. 186).” These behaviors when managed, should result in a decrease in an offender’s criminal behavior. Chamberlain (2012) asserts a significant rise in substance abusers needs among offenders. These needs are followed by a decline in educational and employment needs; she emphasizes “inmates with the greatest substance abuse needs also increasingly have more educational and vocational needs, implying that incarcerated offenders are becoming needier (p. 205).”

Based on the literature, regulating goal-directed behavior for inmates serving subsequent sentences will increase their chances of success, an area not addressed in the Alabama DOC reentry curriculum. An inmate’s personal development begins with uncovering and treating these manageable criminal behaviors and will decreases criminal behavior, citing yet another practice that reduces recidivism. An integral part of an inmates’ personal development during incarceration is attaining a marketable job skill and education they lacked prior to their
incarceration. These skills an education attained during incarceration can translate into viable employment once released.

**Job Skills Training and Education during Incarceration**

Osberg & Fraley (1993) focused on correctional education from a different approach. It was perceived that correctional education did not meet the same standards as traditional educational programs and used recidivism rates, grades, and changes in psychological factors such as self-esteem, as measures of the effectiveness of prison education programs. A survey of faculty perceptions of the education provided in a prison college program concluded that the faculty did in fact; perceive correctional education to be equivalent to traditional education. Also noted was that the faculty was either extremely satisfied or satisfied with programming and found students to be highly motivated, prepared for class and interested in education (Osberg & Fraley, 1993).

Career and Technical Education (CTE) was intergraded into an existing New York State county jail program consisting of three eight week modules of instruction. The purpose of this integration was to increase employment in high demand and high wage jobs as well as to enhance transitional services of offenders into the community. Students would participate in: General Business Education/Small Business Management/Entrepreneurship; Drafting and CAD Occupations and Carpentry with limitations due to security. This study reported a 32% increase in student completing eight-week modules, an 8% increase in GED pass rate and 15% increase in the number of student eligible to test for GED with the reduced number of students served (DelliCarpini, 2010). This study is significant because the programs offered addresses high
demand areas, this type effort is not indicated by the Alabama Department of Corrections pre-release program regarding skills training provided which should be considered and incorporated.

A study by Esperian (2010) found that prison programs are being monitored to determine if costs can be cut to save money. At the College of Southern Nevada, June 2010 graduation for inmates, more than 40 students received either a GED or a high school diploma, and one student received an AA. Esperian (2010) uses this study to support the argument that it is behooves the states to fund education classes for inmates because it reduces recidivism dramatically and because educating felons eliminates the costs associated with long term housing (Esperian, 2010) and improve mainstream opportunities (Owens, 2009).

Mathur & Schoenfeld (2010) recognized the complexity of correctional programs that are complicated by the nature of being in a secure correctional facility and the academic struggles. However, through a three-pronged approach, improvement to this struggle that will aid in the long term success of students can be achieved. These improvements consist of “(a) the use of evidence-based instructional practices; (b) providing professional development that supports such practice; and (c) systems of accountability that can determine whether a given practice is indeed effective (p. 22)” Mathur & Schoenfeld, (2010) also recognized that the educator could contribute to the students success by being content focused, taking advantage of professional development, allowing sufficient time for learning objectives, content consistency, consciousness of practice in relationship to student outcome. This study is noteworthy because it addresses the methods used to improve correctional education programs that if implemented by the State of Alabama, quality training can be ensured.
The impact of education is twofold: it provides both skill and provokes positive morale. Winterfield, Coggeshall, Burke-Storer, Correa & Tidd. (2009) conducted a study that focused on the motivations of inmates to seek post-secondary education. Data were collected from staff and students who participated in four focus groups that ranged from 9 to 14 participants. Groups concentrated on enrollment, effectiveness, impact on self-esteem, attitudes, preparedness for employment, challenges to success and suggestions for improvement. In this study, Meyer, Fredericks, Borden & Richardson, (2010) found a consistent theme across all groups was that postsecondary education (PSE) had a positive impact on inmate behavior and that participating in PSE increased feelings of self-esteem. Inmates typically believed that participation in PSE would increase their employment prospects after release. Additionally, many saw further education beyond that received in prison as a necessity for them to reach their employment goals.

Diseth, Eikeland, Manger & Hetland (2008) conducted a study of 534 inmates seeking to understand their experiences regarding education in prison, most of whom were satisfied with the quality of education received. Difficulties encountered consisted of access to computers, security routines, disturbances in prison, a lack of access to literature when needed and having to study independently without an instructor when taking university courses (p. 209). It is important to note the when inmates can see the advantages of participating in PSE; they should be encouraged, not discouraged because this could lead to employment after incarceration benefiting the inmate and community.

With the use of interviews and observations, Young, Phillips & Nasir (2010) examined a prison school and revealed practices and conflicts within the facility worth noting when seeking effective practices in training. Young et al. (2010) contended “Despite the importance of
education for rehabilitation inside the prison, relatively little descriptive or analytical work is available on educational programs in such facilities (p. 204).” Among the aspect of schooling noted by Young et al. (2010) in prison were: 1) the physical classroom, 2) safety and control, 3) stigmatization of students, 4) student permanence, and 5) the disconnection between the institutional school and youths' prior school (p. 206). Students were treated less like students in a learning environment and more like a prisoner, closely monitored physical movement, little connection with students and slow transfer of school records. Despite these facts, students reported learning and enjoying the prison school (Young et al., 2010). Inmates are most likely to return to their communities once released, an environment conducive to learning should be encouraged in an effort to prevent their recidivism.

In the Meyer et al. (2010) study, inmates reported a number of challenges encountered during their educational experience that includes the availability of quiet space to study, access to electronic resources, and lack of cooperation by correctional staff (p. 153). When asked about the positive aspects of postsecondary programs, students most frequently mentioned that they liked having an opportunity to gain knowledge, face a positive challenge, and become a better person (p. 163). When asked what they gained from their participation in postsecondary programs students cited: improved study skills and test taking ability; improved writing and content knowledge; improved social, communication, presentation, and critical thinking skills; improved relationships with peers; increased willingness to interact with and help out others in the program; increased self-esteem; a sense of accomplishment; and the ability to be a role model for others (p.173). When it comes to program improvement, students wanted greater inmate
participation and volunteers who actually majored in the courses they were teaching (Meyer et al. 2010, p. 171).

Though the benefits of correctional education has been validated, there is still some debate regarding prison education, some argue that it accomplishes it purpose, and other think that it does not work at all (Ubah & Robinson, 2003). Schlesinger (2005) conducted a study of fifteen incarcerated African American males regarding their experiences in correctional education, through a socio-cultural lens of motivation. This study focused on the non-educational motivators such as inmates engaging in correctional education for money, to congregate with friends, just walk around, get out their cell, kill time or do illegal or unethical business (p. 236). There were also inmates who did not want to vocalize an interest in education because it may be perceived as weak. Other inmates who engaged in education did so to set an example for their children. For some, school participation made them feel good and increased self-esteem while others wanted to develop the skills needed to operate their own business realizing that education is the key to success. This miscellany of motivators justifies the debate regarding the usefulness of correctional education; nonetheless, when used for its intended purpose, correctional education is what works in preventing recidivism.

The literature provides a blueprint of component necessary for an effective education and training program for inmates during Incarceration. Correctional programs standards must be equal to public standards, programming offered should reflect current industry needs, and programming should employ delivery methods that are conducive to the inmates needs and create an environment conducive to learning. These components coupled with the social services
available to inmates will reduce recidivism, the cost to house inmates and produce employable parolees.

**Social Services**

Krontiris & Watler (2009-2010) noted that a key barrier that a parolee will face when returning home is the stigma of their criminal conviction. This stigma carries with it discrimination when applying for employment and housing in some instances. These factors substantiate the need for parolees “…access to local services, including aggression management therapies, drug treatment services, housing assistance, and local employment services… (p. 79).” Also suggested is community service as a means to reintegrate the parolee into the community that will improve their social network. This reintegration will provide support in the parolees’ desistance from crime, encourage sobriety and possibly gain employment. Krontiris & Watler (2009-2010) furthermore contended “Civic engagement and education through community service is a powerful way to encourage the development of productive social capital for reentrants (p. 79)” Krontiris & Watler (2009-2010).

Alabama Department of Corrections must ensure that prior to release inmates are fully aware of the social service that are available to them. This knowledge of available service will be paramount as the inmate transition to parolee and back into the community requiring post incarceration needs.

**Effective Post-release Practices of Prison Recidivism**

The reentry process continues even after the inmate has been released from incarnation. This phase is critical and must consist of an effective post-release program. According to the literature, post-release practices that reduce recidivism after incarcerations are similar to those
pre-release programs. These practices consist of post-release planning, job skills training, behavioral modifications that aid in family adjustment, and community integration.

**Post-release Planning**

The federal government also recognized the need for a reentry program for offenders returning from prison with its Second Chance Act of 2005. This initiative seeks to strengthen the community reentry programs for parolees leaving prisons and jails. The Second Chance Act of 2005 provided “Such services which includes public assistance, housing, health and mental health services, education, and job training, would be delivered through the collaboration of the criminal justice, public health, and social service systems (Pogorzelski et al. 2005, p. 1718). In-prison services are also provided that promotes the strengthening of children and family relationships for the inmate.

Obstacles reaching post-release services are further exacerbated with the high number of parolees requiring services. Wilkinson (2001) cited an Ohio all-time prison population low in January 2001, increasing the number of parolees by 3,500. Parolee supervision once seen as a community safety-net, ensuring compliance was shattered with increased caseloads and higher demand for social services that were limited then further hampered when not prepared for the huge number of parolees. With a greater need for resources required and not available, parolees found themselves returning to prison for parole violation and rearrests. This led to the “Ohio Plan” which requires each inmate to have an individual reentry plan developed specifically for them prior to release. This plan includes the inmate’s academic, vocational, work experience and accompanies the parolee; this benefits the parole officer and parolee (Wilkinson, 2001).
A reentry task force was suggested by Krontiris & Watler (2009-2010) that would provide a rigorous and regular monitoring of the parolee, supported by consequences for the paroles noncompliance. The purpose of the task force would be twofold. A secondary task of accounting for services provided to the parolee in report form on a regular basis, displaying transparency and accountability. Once an inmate has been released, the parolee, parole officer and the community has a stake in the parolees’ success. There should be a clear and concise discharge plan prior to release and all invested parties should have access to that plan, once the parolees leaves the parole officers’ office, the community needs to step in and ensure that the parolee is in compliance with their respective discharge plan. The task force should also be a repository of information and necessary services regarding risk and should ensure that the parolees has access to this venue. In working as a unit to ensure success, should a problem occur, all parties should be informed, and work to resolve the issue (Krontiris, & Watler, 2009-2010).

Taxman (2004) contends that within the 30 days after release, it is critical to have the parolee begin to assess the degree to which he or she is vulnerable to become involved in criminal behavior, focusing on and maintaining a crime-free lifestyle. Up to two years after release, it is suggested that maintenance and crisis management be implemented, coupled with incremental advancements in the offender's life (Taxman, 2004) to include paroling authorities (Burke, 2001).

The Auglaize County Sheriff’s office (Auglaize County) in Ohio recognized the need for a reentry program that would assist offenders when returning to their community from incarceration. This office took it upon itself to establish services that assisted offenders during
this transition home for medical, drug and alcohol additions and other services needed by the parolee realizing that success would produce a safer community and reduce recidivism. In a one-year study, following the release of 145 parolees, the test group of 73 had a 12.3% rate of recidivism versus the control group of 72 which had a recidivism rate of 82%, suggesting that reentry programs indeed have a significant impact on community reintegration of its parolees (Miller & Miller, 2010).

An Australian study by Bahn (2011) prescribe the reintegration of offenders into society as a community responsibility in reducing recidivism citing that training and employment of parolees assist them in becoming contributing members of society and less likely to recidivate. Bahn (2011) also contend that educational endeavors while incarcerated are productive and beneficial due to the “…lost connections to potential employers, weakening of work and life skills (p. 263)” while the inmates complete their sentence. The greater benefit is the reduction in cost of housing offenders and increasing the level of community safety (Bahn, 2011).

Post-release planning is critical once an inmate has been released from prison. They should be fully aware of reentry services that were created specifically for them to prevent recidivism. It would behoove the Alabama Department of Corrections to work with the community in the parolees’ reintegration in an effort to provide a safer community implementing a reentry task force focused on assisting and monitoring the parolee during this crucial time. The parolee’s pre-release planning should also include job skills training and other educational services that will be discussed in the next section.
Job Skills Training and Education after Release

Sedgley, Scott, Williams & Derrick (2010) identified inmates working or engaging in education as addressing two potential causes of incarceration and recidivism. Lack of education and job skills that mirrors Bahn (2011) perspective on training and employment. Recidivism, according to Sedgley et al. (2010), “… includes all returns to Ohio state prisons--a new criminal conviction or a violation of the conditions of parole or probation--as all returns affect the prison cost and the prison population (p. 503).” In a ten-year study consisting of 4515 parolees released for Ohio prisons, three prison recidivism programs were evaluated to estimate the cost saved by not returning a parolee back to prison based on the recidivism programs. These three programs consisted of prison industry labor, education programs and (internal) prison jobs. At the conclusion of the study effective job and educational programs were determined to have created a significant cost saving of over $3000 per inmate (in this 1992 study) due to the decreased recidivism of associated with prison jobs (Sedgley et al., 2010, p. 515).

Bierens & Carvalho (2011) re-evaluated the effectiveness of the 1985 “Employment Services for Ex-Offenders” (ESEO) program designed to reduce the rate of recidivism. Efficacious programs noted for post-placement of parolees and follow-up strategies that counteracted previous notions of previous programs were: the Comprehensive Offender Resource System (COERS) in Boston, the Safer Foundation (SF) in Chicago and Project JOVE in San Diego (p. 2). In this re-evaluation, Bierens & Carvalho (2011) examined the effect of the ESEO program.

In the ESEO program, after being assigned randomly to either the control or treatment group, the clients enter the intake unit, where they receive initial orientation, screening
and evaluation by an intake counsellor. While still in this first phase, to secure survival up to the job search phase, the intake counsellor offers assistance services such as food, transportation, and clothing. After intake, the clients enter the second phase that will prepare them to develop job search skills. In particular, a brief job development seminar is offered which deals with issues like appropriate dress and deportment, typical job rules, goal setting, interviewing techniques, and job hunting strategy. It is assumed that the time spent in the first and second phases are negligible compared to the job search phase. The next and final phase before possible treatment is the job search assistance. This is the traditional job search assistance type of service as described by Bloom (2006) and Heckman et al. (1999). The job search assistance in the ESEO program is offered equally to both control and treatment group (Bierens & Carvalho, 2011, p. 7).

The results of this re-evaluation were encouraging in having a positive effect on the parolee’s recidivism; however, the results were not entirely as expected. The ESEO program did in fact, reduce the risk of recidivism as hoped, but only for offenders over age 27 in San Diego and Chicago, for Boston that age was 36. The risk of recidivism increased however, for ex-offenders in the treatment group (Bierens & Carvalho, 2011).

A study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a life-skills-oriented psycho educational program on participant recidivism. The goal was to curtail future criminal activity and the elimination or reduction in crime as measured by post-treatment recidivism data (Quist & Matshazi, 2000) with a grant sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) that supports counseling programs and requires the program coordinators to gather data on client recidivism (Lancaster, Balkin, Garcia & Valarezo 2011). One group of
youth completed the program at a university operated community center while the other group completed the program in a community probation program. The inquiry hypothesized that youth who completed the program at the university operated community center would have a lower rate of recidivism. The inquiry hypothesis proved true that 60% of the participants who complete the program at the university operated community center did not recidivate. Of the participants counseled at the community probation program, 46% did not recidivate during the 24-month period when data were gathered (Lancaster, Balkin, Garcia & Valarezo, 2011).

An Australian study by Bahn (2011), supports reintegration of parolees into society as a community responsibility in reducing recidivism, citing Vocational Education Training (VET) and employment of parolees assist them in becoming contributing members of society and less likely to recidivate. In Western Australia (WA), the Juvenile Offenders Training Employability Strategy (JOTES) mandates that while incarcerated, juveniles completed industry-related training. This mandate is further enhanced with community links that employees these juvenile offenders to ensure successful integration upon their release. In Western Australia “…45% of WA adult prisoners were engaged in work whilst incarcerated; with 30% participating in education and vocational training (p. 263).” Training during incarceration was also viewed as somewhat therapeutic reducing inmate’s boredom and frustration in some instances. Long term training or apprenticeships that would extend beyond prison walls would further enhance community integration and possibly employment stability. Bahn (2011) acknowledges the need for inmate training and employment approaches before an inmate’s release that would integrate the parolee into the community. This integration is considered a community responsibility in creating a safer community for everyone. Providing the inmate with employable job skills
supports the parolee helping them to become a contributing member of society and menace to society Bahn (2011).

Through observation, students were able to observe how ex-offenders used entry level jobs as initial employment; understand the importance of being prepared for encounters with old friends (p. 134); they learned to identify positive and negative behaviors, and the importance of setting goals and proper planning. The Ohio Department of Youth Services has mandated that all inmates within a few weeks of release must complete 12 hours of classes on Goal Setting, Work and Self-Management Skills, Resume Preparation and Job Search, Interviewing and Job Retention. This student observation and mandatory classes proved to benefit the student (Finch, 2005). Same or similar classes would benefit Alabama’s parolees as well.

These studies are clear; it would behoove the State of Alabama to invest in job skills training and educational programming to save the State money and increase the parolees’ chances of not recidivating. The State should also encourage industry and businesses to integrate parolees into mainstream training as much as possible especially those receiving State incentives. In addition to job skills training and other educational services, positive family and community integration are also factors that will ensure the parolee’s success.

**Parolee Family and Community Integration**

Family and community support are paramount in the parolees’ reentry success. Bui & Morash (2010) investigated the effects of offenders and their relationships with people in their social networks before, during, and after their release from incarceration on their refraining from crime which proved to be successful. However, negative relations with family, friends or partners can produce the opposite effect and prevent successful reentry. This study revealed how
the separation caused by incarceration helped to sever ties, networks and bonds that caused the inmates imprisonment. During incarceration many inmates were able to build prosocial networks and gain the determination to no longer become exploited, abused or fall into unhealthy relationships. This study drew “…attention to the potential benefits of changed and expanded network relationships for women offenders, and the worth of instituting prison and parole programming to promote such networks” (Bui & Morash, 2010, p. 19).

Family support, being married or having a partner, living with a family member, and being a parent were not associated with the likelihood of returning to prison. Variables associated with not being re-incarcerated usually consist of a number of close relationships within the family network, the quality of the parent-child relationship, being employed, and having stable housing (Bahr, 2005). Men are returning to family life following prison experience in record numbers and successful reentry into family life may positively influence re-arrest rates (Day & Acock, 2005).

Returning home from incarceration can be a difficult time for the parolee, the family and the community. The vast majority men, who likely were convicted of drug offenses, and are also likely to be substance abusers; family support during this time is crucial. Engaging the family in reintegration can improve the parolee’s success which matters to everyone. Coming home means that family and friends are the initial providers of food, shelter, clothing and that much needed emotional support of the parolee. “Several studies confirm that individuals who maintain contact with family members while incarcerated have greater success on parole. People with stronger social ties, for example, experience fewer (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001, p. 54)” however, the length of a person’s incarceration can make it difficult for families to reconnect (Shapiro &
Schwartz, 2001). The returning parolee must understand that during their absence family members had to assume different roles in continuing their lives, the time needed for them to readjust should be honored. Additionally, the family must not be afraid to seek professional assistance in developing a plan that coaches them along as they continue their journey to reunification and successful return home (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001).

The growing number of released inmates generates a host of problems for the receiving communities, primarily increasing the local crime. Statistics have shown that most ex-offenders have post-release run-ins with the legal system. Approximately 70 percent are rearrested within three years of release, and nearly 50 percent are eventually returned to prison. These numbers suggest a level of criminal activity among parolees that could impose substantial social costs on receiving communities (Raphael & Stoll, 2004). These numbers can be curtailed with proper training and support after the inmate’s release.

The literature identifies the benefits of a positive social network; this interaction should be impressed upon inmates during incarceration which lessens their chances of recidivating. The parolees’ family and community integration is a significant component in their reentry success. The adjustment to home and their previous environment can be a difficult experience for them.

Summary

Prison recidivism is a phenomenon that society must endure, and it affects everyone. Inmates must be prepared for reentry into society if the current recidivism rate is to be reduced, creating a safer and stronger society. The literature has provided a blueprint as to how prison recidivism can be curtailed by providing drug and alcohol treatment, job skills and educational training, combined with positive family and community support. The literature provides a clear
understanding of the cause of recidivism and the importance of applying practices that reduce recidivism during and after incarceration.

This research will focus on parolees within the State of Alabama who were released from incarceration within the past three years. The intent is to uncover which practices were instrumental in the parolees’ experience causing them to desist from criminal activity as the literature as demonstrated rendering this study qualitative in nature.
Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative, ethnographic case study focused on effective practices which reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. These practices are based on the participants’ personal experiences; their voice and what they considered important contributors to their success in desistance from criminal activity. The goal was to find out what works best, what is lacking, what can be improved upon, based on their personal experiences. Therefore, the critical-ideological paradigm is used.

The critical-ideological paradigm is a qualitative tool that focuses on the participants’ experiences and not solely on outsiders’ observations. The critical-ideological paradigm assumes the researcher and participant share values that influence the inquiry. I set out to uncover historical conflict and suffrage of the participants (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

The researcher examining the problem of practice based on the critical-ideological paradigm may contend all inmates are entitled to the necessary resources to prepare them for a successful reentry into society. The critical-ideological paradigm was appropriate because it challenges the status quo and “…the emphasis on dialectical interaction leading to emancipation (from oppression) and a more egalitarian and democratic social order… (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130).” The purpose of this study was to identify effective practices, which reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. In identifying and implementing these effective practices, participants stand a greater chance of succeeding as free citizens.

The next section will focus on the “Research Design” and why a qualitative method was most appropriate for this study. The “Research Design” section is followed by “Research
Tradition”, which provides a rationale as to why ethnographic case study helped to guide this study best. This is followed by “Participants” in which the population and sampling strategy is described. “Recruitment and Access” follows Participants explaining how they became involved with this study. How data was collected follows, and then how data was stored and maintained. Next, data analysis and the processing of this data will be discussed. Finally, maintaining trustworthiness, establishing reciprocity and identifying limitation will be discussed.

Research Design

A qualitative approach to research uncovers life experiences whereby the researcher gains a contextual overview of a phenomenon through data collection and analysis, then identifying emerging themes (Miles & Hubereman, 1994). This study is based on participants’ experiences as it relates to the effects of education, training and social services received during and after their incarceration. Their recidivism can be partially attributed to the current pre-release curriculum implemented by the Alabama Department of Corrections. Qualitative studies are conducted when there is a problem or issue which needs to be explored (Creswell, 2012); the continual increase in prison recidivism qualifies as such problem or issue based on the literature and the Alabama Department of Corrections’ statistical data regarding inmates and parolees.

Research Tradition

When considering the various qualitative approaches to employ for this study, three approaches were considered: phenomenology, case study and ethnography. The case study approach was considered due to its focus on a single case or cases (for this study, the ADOC pre-release curriculum). A phenomenological study was considered due to its focus on the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon experienced by an individual or
many individuals (inmates or parolees) (Creswell, 2012a). However, ethnography seemed to be
the most befitting approach for this study. This research focuses on individuals and their shared
patterns, their shared experiences and training during incarceration. These shared experiences
transcend into the community once released. Therefore, the ethnography approach “…for which
the research describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs,
and language of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2012a, p. 90)” is appropriate for this study.
In examining the experiences and daily lives of inmates, Indberbitzin (2005) affirms ethnography
as “…an explicit attempt to make visible the patterns of their lives and the ways in which they
experienced punishment … (p. 2)” during their incarceration. In this approach, ethnography will
enable this study to make visible the practices parolees have experienced both pre- and post-
release, which were effective in their success.

The ethnographic case study approach is used in this study because of the desire to
examine the effectiveness of the Alabama Department of Corrections’ existing pre-release
curriculum from the parolees’ perspectives. Creswell (2012) indicates ethnography studies may
not fit “cleanly” in one category or another. This study is an example of such research focusing
on the parolees’ voice and their experiences regarding the Alabama Department of Corrections’
existing pre-release curriculum. This method also provides a more in-depth understanding of
the findings in this ethnographic case study approach using a critical-ideological lens where
effective practices, the lived experience, is communicated from the participants’ perspective.
This study attempts to add an authentic view of how successful individuals view practices which
enabled them to remain productive emancipated citizens.
Participants

The population for this study consists of individuals who have been convicted of committing a crime. This population consists of two groups. The first included individuals who served their initial term of sentencing and did not return to incarceration. The second group included individuals who served their initial term of sentencing, were released from incarceration and were later re-incarcerated for a subsequent term. According to Creswell (2012a) “in ethnography, I like well-defined studies of single culture-sharing groups, with numerous artifacts, interviews, and observations collected until the workings of the cultural group are clear (p. 157).” Six individuals were the focus for this study - three individuals who did not recidivate and three who did recidivate -- all of whom were released within the past three years and all live within the State of Alabama. The three-year range in time is a critical period based on Meyer, Fredericks, Borden & Richardson (2010) study which suggests individuals who will recidivate, usually do so within three years of their release and of which, 68% are expected to experience subsequent arrest.

The sampling strategies that was appropriate for this study was maximum variation and opportunistic with the State of Alabama being the only geographical limitation. Participants search consisted of all ethnicities with no age limitation - the intent was to interview participants who were released and returned to Alabama communities. It was a must that participants for this study meet two criterions: to have been incarcerated in an Alabama Department of Corrections’ facility and released within the past three years. The two mandatory requirements for participation in this research study was stressed numerous times; however, it wasn’t until after the interview began that Participant 1 made reference to a state facility other than Alabama as
well as a release date that was outside the limits for this research study. This participants’ interview had to be discarded.

**Recruitment and Access**

The individuals for this study were recruited within the State of Alabama. The initial intent was to recruit participants via Alabama Department of Corrections’ Probation and Parole Board and the Madison County Probation and Parole Office. However, no response was received from the Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner’s office regarding its interviewing protocol. Additional steps were taken, and contact with the Alabama Department of Corrections’ Public Information office regarding protocol for interviewing inmates was secured. At that time two options were presented: correspond and interview inmates through U.S. mail or prepare a proposal for face-to-face interview with inmates, and it would be considered. In contacting the Madison County Probation and Parole office regarding its interviewing protocol for parolees a referral to the State of Alabama’s website was suggested where all questions could be answered; however, this was not the case. The Madison County Probation and Parole office insisted that their office had never participated in research studies and did not foresee participation in their future.

Based on responses from direct contact with State and local offices, the decision was made to use snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to reach participants, with the initial point of contact consisting of previous students, friends and acquaintances. As a volunteer instructor for a Basic Computer Skills course, when mentioning this research topic, several students volunteered to assist as participants and provide referrals. The participants chosen for the study were selected solely by the date they were released from incarceration. Interviewees
were recruited for two separate groups; one group will consist of individuals who did recidivate and one group will consist of individuals who did not recidivate.

Data Collection

The process of data collection was based on Creswell’s (2012a) data collection activities. This research study consisted of digital voice recorded interviews with six individuals who were convicted of committing a crime. Interviews were conducted at researcher’s office, participants’ home, or via of telephone based on the most convenient method for the participant. The lengths of the interviews were between 18 and 68 minutes depending on the participants’ willingness to provide detailed information and follow-up questions. Two interviews were digitally recorded and performed face-to-face with four interviews via telephone; a microcassette recorder was also taken on each interview for backup as well as additional batteries to minimize any mishaps. The interviewees were all asked for their permission to record the interview prior to recording and again once recording began. The interviews were captured on a digital recorder beginning with the Interview Protocol (Appendix C) explaining the purpose of the interview, interviewee selection and what the research intends to achieve. During the interview process a journal was maintained which served as a consciousness of my values and interests that may infringe upon the analysis. In doing so, a log was maintained during the interview process where person thoughts and perceptions of the participants’ and their responses were noted. The journal allowed for a re-examining of preconceived notions of the participants’ response versus the actual response and was useful during the entire process of data collection and analysis. The journal was also useful when participants shared additional thoughts and concerns after the recorded interview had concluded. Interviews for this study were conducted with participants
within the State of Alabama from the cities of Birmingham and Huntsville in an effort to draw from diverse communities, and economic environments.

**Data Storage**

According to Miles & Huberman (1994) “…data management and data analysis are integrally related. There is no firm boundary between them (p. 45).” Data storage is crucial and precautionary measures should be taken for storing and safeguarding information. Even with today’s technology, data can easily become corrupt, lost or damaged. According to Creswell (2012a) there are steps a researcher can take to safeguard data. The interviewer should: backup files, use quality storage medium, maintain a master list of types of information gathered, and one of the most important, participants’ anonymity in the data storage.

At the conclusion of an interview session, the interview was downloaded to the researchers’ laptop computer and rename as “Participant” followed by a sequence number (i.e. Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). The pseudonym “Participant” was used to provide anonymity for all participants taking part in this research study. No one, other than the researcher had access to this computer which is also password protected. Upon completion of all interviews, the researcher downloaded all digital files to a Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drive and a representative of Orion Transcription Services, Inc. collected the data. Prior to relinquishing possession of the USB flash drive containing digital files of his interviews, the researcher obtained a signed copy of the transcriber’s confidentiality agreements (Appendix D). Data in both cases was stored in Microsoft Word© documents secured by password protection maintained by the research with access granted to the primary investigator.
Coding

Once the interviews were completed the data collected was transcribed, after transcription, coding began. Codes can be described as “…tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 56)” and can be used to describe a word, a phrase or sentence even (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I listened to the recorded interviews as I read through each transcript and pre-coded (Saldana, 2009) the data circling and underling significant words or passages. Open coding, an analysis of the transcription word by word and line by line identifying concepts and categories by which the data can be broken down further (Grbich, 2007) was then used. The process of open coding for this study consisted of making notation in the margins of the transcribed interview, this method allowed the researcher to quickly identify the codes while reviewing the transcription and listening to the interview. This method also permitted the researcher to easily develop categories for the open coding while aligning with Miles & Huberman (1994) allowing “…the researcher can quickly find, pull out, a cluster the segments relating to a particular research questions… (p. 57).”

The codes were extracted from each interview transcription separately using In Vivo Coding where he used “… a word or short phrase … (Saldana 2009, p. 74)” from the original data to establish codes. This method of coding is appropriate for qualitative studies and especially in educational ethnographic studies. These codes were then recorded in a codebook (Saldana, 2009). The codebook allowed the researcher to log and analyze pre-codes and then establish initial codes that were a compilation of all interview transcriptions. Initial codes were
then refined to create categories that would accurately grouped codes found in all six transcriptions.

Once categories were created, applicable codes were grouped across all six transcriptions, and then reduced from categories into themes. In doing so, the researcher referred to the first research question to ensure his themes satisfied this question “How has the Alabama Department of Corrections executed its re-entry program such that it achieves its mission of providing a positive re-entry for its inmates?” Ensured that the first two themes did encompass the factors indicated by the research participants in answering the first research question, focus then changed to the second question. The second research question to be answered was “What pre-release and post-release practices do parolees view as being most effective in remaining free of criminal activity and adjusting to life after their release from incarceration?” The remaining themes satisfied this question.

Multiple coding strategies were employed that enabled the shift from initial pre-coding of each individual transcript to final themes of this research study (Table 2). The researcher ensured that all categories and final themes were applicable across all individual transcripts and that each participant’s voice was captured and reflected in each final theme (Appendix E).

**Trustworthiness**

Shenton (2004) has provided numerous methods by which the researcher can ensure trustworthiness for a quality qualitative study. The primary methods employed to provide credibility for this study consist of: (a) the adoption of “well established (p. 64)” research methods, (b) “tactics to help ensure honesty (p. 66)”, and (c) “previous research findings (p. 69).” This was instrumental in validating this research. The line of questioning, interviewing
Table 2

*Initial Code and Final Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Code</th>
<th>Final Themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-entry (Program)</td>
<td>Pre-release Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources (updated/current)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ready-to-Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Programs</td>
<td>Special Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incarceration Beneficial</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Determination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Get out there and get it, work for it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>Family Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parole Officer</td>
<td>Supervised Release</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive People / One-to-one Counseling</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental/Physical Health Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Additions</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rehabilitation Services</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Employment</td>
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</table>

parolees versus inmates being observed by guards and relating this research study to previous studies, are methods which will be implemented. These methods were used in establishing the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. This study examined the effectiveness of the State of Alabama’s existing pre-release curriculum; therefore the research will be valid for all potential parolees within the State of Alabama, fulfilling the criteria of transferability “…the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004, p. 69).” Dependability was achieved by providing a detailed report of the process within the study to allow for easy duplication of work and “…enable the readers of the research report to develop a
thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness…(Shenton, 2004, p. 71)” in guiding this study.

Internal validity threats could have consisted of inmates fearing they cannot speak openly and honestly. Therefore, only parolees, individuals who have been released from incarceration, were recruited as participants.

**Reciprocity**

The participants in this study were provided a chance to speak, a chance to be received by someone who not only listened, but was committed to being a vessel for their voice. The participant provided the study and the readers an intimate encounter of their experiences - what worked and, in some cases, what did not work. This level of interaction has not been experienced by much of the world which makes their voice unique. In concert, the researcher and the participant set out to uncover practices that could be implemented by the State of Alabama, based on the participants’ experiences, which will ensure the success of future parolees.

**Limitations**

The limitation or potential weakness (Creswell, 2012) of this study was its focuses on a small body of participants whose experiences are bound by and limited to the State of Alabama. Therefore, the findings resulting from this study may not be applicable to all inmates within the United States and all parolees. This is due to the fact each State has its own pre-release programming if they have programming at all. This research set out to provide insight based on the parolees’ perspective and not the assumptions of others who have not shared their experiences. This snapshot is based on the lived experiences and the practices that helped them
to remain free from incarceration.

Another limitation may have existed in the study was the lack of an established relationship. The interaction between the researcher and the participant was limited to the initial request conversation, the interview and subsequent review of transcripts had the participant desired a review. An established relationship could cause an interviewee to be more trusting and open with the research, possibly providing a more in-depth and meaningful responses to the research questions.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The first priority for this study was the well-being of its participants. The researcher did not want to risk any adverse actions, which may have ensued when interviewing currently incarcerated individuals. This study did not consist of prisoners or any individuals who are currently involuntarily confined to any penal institution (HHS); therefore, this study did not consist of a vulnerable population. The participants of this study were assured the information regarding their personal experiences would be handled with the utmost care and anonymity. The participants were reminded to refrain from providing any self-incriminate information during the interview process.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

This research study was undertaken to seek out and uncover effective practices that can reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. This research focused on capturing the voices, the views and the experiences lived by the participants of this study which are of a marginalized population. Only the participant can speak to their knowledge and involvement regarding the Alabama Department of Corrections’ existing pre-release/re-entry programs and curricula. Only the participant can speak to contributing factors that have helped and encouraged them to desist from criminal activity, remain free of incarceration and not recidivate. This chapter provides a narrative of the project participants and an analysis of the narratives according to six themes: department of corrections reintegration programming, special programs, family support, supervised release benefits and detriment, physical and social environmental factors and social services, followed by the summary.

Participant Narratives

This study focuses on the experiences of six participants who were released from a State of Correctional Alabama facility within the past three years. The participants discuss their experiences during and after prison incarceration and effective practices that have contributed to them desisting from crime and criminal behavior. The participants’ experiences had shared components but each of them had a unique experience that contributes to the essence of this study. For the sake of anonymity, pseudonyms have been used for each participant of this study who will be referred to as Jessica, Darren, Johnathan, Pete, Isaiah and Travis. This section will provide a brief sketch of each participant. The narratives are brief as not to lead, sway or force
opinions of the participants that may create biases or preconceptions of the participants when experiencing their journeys.

**Jessica.** This soft-spoken mother of two exuded a meekness and gentleness during the interview process that caused the session to resemble a conversation between close friends. After serving three years of incarceration and released for one year, the resolve to abstain from criminal activity was unequivocal. It was fueled by the love for her boys, the resolution to be a good mother and not disappoint her family again.

The 29-years old woman and the mother of two boys was the first member of her family convicted for a crime. Convicted of theft she served three years of a 10-year sentence, and has not committed any additional crimes. She completed high school, was employed prior to her incarceration and attained Cosmetology training while incarcerated. Released from incarceration January 2013, Jessica’s worst aspect of being incarcerated was being away from her children, the youngest less than one year old when she began her sentence. One thing that got her through this ordeal was monthly visits from her sons during her entire incarceration. Visitations were made possible by a local service that works with the correctional system. Her primary concerns just prior to release were finding a job, reconnecting to society and what family, friends and people in general would think of her. After release, Jessica found a job within four months and chose not to reengage her pre-incarceration network of friends because they were the reason that she “got in all the trouble” and they were not there for her during her incarceration and time of need.

**Darren.** Darren was interviewed at his home - a smoke filled residence with people present while others came in went; nonetheless he was enthusiastic, eager to share his experiences and thoroughly engaging. Darren, spoke candidly regarding his depression, drug
addiction, family involvement with drugs, his mistakes and his determination to remain free.
Darren was a storyteller, so much so that after he retired to a backroom, the listeners wanted to discuss what they had gleaned from the interview. Darren’s experiences not only contributed to the wealth of this study, but he contributes to those he comes in contact with, as well.

Darren is 40-years old and served three separate terms of incarceration after being convicted of robbery, receiving stolen property and probation violation serving 34 months (nearly 3 years) of his last 10-year sentence. Released from incarceration November 2011, Darren was able to find work within a week or two after his release. He attended college where he attained Cosmetology/Barbering training and was the first of his family to be incarcerated. Darren’s worst aspect of being incarcerated was losing his freedom; being told when to eat, sleep, take showers and use the restroom - essentially everything. Another aspect mentioned was trying to avoid confrontation with inmates serving 25 – 40 year sentences; they would try to create a situation that could “add additional time to your sentence, especially if you have people on the outside doing things for you.” Darren looked back on incarceration as “time to really focus on what you want to do. I mean, look at your mistakes and try to change them.” His primary concerns just prior to release were returning to the same environment, being around the same people in the same situations that caused him to be in contact with illegal activities.

**Johnathan.** Johnathan was intriguing; being the only person in his family to be incarcerated, a recidivist and ex-military with his military bearings still very much intact. Johnathan spoke very highly of his family who supplied all of his needs during and after his incarceration. No other participant of this study had a choice of jobs upon their release and a
vehicle awaiting them. He recognized his unique position and was determined not to let his family down again because of their love and support.

Johnathan now 46-years old, served two separated terms of incarceration for rape – he received 25 years, served nine years; and for receiving stolen property - he received fifteen years served three. Johnathan and released from incarceration May 2013. Johnathan works as a barber and was awarded an Associate’s Degree prior to incarceration. He attained Auto Body Repair skills in the military and Small Engine skills while incarcerated. Johnathan was the first member of his family to be incarcerated and his major concern prior to release was trying to help his mother after his father passed during his incarceration. Johnathan was also concerned with how he was going to be able to support himself, but found work within one month of his release. After his first incarceration, he realized that it was time to reevaluate his network of friends. He chose a circle of friends that were “pretty much above board,” mostly married, have jobs and “all around moral people.” The worst part of being incarcerated for Johnathan was being torn away from his family missing various events such as birthdays and family deaths.

Pete. Pete was a man with a lot on his mind; he had quite a bit to share and was eager to get started. Pete, a recidivist with multiple incarcerations within his family stood out, but this wasn’t the most notable contribution. Pete added a new and unexpected depth to this study, Pete was an inmate with a disability, a condition that not many consider when pondering prison, prison recidivism and more importantly sustainability after incarceration, but it cannot be ignored.

Pete is 48-years old and served two terms of incarceration: distribution sales of marijuana a 7-year conviction where he served 18 months, and two-robbery counts in the 1st degree where
he served 13 years. Pete was released from incarceration December 2013. Pete worked as a bus driver prior to his incarceration, attended college and attained skills in Furniture Upholstery while incarcerated. Prior to release from incarceration, Pete was concerned about his 69 year old mother and how he would be received by his 11 kids and 30 grandkids. Pete recalls the worst aspect of incarceration as being “locked up, like you’re an animal.” Incarceration and programs offered during incarceration allowed him to see his life as “wild and untamable…not fit for society,” but got the help he needed to control his behavior.

Isaiah. Isaiah had the most convictions of any participant in this study; his initial persona was that of an angry slightly bitter young man. Isaiah had the shortest interview of all; he was aloof and provided unusually short answers with very little detail. He was extremely difficult to engage, and the interview seemed as if it was forced versus voluntary. Surprisingly, after the last question was answered and the recording ended, Isaiah expressed his desires to help prevent anyone from taking his route. He offered to speak to anyone or any group of people if it would help in preventing anyone from incarceration.

At 33-years old, Isaiah was the youngest of the male participants and served four terms of incarceration. Isaiah was convicted of receiving stolen property and breaking and entering causing him to serve a three year sentence. He was also convicted of possession of a controlled substance serving two years; robbery 3rd degree serving 18 months, and a technical violation that caused him to serve two years. Released from incarceration December 2013, he is the only person in his family to be convicted of a crime. It wasn’t until his fourth release that he came to realize that “going around with the same people, you're going to get in the same trouble you been getting in.” Isaiah’s worst aspect of being incarcerated was losing family member during his
incarceration, two in one week that “started opening my eyes.” His last incarceration also provided time needed to “sit and get his mind together, focus on staying out of prison” and being with his family.

**Travis.** Travis was extremely excited about sharing his experiences and being home with his family. He considered himself blessed as he was the only participant who took part in the Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility program. This experience brought a new dimension to this study exposing a new program that focuses on behavioral therapy and vocational training for individuals incarcerated in the State of Alabama. Travis felt this program prepared him spiritually and emotionally. This program also provided him with a new skill set. Travis contributes the treatment and services received at the Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility, as helping him becoming a better father, son and brother and his overall ability to communicate with others. Without Travis’ participation in this study, I would not have been aware of this program.

Travis is 45 years old, convicted of 1st degree robbery & possession of a controlled substance. He served six years and four months of an eight-year sentence and has not committed any additional crimes since his release from incarceration December 2013. Travis completed high school and attained Plumbing/Fork Lift skills prior to incarceration. Travis was able to attain employment within two months of his release and chose not to return to his previous network of friends. Those friends were not there for him during his incarceration, and he knew that he would return to prison if he were to be around them. Although being away from his family was tough, he had time reflect on what he wanted and looked forward to his future with his kids.
The interviews of the six participants Jessica, Darren, Johnathan, Pete, Isaiah and Travis have contributed to the themes that emerged and collectively address effective practices that have caused them to desist from criminal activity, thereby reducing the rate of recidivism.

**Themes**

The following six themes: department of corrections reintegration programming, special programs, family support, supervised release benefit and detriment, physical and social environmental factors and social services represent shared responses from the participants which addresses the research questions. Department of Corrections Reintegration Programming was derived from the participants interviews as they shared their experiences with the ADOC’s re-entry program, resources (literature) received, and their references to trade school, school and computer training. Special programs consist of various platforms identified by participants that contributed to their personal development and self-determination some of which were considered a benefit of their incarceration. Families and community support provided the participants with financial, spiritual and moral support which helped to sustain them during and after incarceration. Supervised release is mandatory in the State of Alabama for individuals granted early release from incarceration. This service provided the participants with guidance, resources and served as a reminder of their conditional release. The participants’ environment consisted of their network of friends and family in some cases which were often the catalyst to their incarceration. Social services consisted of one-to-one counseling, attaining mental evaluation and treatment, treatment for addictions and employment services; all contributing to the participants success.
Theme 1: Alabama Department of Corrections’ Reintegration Programming

All participants were asked questions related to the Alabama Department of Corrections’ (ADOC) pre-release/re-entry program. The Alabama Department of Corrections’ Reintegration Programming includes the ADOC’s re-entry program, resources and skills training as well as programs offered by outside agencies that bring their independent programs into the correctional system for inmates. Programming offered by external agencies varied regarding location, where programming was offered and which facilities programming was offered varied as well. The participants of this study completed their sentences at various facilities throughout the state to include both male and female facilities. The location and gender specific facilities resulted in varying programming opportunities and resources. The Department of Corrections Reintegration Programming offered by the Alabama Department of Corrections’ Re-entry Program consists of, Resources (literature), Skills Training and Personal Development.

Alabama Department of Corrections’ Re-entry Program. To gain insight of the ADOC’s re-entry program, participants were asked the question “In your experience how are people actually prepared for release?” There were participants who expressed how well versed the program currently is in preparing inmates for release, while other disagreed or had mixed feelings. All participants expressed ideas as to how the current re-entry program could be improved upon.

Isaiah offered “They have kind of like a little class that they give some people who get out, but it don't really prepare you for what's going on out here, man.” When asked if he participated in the re-entry program he stated “No, it's for people who EOS (End of Sentence) not parole people.” Jessica described the program as a two-week, six-hour day class that helped
her after release. Jessica shared “It gives you material so when you get out you can go and (get) help. Different people come in to speak and tell you stuff you can do when you get out and they’re behind you 100% when you get out to help you along the way.” Darren offered mixed reviews of the re-entry program as he describes:

I think it was like a three or four day thing where they brought in different people, you know what I’m saying. They brought in different organizations. The pre-release program, they came and taught you and told you things that was available to you like the food stamps assistance like that and different vocational rehabilitation places that you can go to and how you can get help, but when you get out and you try to pursue those things, it’s like the pre-release program tells you what to do to be eligible for these things, but when you get to the place like [facility redacted] and different places, they told me I wasn’t eligible to receive the things that they said I was at the pre-release program. But, I did receive food assistance benefits… the people that they had coming in, you have, what do they call those, their case worker, the people that review your files, they had like the main people there, so like they had food, and then they had the main people coming in, and like I said, they had people who were incarcerated before, so when you see people come in and say that they made it, I think that if they can do it, then I can do it. I think that was a very positive thing.

Johnathan and Pete revealed a different perspective than Darren of the ADOC’s pre-release program indicating that inmates are “loosely” prepared for re-entry and even “slow” to some degree. When Johnathan was asked for his opinion on how inmates are prepared for release he expressed:
Loosely, I believe that more can be done, because like when we went to pre-release days, they have these little, I don't know how long they were, like 15-minute session or 30-minute session, or an hour session on different subjects, but really, you can't learn, I mean they really can't teach you or show you anything in 2 or 3 days, I'm saying, especially if you don't already have an understanding of what is going on, and a lot of inmates today for some reason they get lost behind that wall. They are dealing with non-reality, and it's hard I guess you could say when they get out because they live in a fairy-tale world, so it's hard. I can't really verbalize it. I can't really put it into words right now, but it's hard, though, when you go through pre-release, and they show you these things once or twice and they can't pick up on it. I mean I did, it was no problem, but I saw that in other guys there, it was hard for them to understand what was going on. I think we had to go to a week or almost two weeks, so I won't really say that the length is too short, but the time spent on certain subjects needs to be extended, I'll just say it like that.

Pete echoed the sentiments of Johnathan. In his opinion, he did not feel that the program was offered far enough in advance, prior to release, so that the inmate would be truly prepared for release. This was combined with the relatively short period in which information was presented. He shares his views of preparation as:

Slow. They're being prepared slow. You got this one program that at the end....they give it to you a couple of months or so before you're getting ready to come out. It's called pre-release. And pre-release, it kind of like updates you on the things that's going on in the world in a sense of, as far as what they call giving you tools to work with. Things you need to know ahead of time. How to get back in school or how to have jobs, you know,
applications already prepared for you before you hit the street, and a whole bunch of things that's intertwined into the pre-release program, but the thing is, is that.....Listen, pre-release is a good thing too, but the thing is this. It's given them such a short segment. It's a 3-day segment. Let's just give them a week. Let's say that they cram everything that they're trying to prepare you for in the pre-release, they cram it into 3 or 4 days, and it's like teaching you your options or your help as far as, you know, what people that's alright that's willing to help you upon your release, you know, the places you can go, you know, like filling out applications to get back in school or applications, you know, I went and got a whole bunch of jobs that will hire convicts that's coming out of penitentiary. You know, these type of things are already on paper for you. You know, you got a job listing. You got school listings. You got a neighborhood listings as far as NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings, and you got family court help, you know, for the guys that's caught up in child support. You got all this type of stuff that's tied into the pre-release program. But, the information, I feel is a little slow, and the reason I mean a little slow is because they give it to you in such a hurry, and you don't really have time to soak it in. You know, if you do 13 years, you got time to soak it in because these are the things that....Listen, if you do 13 years in the penitentiary, and you want to go back to the street, you need to be spending the 13 years on preparing yourself to go back to the street. In other words, you can't get lost. If you stay in the penitentiary 13 years and don't keep up with what's going on out there in the world, you're going to be lost. You're going to be lost. So like I said, man, you got to be willing. It's got to be a profound language being spoken in your mind to your heart and
all of that. You got to hear a profound message on what you need to do and what you need to have in order to go back into society after doing all this time, you know. I've heard some things, I've seen some things, and I caught on. I didn't wait until the last minute to start trying to prepare to come back out here to the street.

Travis offered a unique perspective of the re-entry program based on the unique situation he found himself in. Although he spent many years in the traditional facility prior to his transfer to a new program (facility), he expressed:

They had a reentry program, but also, I was blessed once again. They have a new program called ATEF (Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility) (ATEF, n.d.) that’s out of Columbiana. It's a program where you get three months of schooling and they really told you how to make it in society plus how to do resumes. You can use computers, and basically, it really helped you to reconnect back into society.

Resources (literature). The pre-release and reentry programs provided resources to the inmates prior to release consisting of community referrals, information regarding housing, employment and other services aimed at preparing the inmate for their transition back into the community. Jessica described the variety of resource provided prior to her release and offered:

They gave a list of jobs, health service, dental, stuff like that. Clothing, where I could get help for apartment places. And then another thing, before you get out they do a home plan with you so if you don’t have a place to go they’ll try to find somewhere in your district to go. Like if you’re in Birmingham or close to it they’ll sometimes offer Lovelady (Lovelady, n.d.) to you.
Darren also found the resources decimated prior to his release from incarceration to be helpful as well, arming him with “something to fight with” especially when it came to employment as he shares his experience:

I think it really did help me because when I came home, I had a folder, and it gave you a list of all the people that hire people with felonies, all of the companies and corporations, so I think it was very helpful because if you get out without this information, it’s kind of like you don’t know nothing, but if you have this information, it’s something to fight with. You can try, you can pursue this because you got [facility redacted] and all different kinds of places that hire people with felonies, so you can see this and not think that it’s a hopeless situation because you know these people are already telling you through the pre-release program that they do hire. They might not hire you, but they do hire people with felonies so they give you something to at least press towards and push towards and not feel like it’s a hopeless situation.

Travis, who agreed with Jessica, argued that the resources provided contain everything a person needed to succeed and if they didn’t it was their fault:

They gave us lots of news of places and people and even job listings that hire ex-felons. Numerous churches and organizations that set up different programs for ex-offenders to help them to get established in housing and clothing, you know, and the list goes on. They give you information again. They direct you, like I said once again, a list of people, but like I said, it's up to you.

**Skills Training.** Participants indicated that during their incarceration they were able to attain valuable training that has transferred to the outside and has helped in sustaining them once
they were released. Training was referred to by various names such as trade school or just school. Jessica completed a two-year cosmetology program while incarcerated and is currently using those skills. Johnathan completed a barbering program while incarcerated and received his licensing credentials after released. Johnathan served a subsequent term of incarceration and completed training in small engine repair during that time. Pete learned how to refinish furniture while incarcerated. Isaiah began an electrical technology program but reported “I still got a little bit to do because I messed around and EOS’d before I could finish. So I got one or two more semesters.” Darren was the only individual who did not participate in any skills training and offered “I didn’t really participate in them because I mean I had my, like I said, I got my GED and I had some college so, you know, as far as like anything educational, I didn’t pursue that…”

With technology being as prevalent as it is in society, it’s important to not only attain basic computer skills but remain well-informed of technological advances, these skills are important when applying for employment. When asked about computer related training during incarceration, Jessica stated that she did receive some form of computer related training and this training has helped since her release. Darren and Pete responses were in contrast to the experiences of Jessica. Darren offered:

Well, since 2011 at the time, they didn’t have any computer classes or anything to teach people to be computer literate. I would think that the way technology is today, almost all jobs you’re going to fill out an application online. Just with my contact with different inmates in the prison system, I would say probably less than half would know how to probably fill out an application online, just to fill out an application period, let alone online on the computer and submit it and have it done right. You know, with an
application, once someone is reviewing that, what you put on that application is really
going to determine whether you get the job or not.

Pete responded that he had not able to participate in such training because of its late
introduction to the correctional system programming:

They are being introduced into the program system now. I mean it took the penitentiary
system now here at the last moment of my incarceration. I didn't get a chance to take
one, but they were being introduced into the system right before I got ready to leave. I
don't recall the name of what was getting ready to be taught in there about the
penitentiary system. It's now a practice inside of what they called the faith-based honor
dorm program. They got a computer class system in there where they try to teach you
and prepare you for doing things on the computer or whatever. Yeah, it's in the faith-
based honor dorm.

Johnathan stated he received no computer training during incarceration at all but knew a
little about computers. Isaiah stated “I was doing that before I got locked up” indicating that he
was computer literate prior to incarceration.

**Personal Development through Programming.** Participants took part in personal
development programs during their incarceration. Jessica stated “I took other classes like
Depression, Parenting, Domestic Violence, and Anger Management. Some of them were
required like Depression was required on my behalf but the rest were volunteer classes; took the
Substance Abuse Program.” Darren only cited one class as helping him “The only class that was
really educational to me was I think it was like ‘a better father’ or some type of father program, a
parenting class that really helps you.”
No participant during any of the interviews conducted indicated or stated that they wanted to be incarcerated; in fact, they all stated they were not going back (to prison). Each participant also stated that there were benefits of their incarcerations. Jessica offered “…good programs to help you better yourself. Further your education if you wanted to, say if you didn’t have no high school diploma or nothing you could get your GED or take a trade.” Johnathan shared “I also received my associate's degree in prison. I went to college in prison.” Programming during incarceration also caused the participants to reflect on their lives. Travis stated “For me, it was because I had time to really reflect on what I really wanted and look forward to my future with my kids.” Isaiah took “Time to sit down and think and get my mind together. I had to deal with all of the day to day business. I had time to sit down and get my head together and focus on what I needed to be focused on so I could stay out here with my family and do what I'm supposed to do.” This sentiment was echoed by Darren, “Well, it gives you time to really focus on what you want to do. I mean, look at your mistakes and try to change them.” Pete shared a somewhat different but meaningful insight nonetheless, regarding looking at self, and reaching a turning point as he offered:

You know, first of all, you have to get focused on the things that you’ve been labeled as being an animal and these types of things. You have to really look into this type of stuff and know that if you are not doing what society asks of you, then you are exactly that, man. You are an animal. You are an animal. You are out of control. So, there are beautiful things that’s in the penitentiary for the animal guys, you know. You have to see it for what's it worth. Look at it and touch bases. I learned that I was an animal, man. I learned that.
Time to reflect and programming during incarceration seemed to have cultivated the trait of determination to remain free for most participants. Jessica repeated during her interview “the study (material) they give you and stuff and you want it, it’s easy for you to stay out. If you really want to change its easy for you to stay out, you got to get out there and get it if you want it.” Johnathan stated “I don't think anything would permit me to go back to prison, man, I really don't… Even if I'm not making a dime, I'm not going back to prison, I'm not… No siree bobby! No sir!” Travis simply stated “Well, like I say again, I've changed everything. What I once did….now I changed everything.” Similarly, Darren stated:

Because I’m tired. I think that the first time I was really young, you know what I mean, and I just got caught up in a bad situation. And the second time, I was doing drugs, and that led me. I knew I was doing wrong, but I had gave up, but like this last time, I was doing kind of good, I just didn’t go report. You know, I really moved out of town, but I knew that once I got caught, I was going to go to jail. So when I finally got caught this last time, as you get older, you get a little wiser and you start to see things, but really, just being in the situation where being incarcerated, and you got a lot of 19, 20, and 22-year-olds, and some of them are “big johns”, you know what I’m saying, there’s a lot of stupidity going on now and a lot of fights, and so when you get older, you don’t really want to be in that situation. Even when I was younger, I was kind of like they was now. You know, I was just young and wanted to fight all the time, I had a lot of anger, and I think I resolved a lot of issues with a lot of resentment, you know what I’m saying, that I had. So, you know, now I think it is just a different peace that I have.
After being released for a fourth time, Isaiah, the youngest male participant had an epiphany during his last incarceration, he shared:

Time to sit down and think and get my mind together. I had to deal with all of the day to day business. I had time to sit down and get my head together and focus on what I needed to be focused on so I could stay out here with my family and do what I'm supposed to do. I'm not going back no more, man. I'm going to do what I got to do. I got gray hair on my head, man, I'm old. I can't waste no more of my life in jail, man.

Pete was incarcerated for 13 years and had no problems admitting that he needed help. His determination to remain free was derived from a hunger for help as he searched and pursued programs to assist him in this quest. Pete found the help he needed in numerous programs such as New Beginning Drug Treatment Program, Give it Away and After Care to name a few. He found help not only in programs but hearing about the experiences of others and sharing his own experiences as he “gives it away”:

I was hungry. Like I told you, I was looking for help. I was looking for a way out of what I had walked into as far as my change in my lifestyle. I needed help and I found that the help was in these programs and in these classes and carrying on and I heard things. In these types of programs, you get to hear people who are willing to speak on their, what they call, their mistakes or their downfalls or their greed or whatever they done to people with open honesty where they just put it on the line, where they just put it on the line. And when you hear this type of stuff, you go to admire these type of people and when you hear what relates to you and what you're going through and what you did, if you just give it away....if you just give it away, it lets a burden up off of you. Man, it's
beautiful. It's beautiful, man. You know, I had a burden. I had a burden with a lot of things that I did. And the more that I kept it inside, the more I got into trouble, man. I couldn't stop because I had some things hid that I didn't share with people. So, the more I had hid, the more I did, because I always got away with things when I kept them hid. You know, it was like a secret thing with me, you know. If I get away with it, I keep it to myself and I do it again and this type of stuff. But when I went to telling people about what I did because of listening to other people and what they had did....when you hear other people talk about what they did to their kids or what they did to their mom or what they did to themself, hey man, that opens up some doors in your head and in your mind and in your heart. So, I started to listen. I started listening and I started to identify what I was going through to what I heard other guys saying. And when I started to do what they was doing, giving it away. It's called giving it away. It's called giving back what you took, you know. You got to give it away, man. I needed some real help, and that's what I obtained in the penitentiary through what they call they had a New Beginning Drug Treatment Program. I entered into it. I stayed in it 9 full years out of the 13 years I was in there. They helped me with open arms. They taught me. I was willing to learn. Right now, I am practicing what I learned, taking it one day at a time, taking it one step at a time. Letting go and letting God. Staying focused on my friends, my surroundings, and all that type of stuff. It's just beautiful, man, I mean I could rattle on, but I want you to ask the questions.
Theme 2: Special Programs

As previously stated, there are numerous programs offered by outside agencies that bring their independent programs into the correctional system for inmates. Special programs consist of programming that may be offered within the correctional system for inmates or offered to the individual once they are released from incarceration (Table 3). Each program is discussed by the participants regarding how they were able to benefit from these programs both pre-release and post-release.

Pre-release External Programming. These programs are broad and offer services that assisted in dealing with incarceration, personal development increasing one’s self-esteem, sobriety, mental and physical wellbeing, life skills, job skills and support that increased their desire and resolve to succeed.

Jessica was separated from her children during her incarceration, one child less than one year old. With the help of Aid to Inmate Mothers (AIM, n.d.), Jessica describes how visitation was made possible, “It was set up with a local church. They would bring my boys to visit once a month.” This allowed her to be a part of her children lives during their early years and helped to maintain a nurturing bond between her and her children.

Darren and Pete credits Crime Bill (Crime Bill, n.d.), a six to nine month program that varies based on the facility’s location. This program taught them discipline and helped with their personal development. Darren noted:

I took a 6-month Crime Bill, and that was very educational because, I mean, I’ve been dealing with addiction since I was like 17, and so, you know, to have a course that lasts 6 months. It was just in depth with a lot of things, a lot of videos, a lot of things that it
Table 3

**Programs Identified by Participant / Facilities and Their Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program / Facility</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid to Inmate Mothers</td>
<td>Provide services to Alabama’s incarcerated women enhancing growth and strengthening the bond between mother and child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility (ATEF)</td>
<td>Provide a healthy, drug-free, safe and secure environment with provide treatment and education services that focus on changing addictive and criminal behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Bill</td>
<td>3 nine week segments- SAP (Substance Abuse Program), Criminal Thinking and Behavior, Lifestyle Choices and living Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dannon Project</td>
<td>Assist in the development of healthy lifestyles, preventing violence and other at-risk behaviors that lead to unemployment, disease, incarceration and re-incarceration, premature death and generational cycles of poverty and economic exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lovelady Center</td>
<td>Faith-based residential re-entry program for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project FOCUS (Former Offenders Changing for Unconditional Success)</td>
<td>Provides leadership, counseling, mentoring, educational assistance, community resources and employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready to Work</td>
<td>A state certified career skills training program designed to help participants prepare for success on the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised Re-Entry Program (SRP)</td>
<td>Places selected inmates in a residential environment, under supervision of their sponsors and AADOC SRP Supervisors, where they may obtain employment, education, and / or training and pay court-ordered restitution Rehabilitation, re-socialization, and reintegration of an offender are the SRP’s primary goals and allows for offenders to re-enter society in a structured manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Foundry</td>
<td>12- to 18-month residential recovery program for individuals throughout Alabama and beyond, men and women battling drug addiction and substance abuse, through God’s hands, broken individuals can regain basic necessities, restore their hope and self-esteem, and achieve real, lasting change in their lives as they break the cycle of their behaviors, develop life and job skills, and improve academic levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Only verifiable services and facilities were listed by the researcher.
taught you and showed you. It was a 6-month course, and it was just like, you know, you had to get up at a certain time and your bed had to be made a certain way. Things have to be put up a certain way in your box. Your shoes had to be put up a certain way, and I think there was a lot of discipline in that, you know, to make it through that class without getting wrote up for 6 months, because 3 write-ups and then you get kicked out of the class, so to make it through that class for 6 months and to obey all the rules and pass it, I think that taught discipline.

Pete was quite adamant when speaking of how profound programming was, when it consisted of Crime Bill and this program actually saved him, he notes:

The program consisted of what they call a 6-month Crime Bill program. It is based on teaching you about 12 steps of what they call Alcoholics Anonymous and NA, 12 steps and 12 traditions. It's not religious. They don't prefer to be associated with religion, but it is like based on what you would call your higher power. It is intertwined with what you believe in, some power other than you that you can kind of like root yourself in and connect yourself with. And so, it's a do-your-own-thing program. It's not about nobody making you do anything. It's all about your acceptance of the rule and regulations of the program. It’s beautiful, you know? They teach you responsibility. They teach you how to be a father. They teach you how to be a son. They teach you how to be what they call a civilized citizen and all these things. It's just beautiful, you know? Man, I don't know, man. It saved me. I think they saved me. This is what I feel. I believe they saved me. This is what I believe. There's no doubt in my mind, and all my thanks goes to God, first of all.
Unlike Pete, Travis received trade force training as a part of new programs that allowed him to grow and develop a greater sense of self as he shared:

Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility and I got numerous certificates for it, and behavior-wise, and they told us that what I was thinking was wrong. It was numerous things that really deep inside you knew, but you really didn't, I would say, put forth much effort trying to do the right thing, but it was a good program because they really, really, I would say, was more repetitious for us. The program, they like continue on giving you hope that you can make it and for the people that made it through and the people that it has getting out of prison and living a productive life. It gave you hope that you can make it if you only try.

Although Darren did not take part in this particular program he was willing to share his knowledge of the program and the advantages it offered others. He discussed the Supervised Re-entry Program (SRP, n.d.) “The SIR program. I don’t know what the S-I-R means, but it’s basically like they send you to a different place, like when you become within a year of your release date, you become eligible for SIR, work release, and Community Corrections. Community Corrections is within 6 months.” Darren had previously mentioned that he did not return to his family environment once released because that is where most of his issues began and this program (Dannon Project, n.d.) had been beneficial to him:

I remember the Dannon Project came, and a group out of Birmingham came, you know, just telling you things that’s available. I think it really did help me because when I came home, I had a folder, and it gave you a list of all the people that hire people with felonies, all of the companies and corporations, so I think it was very helpful because if you get
out without this information, it’s kind of like you don’t know nothing, but if you have this information, it’s something to fight with. You can try; you can pursue this because you got [facility redacted] and all different kinds of places that hire people with felonies, so you can see this and not think that it’s a hopeless situation because you know these people are already telling you through the pre-release program that they do hire. They might not hire you, but they do hire people with felonies so they give you something to at least press towards and push towards and not feel like it’s a hopeless situation.

**Post-release Programming.** Darren took advantage of programs such as Project FOCUS (FOCUS, n.d.) a local program that helps ex-prisoners returning to the communities and the Dannon Project an organization not local to his area but they did provide services and resources to inmates for use upon their release. Darren offered:

> When I first got out, I went to a program called, what was it called, Project Focus. It is by Commissioner [name redacted]. It is a program he has to help ex-prisoners to get back into society. They have jobs and different things. Like, they have you can get your GED or different educational things that you can go through, but it was a slow process because he had so many people. They even had housing available, but they had so many people on the waiting list that, you know, as far as when it came to jobs, they didn’t have any jobs available, and the housing they had came through. The funding for the whole thing was kind of like he didn’t really have that much funding for the thing.

Much like Darren, Pete prepared for his release from incarceration. Although he could have returned home with his family he chose to enter a halfway house instead, as he shares his decision:
I had plenty of places to stay, but I chose to come to a half-way house at the Foundry (The Foundry, n.d.) in Bessemer. With the Foundry Program, you have to like work a 30-day probation, so to speak, to where you can't obtain a job. In other words, when you come here, you might not have all the things you need to go back into society and get a job, you know as far as birth certificate and ID and all this type of stuff. So, you kind of like get prepared with working the 30 days up under them at what they call a little thrift store thing they have, and they also have other kinds of jobs that's like a volunteer thing. When you work these 30 days, it kind of helps you because it actually pays the rent for your stay the first 30 days. That's a beautiful thing, too.

Prior to his release from the new ATF program, Travis maintained all resource literature that would assist him in his transition and adjustment into society as he reflects on his initial journey:

I was already directed to a program called the Dana (Dannon) Project. It's a program that helps, like I said, ex-felons to get started. To help you find a job or like if you need a place to stay or even if you owe like tickets or owe fines or things that you didn't handle before you went to prison, you know they help you along with these because they have social workers there that basically you can confide in, one-on-one. It helps you like the first year. It's a timeframe for you to apply. You have to apply within the first three months of your release. I had to go there and fill out the application and it's a process where you fill out and they assign a social worker to you, and also, they give you a paper that you have to get your parole officer or your probation officer to sign also. And then the process goes from there.
Jessica completed the Ready to Work (Ready to Work, n.d.) program after release and reported the program “… helps you to…say if you’ve never worked and don’t know how to use the computer it’s a program that helps you …it helps you fill out applications online. It helps you with the interview process, how to present yourself at an interview.” She also shares information regarding the Lovelady Center. Although Jessica did not take advantages of these services, she wanted to note that if family was not available upon her release, she felt that she could have relied on the services provided by the Lovelady Center to offer the support needed to transition back into society, this being their mission.

**Theme 3: Family Support**

Family support played an integral part in the lives of the participants of this study. Support from family carried over from incarceration to the participants release from incarceration. For many, they found comfort and support in visits and beyond. Jessica shared “I know they (her family) were hurt because I went down and stuff but over the months and years they got over it. When I first got out they were real supportive, making sure I had a ride to find a job, made sure I had a place to live and just stood by my side.” Travis found encouragement as well as he shared: “Well, they came to see me. They always encouraged me. Sent me like money if I needed it. But the most important thing, they always wrote me. They told me to keep my head up and was always praying for me.” Isaiah offered “They send me money, letters. If I needed any business taken care of for legal obligations, they was doing that too.” Johnathan was overwhelmed with family support; this was made clear as he stated:

I come from a great family, man I come from a great family man. They really have supported me, understand. When I got out I had a car waiting on me, you know what I'm
saying. Of course I had a place to lay my head. I had clothes already purchased, bought, laid out for me, you know. Man, I'm serious, I really didn't have to worry. My case may be one in a million. I mean, I don't know, but I really had no worries. I mean, it was already laid out for me. You know, if you need a job, here. We can get you one there or we can you one here or wherever you want. Whatever you need, we got you. Whatever you need, we got you, and they said that and they meant it, and that's the way it's been.

Pete was equally charged as Johnathan but also added how he was affected once he was released. To see and realize how much his family had to give up and sacrificed to provide support for him while incarcerated was profound as shared this experience:

Man, what you talking about! Man, I have a beautiful support system from my family. It was love. I am one of those guys that needed to know that, hey, your people need their money that they're sending you, but they sacrifice just for you. I'm one of them people, man. I am one of them people, you know. But it took me to come out here to actually see it for myself. Man, my mom, or my cousin, or my brother, or my aunt, they didn’t let me want for nothing. I had a beautiful support system when it came down to getting the money sent, or keeping the phone on and sending me personal packages and hygiene packages. My folks didn't miss a beat. I had a support system, but I so wished I would have knew that the things they was sending me....Because I could have took a back seat. Because you going to get three meals and a cot in the penitentiary, man. You're going to get three meals and a cot every day. You're going to get that. It ain't nothing. It don't taste like nothing, but it will get you through. It will get you through. But man, out on the street, man, when I had a chance to see what was going on, man, it hurt me bad. It
hurt me bad to know that my folks was sending me all this love and they really couldn't afford to do that, for real.

**Theme 4: Supervised Release, Benefit and Detriment**

The transition from incarceration back into society is a crucial time and can play a major role in an individual remaining free or returning to incarceration. In the State of Alabama, when an inmate is released prior to the end of their initial sentence, they are released under the supervision of a parole officer who monitors them, counsel them and ensure the conditions of their release are met (PO, n.d.). Supervised Release can offer guidance and support but it can also be a detriment.

**Supervised Release Offering Guidance and Support.** Isaiah thought that supervised release would “help to keep me straight.” In Travis’ initial visit with his parole officer, he offered “She really read my history, my past, and just gave me the do's and don'ts as far as what she expects from me. She asked me what my plans were. I believe that everyone that gets out of prison should have a plan” later adding “I believe that if a person don't have a plan, it's going to repeat.” Jessica had a great parole officer who cared about her and she reflects “They gave me directions and she just stood by my side, helped me out. Anytime I called and told her I might be late, could I come Monday due to work, she extended that to me and worked with me.”

Darren was a bit indifferent towards the question related to the parole officers’ concerns regarding his second release. After his first release, his parole officer informed him of Project FOCUS (which he mentioned earlier) and had this to say regarding his second parole officers and what their concerns were:
Maybe the job situation. And your housing, because you know you have to put down your address where you live in case they want to do a visit. So I think he was concerned with that and my job situation but not really about me or how I’m going to make it or this, that, or the other, because his case load was so many. You know, I don’t think they have time to really get personal or be concerned personally with people… I mean, we don’t like it because if you do anything wrong, you’re going to go back to jail, but as far as if you’re out and trying to do something productive and do something right, then you always have to remember that, you know what I’m saying, you got this hanging over your head, so it’s a remembrance that if anything goes down, the first thing is ‘Aw no man, I’m on probation. I got to go.’ For people who maybe have addictions and stuff, you know, I would say that, you know, they could probably be more in tune with AA and NA and different substance abuse programs where people are like having problems, because this is something that led a lot of people to prison, their addictions. So, when they get out, it’s not like this disappeared, you know what I’m saying, it’s still there, so some probationees might have problems still with their addictions, so I would say maybe to recommend to have different programs for them to look into.

Johnathan seemed to have an all-around positive experience with his parole officer by his account, especially as it relates to employment and assistance with employment:

Now, once you’re out and you have to report to your parole officer or your probation officer, it's fine. I mean, I have a very nice and informed probation officer. He's a good guy. When I go now, after the first time like I said I really didn't talk to him, but when I go now though, you know he asks me how I'm doing, you know, do I need any help with
anything, am I working my job good, you know. You know, what's going on with me. So we sit down and talk. He's kind of like a chaplain to me. I look at him more not as a punishment thing, I look at it as a helpful thing now, you know really. The guy is alright. He told me, for a little while it was kind of slow in the barber shop, and he was like, you know if you're having problems there or if you're not making the kind of money that you think you could or you need, you know, I would recommend that you try this company or that company, you know what I'm saying trying to help you, but I know they're hiring and they're hiring felons, you know, so if you ever have a problem with that or you think you might want to try that, just let me know and I'll put in a word for you and we'll try to get you on over here or over there, you know.

**Supervised Release as a Detriment.** During a transition and lack of communication between parole officers, Jessica suffered unjustly as she shared a horrible ordeal:

Some of them, it’s like sometimes you can go in and they can be laxed on their paper work. Like I almost got locked back up because I had one officer then she moved up to the big supervisor and she didn’t put in some of my paper work in and I almost went back because of a lack of communication. I went back to jail for a month after that because the new lady, I had went in to report and I didn’t know the old lady had left and it was shocking me and she (the new lady) arrested me and said I didn’t do this and I didn’t do that. Then I had all my paper work and stuff and the old officer came in and did my hearing and let me out and apologized and said it was her fault.
When the question related to the parole officers’ concerns was asked of Pete, he seemed to become somewhat perturbed and the tone of the interview seemed to diminish momentarily as he responded:

From my observance, no. To me, the question you're asking is like a pressed issue to the point where I feel that it would make any guy that's coming out of the penitentiary kind of nervous or he would kind of make him panic. If your parole officer turned to you about a job or turned to you about money and issues of where you're staying and how you're going to stay and this and that, that would make a guy panic and worried because what if he can't pay the money that's being required to pay or what if he can't stay where he's being asked to stay? All these things are important in the convict's head too.

Because if I miss a payment, what do I do? Do I go report knowing that you might be more concerned about me paying you what is required of me to pay you? If you're more concerned with me having the money, then I'm going to be more concerned about getting somewhere if I don't have the money. You know what I'm saying, do you understand that? I don't think that's in his job description ...What my parole officer did was to let me know, "Hey, you got what they call a $40 fee that you got to pay while on parole every month. You need a job to do these things." You know that and I know that, and with that being said, this is what eased my mind with him. “Hey, if you don't have the money to pay me that month, just report anyway. It's going to be alright. I'm going to work with you." And that was the bottom line. That was all that was said as far as on that trip.
Theme 5: Physical and Social Environment Factors

An obstacle that seems to plague the newly released individual is returning to the same network of friends and environment that may have contributed to their incarcerations. Environmental factors played both a positive and negative role in the participants’ lives.

Positive Environmental Factors. Of the six participants of this study only two had positive responses to offer regarding their friends and returning to those same friends. Johnathan shared:

It’s been pretty good. I have a pretty good friend, friend, or shall I say acquaintance base. After my first time of incarceration, my friends and everything changed. So this group of friends are pretty much above board. Good people. You know, all of them had jobs, or have jobs. Most of the guys are married, you know what I’m saying. And, you know they’re just good, good, moral people. So when I got back out, I got back with that same friend, friend, I guess you could say level right there and everything’s been going pretty good. You know, and they, they’ve been trying to help me to maintain my, my job status, you know what I’m saying. Making sure that I reply, I’m on probation so, make sure I report to my probation officer, you know. And they, I’m kind of accountable to them, you know. I respect them; they respect me. And I, it’s, it’s been pretty good since I’ve been back.

Similarly, Pete shared I returned to my kids. “I spent every day that I was allowed to spend with them from the 22nd to the 25th. I spent every day with my kids. Not one day did I spend with a friend, my kids and my mother.”
Negative Environmental Factors. Travis chose not to return to the same network of friends also as he recounts “I figured in the years that I was incarcerated, that they wasn't (there) for me. That if I just get out of here and continue to be around them, then I would be right back in prison, some place that I really didn't want to be.” Isaiah did not distance himself from his network of friends after is first release, but after his fourth release he states:

With a couple trips to prison, man, you know, everybody that I hung with on the street, you know, while I was out thuggin’ and buggin’, I didn't hear from them while I was gone. You know, I heard from my family, the people that want me to do right. So, you know, that's why this time, that's who I concentrated on, the people who love me no matter what the situation is, man. You don't got too many friends out here.

The network that caused most harm and detriment to Darren was his family. When asked what he was concerned about just before his release as he states:

Basically, coming back into the same environment. You know, being around the same people in the same situations that caused me to, you know, be in contact with illegal activities again. I was released at home, but I went to the halfway house voluntarily because I had an addiction problem and so I didn’t want to come back. It was just my choice because I wanted to give myself enough time to really focus on what I wanted to do. So I got out and I got a job and I was down there staying at this halfway house. If you’re an addict and you’re addicted to drugs, and you come back out, and you have to stay with your auntie or uncle or mom or a cousin or something, and there’s drug use going on all the time in the house, then within your first few days or first couple weeks, you might say no for the first couple weeks, but then eventually, you’re going to maybe
hit the blunt or you’re going to drink or you’re going to do something else, and then, bing, you got a probation officer to go see in a few weeks and then you go right back. You know, your back’s against the wall, you know, you’re dirty, and so if he tests you right then, you’re going to go right back to prison and you ain’t even been out a month. I saw that a lot of times, and I think a lot of that has to do with going right back into the same environment that you came from. But, I mean a lot of times, you can’t just change that, you know. A lot of times you just have to go back to where you was at because you don’t have no money. Your family really doesn’t have no money, and who’s going to let a convicted felon just come and live with them, you know what I’m saying, unless they love him? So, I think I would try to change those things.

**Theme 6: Social Services**

There are numerous social services that are needed once an individual has been released from incarceration, some of them previously mentioned. The participants of this study have indicated such needs, but not limited to: counseling, mentoring, rehabilitation and services related to finding or assistance with employment. Although the needs for these services exist, so did the misuse of these services exist as revealed by the participants.

**Mentoring.** The question was asked “If you were able to help the next person being released from prison, what would you tell them?” Travis stated “I would be there for them on every aspect. Even though he faltered in a way, I would still be there for him and let him know that if I could do it, he could do it.” Similarly, Isaiah maintains that he “Try to keep positive man, and recognize the signs of depression and recognize the signs of them going down the
wrong track they’ve been at, you know, like a buddy system that sort of like sponsor or something like that.” Jessica responded:

I would tell them its help if you want it and just to get around positive people that’s trying to go places and stay away from the negative. I would just guide them along the way, be like a mentor to them to help them out, show them the way to go. (Provide) somebody they can talk to if they need it because sometime people are scared to talk in groups, sometimes people have trust issues. And I think Mentors could help people because you don’t know what people are thinking.

Jessica also indicated that having someone to make sure you are on the right track is beneficial in his statement “I think before you being released they should at least ...follow you up with stuff that’s gonna help you better yourself when you get out, stay connected with you at least 3-6 months to make sure you’re on the right track, give you a mentor, somebody to push you to find a job, find your own place and do whatever you need to stay out.”

**Rehabilitation.** In sharing their experiences, Jessica and Darren indicated a need for mental evaluation and treatment. Jessica stated that she took part in NA (Narcotics Anonymous), AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and classes dealing with depression which helped and was asked if prior treatment could have prevent her incarceration, she stated “Yeah cause I had real bad depression during that time. Finally I went to the Mental Health and got evaluated and did (help), it probably wouldn’t have led that far … it probably would have helped to have a counselor or somebody you could talk to one on one.” Darren stated he had an addiction problem and there is a need to be informed of programming that is available as he shared:
Different substance abuse programs where people are like having problems, because this is something that led a lot of people to prison, their addictions. So, when they get out, it’s not like this disappeared, you know what I’m saying, it’s still there, so some probationees might have problems still with their addictions, so I would say maybe to recommend to have different programs for them to look into.

Pete shared “I am limited in one hand. I got mugged about 30 some years ago that kind of disabled me in one of my hands.” Pete shared the issues he faces being disabled after his release from incarceration:

I'm facing a problem as far as the working thing. I am actually eligible for disability.

Even though I learned the skills that I learned, I'm still dealing with the issue of not being able to actually perform the job that I'm doing. I'm doing it, but I'm doing it with pain.

Like I told you, I'm limited in one hand and then on top of that, I had back surgery.

I know you didn't ask for this so let me explain this to you. Let's say this. Listen to what a guy has to deal with if he's in the penitentiary like I was. I was in the penitentiary for 13 years, and for 13 years that I did all this time, I didn't get no younger. I got older, right? Now guess what, being that I got older, I'm not going to be able to perform on jobs like I could have when I was younger. So now I'm at a disability point of not having my back and not having the use of my hand. Now if you are giving me this thing saying, "Okay, I'm going to give you parole based on this right here." Okay, listen, if I can't work, I can't buy myself a house or a place or whatever, then guess what man, you could have schooled me. I'm going to feel like I can't get out of the penitentiary because you feel that I am what you call a liability or a leach or however you want to put that because
I'm not able to work. What do I have? I'm looking for disability. Guess what, I don't even qualify to come to your half-way house or this half-way house, or this program or nothing because I'm a liability. I'm on disability. I'm disabled. That's hard. It's real hard because I had to actually work through some things then. I'm 48 now. I'm 48, I got the use of one hand, and on top of that, my back's messed up and then guess what, man, I couldn't even let these people know this type of stuff with me in order to come to a program. If I would have said, "Hey man, I can't work. I can't do this, I can't do that", what man is going to let me into this program? "I don't want you at my program if you can't work because you can't help my program." You see what I'm saying? So there needs to be something established for the guys that can't work, man, that need disability. That stuff needs to be did upfront, real quick, fast, and in a hurry, so he can get out like any other guy that's making parole. He needs that help real quick, fast, and in a hurry.

Misuse of Services. When the term rehabilitation was used in a question results were somewhat peculiar. Isaiah was asked if took part in any rehabilitative services? His response was “No. The last time I did. I took the SAP program, but the first three times I didn't.” He went on to say “It helped me because I wanted something out of it, but it probably needed a little bit more discipline in it, you know.” I asked, how so? And he relied “There are people that don't take it seriously. You know, you got people who think that no matter what they got going on, if they're not doing drugs, then they scrape. But it's all a cycle, man. It's all about trying to change your mind away from the drug problem and the drug situation one day at a time.” Similarly, Darren described misuse of the SAP program by some inmates:
You had a lot of people that was just in it and weren’t serious, they were just trying to get home, and then you have other people that was there that was just trying to get out of a bad place because like there are different dorms, you know what I’m saying. Some of the dorms are worse than the other ones, and like you have certain dorms, they might call it Thunder Dome because there’s a lot of fighting and a lot of drugs and a lot of homosexuality going on and like the dorms where the programs are at, they’re more monitored and structured, you know what I’m saying, so those type of things don’t really go, so some people was just trying to get out of that situation and get into a class for, not necessarily protection, but so that they wouldn’t have to be in a situation like that.

Like other participants, Johnathan was asked what rehabilitative services did you receive, or did you receive any? Johnathan stated that he was not offered rehabilitative services; it wasn’t by choice and had this to offer:

No sir, it really wasn’t by choice. They were, clearly it is not about rehabilitation anymore. I mean, there are, I mean, well I'm going to say it like this -- it's really up to the individual. They have certain classes, man I can't think of it right now, my mind is blank, excuse me, but they have certain classes, but it's not really about rehabilitation anymore. It's about warehousing now. It’s about warehousing. Yeah, it's about getting you behind the bars and leaving you there. I'm saying that the parole board is not really releasing anybody anymore. It's not like it used to be years ago. I mean, it's just like, okay, you're there and there you are. I went up for progress review. Let me explain it like this. Okay, I had a rape case. Okay, I had a rape case. Now I didn't rape anybody but I got a rape case, and I got convicted of that, and that is what it is. Okay, but now I have, I did nine
years in prison the first time, and every time that you go up for progress review, you have an annual review, a yearly review once a year. Every time I went up there, I would keep my nose clean, I've been to school, I've kept my job, whatever job they assigned me in prison, I didn't have any write-ups, any disciplinarians, anything like that, but every time you go to progress review, well, every time I went to progress review, it was always everything remained the same. I mean nothing really changed. It didn't lower my custody. I didn't get any incentive or any perks for keeping my nose clean or for staying out of trouble. You know what I'm saying? I was just there. I was just there.

**Employment.** Participants understood the need for employment and job skills training. They thought that jobs should be on the short list of must haves in remaining free and should be a part of the reentry program. Jessica cited a need for a “mentor, somebody to push you to find a job, find your own place and do whatever you need to stay out (of prison).” Isaiah’s thoughts were, after release it would help the individual if the reentry program could “find them easy employment, at least for a little while, you know something, might not be that much because you got to get it back in the habit of working, you know. Let them know they’re doing good, man.” Darren prescribes:

Initiate a program to help inmates find jobs, you know people who are willing to give people second chances, because I mean you have different drug abuse programs that have connections with employers, and if you go to this place, this halfway house or something like that, they already have people working in these places and they have a connection to where when a new guy comes, we got transportation, we’re going to get you an application, and you’re going to work there too. So I think that like when people come
home from incarceration, females and males, that with all of the connections that the State has, I think it would be no problem for them to have a program where you can hire people with felonies because you know one of the main things that you have when you first come home is not finding work. Some people get lucky, but when you find the work and it’s at a restaurant, it’s all in your mind state. Is this good enough? But a lot of people don’t want to just be stuck in a restaurant for the rest of their lives, so that’s why I would say educate them. Get the education skills and JOB skills first and JOB placement skills, you know what I’m saying, to have a program where we can place people in different jobs.

The six themes uncovered in this study: Department of Corrections Reintegration Programming, special programs, family support, supervised release, environment and social services represent shared responses of the participants Jessica, Darren, Johnathan, Pete, Isaiah and Travis. All participants are unique in their own way, contributing their personal experiences as a collective expression addressing prison recidivism.

Summary

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study derived from six participants. The participants’ responses were analyzed and themes were developed uncovering effective practices that reduce recidivism. Final themes were: department of corrections reintegration programming, special programs, family support, supervised release benefit and detriment, physical and social environmental factors and social services, all presented in the participants’ words.

Chapter 5 will consist of interpretations of the research findings presented in this chapter. I will also include a discussion of how these findings align with current research, answer
research questions and limitation of this study. Chapter 5 will conclude with suggestions for action, followed by suggestions for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to uncover effective practices that would help to reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. In 2012, 13,639 of the 32,493 inmates in Alabama had been previously incarcerated. The State of Alabama is concerned with the safety of communities and has a prison pre-release and re-entry plan in place to prepare inmates for reentry prior to their release. The rationale for this study was to capture the voices of six individuals who were released from an Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) facility within the past three years and share their tools and/or strategies for success in their desistance from criminal behavior. The participants of this study shared their experiences of pre and post incarceration, as they told their stories in interview sessions that ranged from 18 minutes to 68 minutes depending on how much detail the participant was inclined to communicate.

The two research questions for this study were:

1. How has the Alabama Department of Corrections executed its re-entry program such that it achieves its mission of providing a positive re-entry for its inmates?
2. What pre-release and post-release practices do parolees view as being most effective in remaining free of criminal activity and adjusting to life after their release from incarceration?

Chapter 4 detailed the findings from the research participants that yielded six themes that address the two research questions. This Chapter provides a discussion of each theme as they answer the research questions, limitation of study, researcher reflections, suggestions for practice, and will conclude with suggestions for future research.
**Theme 1: Alabama Department of Corrections’ Reintegration Programming**

Taxman (2004) suggested that preparation for release begin at the onset of incarceration consisting of multiple phases of preparation that extends up to two years after the inmates’ release. The first theme, department of corrections reintegration programming, encompasses the preparation of an individual for release from incarceration and reentry back into society. The findings of this study revealed that the duration of the Alabama Department of Corrections’ pre-release program should not only be extended beyond its current one-to-two week program, but as Taxman (2009) suggests, began the first day an inmate enters incarceration. The participants’ statements regarding information disseminated during the current pre-release program ranged from being hurried, with little time to “soak it in,” to being everything a person needs to succeed; however, the information needs updating and should always be current. Much needed treatment for drug and alcohol abuse was gained during incarceration for some participants as well as mental evaluation and treatment of depression for others. These diagnosis and treatments could have deterred incarceration for some as stated by Jessica, Darren and Isaiah. Two-thirds of the participants in this study accumulated college credits towards a degree or received job skills training (or both) during incarceration that they were able to utilize in their local areas.

All participants of this study took part in pre-release programming offered by the Alabama Department of Corrections with experiences that varied. They were able to benefit from the programming offered to them that provided skills to sustain themselves, treatment that addressed addictions and depression and resources they were able to refer to after their release. The pre-release programming did fall short, based on the participants’ experiences, when it comes to the length of the pre-release program and outdated resources. Theoretically, Job/ Skills
Training (employment) also serves as a transition in the participant's life that could alter their trajectories (Bahr, 2005) causing them to desist from criminal behavior.

The individual must take personal responsibility for their personal development by taking advantage of education and training opportunities offered. The Alabama Department of Corrections offers inmates rehabilitative services that are grossly needed and the literature also indicate pre-release needs. Pogorzelski et al., (2005) noted nearly two thirds of offenders, in their study on offenders’ behavioral health problems, were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they committed their offense and nearly 60% engaged in substance use at least one month before their offense. Advances have been made in programs such as the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) study conducted by Blenko et al. (2004); a 24 month residential drug treatment program resulted in reduced court cost, improved public safety and a reduction in recidivism. “According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an estimated 16% of adult prisoners report having either a mental disorder or an overnight stay in a psychiatric facility (Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan & Blitz 2005, p. 1719).” Additionally, in a study of four focus groups, Meyer, Fredericks, Borden & Richardson, (2010) found a consistent theme across all groups was that postsecondary education (PSE) had a positive impact on inmate behavior and that participating in PSE increased feelings of self-esteem. Inmates typically believed that participation in PSE would increase their employment prospects after release.

**Theme 2: Special Programs**

Special programs consist of programming that may be offered within the correctional system for inmates or offered to individuals once they are released from incarceration. Programming outside the State of Alabama Department of Corrections traditional system was
cited as being effective in helping the participants of this study desist from criminal activity and recidivism.

**Aid to Inmate Mothers.** Aid to Inmate Mothers provided the means for Jessica’s continued contact with her children during her incarceration. This program provided transportation for Jessica’s children to visit her monthly while she was incarcerated. These monthly visitations allowed Jessica to maintain a bond with her children and provided comfort and encouragement during her incarceration to succeed.

**Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility (ATEF).** The Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility (ATEF) is a relatively new facility that opened March of 2008. This program focuses on the treatment and education services that help the inmate change their addictive and criminal behaviors outside of the traditional prison system. Travis cited this alternative to the traditional correctional facility as being a blessing. At this facility, programming consisted of a three month skills training component, genuine concern for the individuals, tools need to succeed, and a plan to reconnect and make it in society to include building their resumes and basic computer skills and usage. Travis stated “going through this program really gave me some tools and a different outlook for how to go about and be a good father and how to be there for my kids and to listen to them … my sister and brothers and my mom and dad.”

**Crime Bill.** Darren and Pete credit the Crime Bill a three, nine-week segmented program in helping with their personal development. This program consists of a Substance Abuse Program (SAP), Criminal Thinking and Behavior, Lifestyle Choices and Living Skills. This program appeared to be quite helpful in Darren and Pete’s participation that allowed them to gain insight and change their behavior, which was not the case in many instances. Although very
helpful, this program was abused by some individuals as a means to get away, escape undesirable situations. Darren offered that individuals often abuse the program by enrolling only to escape dorms conditions overrun with fighting, drugs and homosexuality. This behavior was exhibited in the Schlesinger (2005) study that focused on non-educational motivators of participating in correctional educational programming which included: to walk around, be with friends, or conduct illegal or unethical business.

**The Dannon Project.** The Dannon Project focuses on providing a strong support system for individuals as they reenter society and addresses the issues that individuals will face upon release from incarceration. Travis cited services such as assistance with paying traffic fines received prior to incarceration and finding housing after release. This program operates out of a physical facility but also presents workshops and training within the Alabama Department of Corrections’ facilities. This program provides individuals with information regarding services that are at their disposal upon release. Darren found these services were helpful because he was given a list of employers who hired individuals with felony convictions. Darren was also released to different areas of the state and shared how helpful this program was for him after his release from incarceration. Travis also noted that the Dannon Project provided much needed one-to-one consultations and increased his trust in the agency itself not only for him but others as well.

**The Lovelady Center.** The Lovelady Center is a faith-based residential reentry program for women that offer a host of services to females. Services offered by the Lovelady Center include housing, employment, transpiration, basic utility payments, adequate child care, and educational opportunities. Jessica wanted to note that if her family had not been available upon
her release, she could have relied on the services provided by the Lovelady Center to transition back into society.

**Project FOCUS (Former Offenders Changing for Unconditional Success).** Project FOCUS offers their consumers counseling, mentoring, educational assistance, community resources and employment. The organization works in partnership with state agencies, a local community college and employers that employ individuals previously incarcerated. Darren cited this program as being a great program, but the process was a bit slow due to the number of people on the waiting list for assistance and funding for this program seemed to be an issue.

**Ready to Work.** Ready to Work is a state certified career skills training program offered by a local community college that helped Jessica to attain additional job readiness skills, resume assistance and an increased knowledge of job and work ethics. The program offered is designed to help participants prepare for and succeed on the job. With technology being as it is, this program is beneficial because it provides basic computer skills, assist with on-line job application, how to prepare for an interview and proper conduct during an interview.

**Supervised Re-Entry (SRP).** The SRP program acts as a medium between the traditional correctional system and the individuals’ actual community re-entry. This supervised program places selected individuals in a residential environment where services offered consist of employment, education, job training, rehabilitation, re-socialization and assistance paying court-ordered restitution. This program was instrumental in preventing recidivism because as stated by Darren “they send you to a different place” and that is what Darren needed. He knew that he could not return to his family because his family members were steeped in illegal drug activities that would stimulate his addiction.
The Foundry (The Foundry Rescue Mission and Recovery Center). The Foundry is a 12 to 18 month residential recovery program that services, men and women assisting them with drug addiction and substance abuse. This program provides the newly released individual with housing, counseling, behavior modification, life skills and job skills training. Two participants, Pete and Isaiah, were residents of the Foundry when interviewed. Both were recidivist and felt that this residential faith-based program was needed versus returning home to their families. Isaiah had been incarcerated four times and felt that this structured and decelerated re-entry back into society was what he needed to prepare him for his return home and to his family. All special programs have contributed to effective practices that reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama based on the experiences shared by the participants of this study. Special programs caused a turning point (Bahr, 2005) in lives of most participants causing them to desist from criminal behavior. Special programs also helped participants manage behavior that initially caused them to engage in criminal behavior.

The literature supports this finding and an example of such was illustrated by the DelliCarpini (2010) study where Career and Technical Education (CTE) was intergraded into a New York State county jail program. The purpose was to increase employment in high demand and high wage jobs by providing inmates the skills needed to fulfill this demand. Bahn (2011) conducted a study focused on the role of the community in reducing recidivism by allowing the inmates to engage in industry related work while still incarcerated. This collaboration provided the inmate with marketable skills, needed in that community. Winterfield, et al. (2009) reported postsecondary education as having a positive impact on inmates’ behavior, self-esteem and
preparedness for reentry in their study of four focus groups consisting of staff and students (inmates).

**Theme 3: Family Support**

Family support played an integral part in the lives of the participants of this study. Support from family carried over from incarceration to the participants’ reentry and re-acclimation to society. The participants of this study did not report any negative reactions or condescension from their family members after their release from incarceration. Some families, especially those living in poverty cannot serve as a support system for their incarcerated or newly released loved ones (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001). Jessica, Isaiah and others reflected upon celebratory dinners their families had planned for them once they returned home. Travis expressed how his family visited, sent money and took care of legal obligations in his absence but the most important aspect for him was his family writing to him. Johnathan described his case (regarding family support) as “one in million,” his family supplied him with clothing, his own transportation, housing and a choice of jobs. Several months after Johnathans’ release from incarceration, he was still overwhelmed by his families’ support and the extremes they went to, to ensure he had everything he needed to return to society, adjust to society and not return to incarceration again. Pete described his family support system as “beautiful” with all the love and support he was showered with before, during and after his incarceration. Pete also shared his regrets. While incarcerated, he had no idea as to the sacrifices his family endured to support him. This sacrifice pained him because he had no idea as to how terrible the economy had affected his family forgoing their needs; they supplied him with everything he needed while he was incarcerated. He went on to say that the state had supplied him with everything he needed,
three meals and cot, he also expressed that all inmates should see the sacrifice and potential burdens their families bare when taking care of an incarcerated family member. Family support served as a transition in the participants’ life that altered their trajectories (Bahr, 2005) causing them to desist from criminal behavior.

The literature cited family support as a variable that contributed to individuals remaining free from incarceration (Bahr, 2005) whether this support was through marriage, a partner or living with a family member. Shapiro & Schwartz (2001) found in their study that inmates who maintained a connection and continued to bond with their families while incarcerated exhibited a greater chance of remaining free of a subsequent incarceration.

**Theme 4: Supervised Release, Benefit and Detriment**

The transition from incarceration back into society is a crucial time for the individual and this transition plays a crucial role in the individual remaining free or returning to incarceration. So much so, that the federal government also recognized the need for a reentry program for offenders returning from prison with its Second Chance Act of 2005. When an individual is released prior to the end of their initial sentence in Alabama, they are released under the supervision of a parole officer who monitors and counsels them. The challenge is a limited number of probation officers servicing a high number of persons returning from incarceration.

The importance of supervised release was evident based on the participants’ responses and the participants’ interactions with their parole officers. Isaiah viewed supervised release as helping to keep him straight while others had parole officers who express a genuine interest in the individuals’ plan for success, stood by them and provided directions for a better way of life. Parole officers provide individuals with valuable information regarding local programming that
does not cater to the entire state and service that may not be widely publicized. This was the case with Darren who learned of a program that provided social services, as well as job referrals, from his first parole officers. That information was not shared by his parole officers after his second and third release, demonstrating a need for a repository of information and services. Johnathan referred to his probation officer as being like a chaplain, someone whom he could sit and talk with and provide employment leads if his employment did not provide enough income for survival. There was only one participant, Pete with a neutral to somewhat less than positive response to supervised released. Pete viewed interaction with his parole officer as a simply routine of checking in on a monthly basis. He felted that his plans, concerns and well-being were outside of the parole offers’ realm and should not be their concern. Although most participants reported their visits as brief, they understood the workloads of their parole officers. Supervised release still served as a transition in the participants’ life that altered their trajectories (Bahr, 2005) causing them to desist from criminal behavior. Conversely, Supervised Release was a detriment for Jessica. Transitioning from one parole officer to another caused her to be returned to incarceration, for 30 days unjustly due to the parole officer’s miscommunication. Equipped with her documentation of compliance, she was still returned to prison.

The literature further substantiates supervised release in the Wilkinson (2001) study, where the State of Ohio had an increase of 3,500 persons returning from incarceration in one month. This system that once functioned well found its parole officers with much higher than usual caseloads and a higher demand for the already limited social services which resulted in parole violations and, unfortunately, rearrests. Krontiris & Watler (2009-2010) suggested a task force for monitoring the individuals released from incarceration that would consist of the
individual, parole officer and the community. The objectives of the task force would be to establish a clear plan for the individual after release and maintain a repository of information and services necessary for the individuals’ success. The Auglaize County Sheriff’s office (Auglaize County) in Ohio took reentry efforts into their own hands by assisting individuals with social service needed such as medical and drug and alcohol addictions. In a one-year study, the efforts taken by the Auglaize County Sheriff’s office resulted in 12.3% decrease in the rate of recidivism.

**Theme 5: Physical and Social Environmental Factors**

Environmental factor seems to plague the newly released individual when returning to the same network of friends and environment that may have contributed to their incarcerations. The participants of this study were adamant about not allowing their environment to wreak havoc on their efforts to desist from criminal behavior and avoid re-incarceration. Johnathan stated that, after his first incarceration, his group of friends changed (for the better), now most of his friends are good “moral” people. Johnathan and Isaiah chose a halfway house away from their pre-incarceration communities, realizing that returning to their previous environments were not conducive to their successful reintegration back to society. Choosing not to return to their previous environment also demonstrated an effort and desire on their part to avoid recidivism. Although released to his home, Darren refused to return to his home environment because of his addiction. He acknowledged that there would be drug use, whether he lived with his aunt, uncle, mother, cousin or anyone and that he would be able to resist initially, but the probability of eventually giving in to his addiction was inevitable. Therefore, after his third release, he took the
responsible route and chose a halfway house where he could continue treatment for his addiction in a safe and non-threatening environment that would allow him to recover.

The literature support the finding of environmental factor as a means to reduce recidivism. In Bahr’s (2005) study of 51 participants, re-incarceration was heavily associated with socializing with friends four or more times per week, conflicted relationships in the family, family members who had been on probation or in jail, and the difficulty of staying off drugs. Incarceration has served as a means of severing ties that had a negative impact on inmates and in some instances these ties were at the root of their convictions. Pre-incarceration relationships including partner physically, emotionally, and mentally abuse, coupled with being forced into illegal acts such as robbery, eventually caused convictions in Bui & Morash (2010) study of twenty female participants. Inmates in a relationship with someone, who was either drug dealers or users, eventually involved the inmate in drug use or drug sales causing them to commit illegal acts. Dysfunction within the family to include sexual abuse by family members, abusive, alcoholic, drug users and criminal sibling, parents and grandparents also contributed to illegal and criminal behaviors.

The social learning theory offers an explanation as to why individuals initially engage in crime and deviance. These environmental changes by the participants have caused a turning point altering their criminal behavior.

**Theme 6: Social Services**

There are numerous social services that are needed and available once an individual has been released from incarceration. The participants of this study have indicated such needs, but
not limited to: counseling, mentoring, mental and physical evaluation (rehabilitation) and services related to finding or assistance with employment.

Jessica, Isaiah and Travis all stressed the need for mentors, having someone to talk to outside of a group setting for those who may have trust issues. This need was expressed by a participate who suffered from depression and never diagnosed nor treated until incarceration. The treatment for depression received during incarceration contributed to Jessica’s success where prior treatment could have possibly prevented incarceration. Jessica also benefited from mentoring that helped to keep her on track, continued to follow-up with her and made sure she kept scheduled appointments and followed proper guidelines.

Substance abuse counseling and rehabilitation are services that are in dire need. Darren stated that substance abuse is what led a lot of individuals to prison, their addictions. He went on to say that just because a person has been released from prison, the addiction did not disappear, the person still has the same addiction when released as they did when initially incarcerated.

Mental and physical evaluation and services for the disabled were cited also as being a need for the individual once released from incarceration. Pete shared that because of his physical disability (use of only one hand and back injury) he did not qualify for admission into the halfway house where he currently lives. Pete had to hide his disability to gain access after his incarceration. Although eligible for disability the process could take years and this participant needed something “quick fast, and in a hurry” as he stated. Because of his situation, Pete expressed the need for disability services to begin at the time of release from incarcerations. A disabled person cannot provide for themselves; they need assistance and this participant did not want to rely on his family for support and be a burden to them. Social services serve as a
transition fulfilling the participants’ needs thereby altering negative trajectories and causing them to desist from criminal behavior (Bahr, 2005).

The needs of a newly released individual are extensive, well beyond the basic primary needs. The newly released individual requires access to employment, housing and possibly mental and or physical evaluation and treatment Krontiris & Watler (2009-2010). With over 600,000 individuals moving from prison or jails back to the community, many of them return with the same drug and alcohol dependence, mental illness, education and job skill levels they had prior to incarceration (Pogorzelski, et al., 2005). After release from incarceration, individuals are still in need of treatment and services; these services do exist, but the individuals must be informed and access provided to these services.

Limitations

Limitations were minimal for this study, the lack of an established relationship between the participant for this study and me. The number of participants for this study did not change; six individuals were selected as originally planned. As soon as an interview session ended, I would review the recording and make notes. After the third interview, these notes began to reoccur, duplicating the previous sessions. Although a greater number of participants were projected during the conception of this study, six participants seemed to be most appropriated when duplication of codes occurred. Furthermore, once themes began to emerge, most could be construed as effective practices that could reduce prison recidivism in any state, not limited to the State of Alabama.

Despite the initial notion, the lack of an established relationship did not seem to hinder the participants of this study at all in sharing their experiences. All but one participant seemed to
be eager to share their experiences; they all had a story they wanted to share. In the end, after the recording ceased, Isaiah who provided short answers and the shortest interview of them all, offered his services to speak to any group or individual that he could help and provide encouragement as they contend with incarceration or possible prevention for youth.

**Researcher Reflections**

As mentioned earlier, prior to conducting this study and speaking with individuals released from incarceration, no one was aware of any Alabama Department of Corrections programming that prepared individuals for their release from incarceration. The individuals questioned had been released prior to 2007 before the Alabama Department of Corrections implemented its prerelease programming. Conducting this study disproved my initial assumptions. I also presumed that education and training alone was the key component to the newly released individuals’ success. Based on the participants’ responses, education and training combined with social services, special programs, family support and their environment were all essential to their success.

During the interview process, I had no idea there would be a level of comfort that would cause a formal interview to resemble a conversation among friends. This level of comfort may have been due to the private setting without prison officers present monitoring the participants’ responses. I did not expect to interview a participant with other individual’s present and smoking cigarettes continuously while other individuals come and go, and converse, oblivious to the interview underway. I did not expect the individual present (the smoker) to stop me as I attempted to make my exit, share how listening to the interview process motivated him. This seemingly unconventional situation was an opportunity to possibly save someone from
incarceration and served as a deterrent to criminal activity. I did not expect a participant to become defensive to the point I sensed hostility in his voice when I asked a particular question. This behavior was later understood when he revealed that he had a disability and how it affects employment. This behavior also initiated the possibility of a potential study would explore community reentry from the eyes of an individual with a physical or mental disability. All participants volunteered for this study, as such, I did not expect to encounter a participant who would be seemingly reluctant to answering questions and provide no depth in the answers provided. Initially, I was discouraged but after the recording had ended, Isaiah seemed to be a bit more comfortable and shared more information. Keeping a journal was most useful in documenting our conversation in this instance. I did not expect a participant to cause such a disturbance within me that I would act upon and implement immediately. As with Isaiah, after the recording has ended, Travis indicated the need to help released individuals start their own businesses. I immediately implement his suggestion. These unexpected experiences and events of discovery caused this study to be more invaluable and merit further research than I had expected.

Equipped with the results of this study, practices that participants have identified as being effective in their desistance from criminal activity, informed decisions can be made regarding instituting changes and practices that will reduce recidivism. As a researcher and change agent, the change I have implemented based on the knowledge gained from this study was the establishment of “Project IE,” Inmates to Entrepreneurs. Participants mentioned difficulties finding employment after their release, and self-employment as an option, but need assistance and guidance in getting started. As someone who assists with business startup, a Certified
Grants Specialist and a Certified Career Coach, I will contact Executive Directors and Managers of the special programs identified in this study and offer my services to their consumers. Additionally, the effective practices uncovered by this study will be shared with other organizations and change agents in an effort to ensure special programs cited are available statewide and eventually nationwide where currently not available. It was the participants’ personal stories as they shared their pre and post release prison experiences that produced themes or effective practices that will reduce prison recidivism and enrich correctional academia.

Suggestions for Practice

Prison recidivism is a phenomenon that has existed and will exist for some time to come, foreign to some, but affects all. The purpose of this study was to uncover effective practices that would reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. One of the most valuable pieces to uncovering effective practices was to capture the voices, the views and the experiences lived by each participant.

By sharing their experiences, the participants of this study have provided a collective insight regarding what has worked for them identifying key practices that will reduce prison recidivism and what has worked for the six participants of this study.

As a pre-release practice, the Alabama Department of Corrections’ current pre-release and reentry programs are effective but could be lengthened, and the state should consider offering this program perhaps 60 – 90 day prior to the inmates release, Taxman (2004) suggest 90 prior to release. Also, based on the participants’ responses, the content of the current program should be expanded and updated to ensure all information is current. Participants indicated that not all information they received was valid and some services did not exist in the areas or
communities they returned home to. Ideally, participants felt that preparation for reenter back into society should begin the first day of incarceration; this also provides encouragement to work towards release and not an extended sentence.

Each participate was able to benefit from the unique services offered by special programs. They also shared how instrumental these programs were from accommodating visitation from ones children to providing much needed guidance and treatment for addictions and depression. Certain programs were local whereas others were statewide. One stop shops are becoming prevalent, and it would behoove agencies to incorporate the services shared by the participants as their resources permits.

Supervised release was a positive contributor to the participants’ general wellbeing. This monitoring serves as a reminder to some participants that if they do not comply with the guidelines of their release they will return to incarceration. Supervised release also served as counseling for some and a resource for employment and other services for others. There was, however, one mishap reported that caused the participant to be returned to incarceration because of a lack of communication on the part of the parole officers during transition. This participant spent additional time in prison because the parole officers did not consider documentation maintained by the participant, nor did the new parole officers follow-up with the previous officer. Workloads are high for parole officers, however; proper follow-up would have prevented an innocent person from spending 30 day in prison.

Social Services consisting of counseling, mentoring, mental and rehabilitative services such as treatment for depression, drug and substance abuse, addictions, resources for food and housing to assistance in finding employment were all vital. The participants expressed a need for
one-to-one counseling after their release from incarceration. The participants also expressed a need for mentors, someone to hold them accountable for remaining within their bounds and guidelines of their release. Someone who is going to be there for them, as one participant phrased it, someone to “…confide in about anything. Anything that he is going through at all, emotions, physically, spiritually, he can go to these people, and they will listen to him without ridiculing, without trying to put him down, but listen.” Another participant’s sentiments were if a person enters prison with an addiction he will leave prison with that same addiction. The newly released individual is in dire need of social services. Treatment for depression, addictions and other afflictions do not end as the inmate exit the prison walls. Once released, the individual must continue treatment or began treatment if needed if the rate of recidivism is to be reduced.

When mentioning the topic of this study to friends, cohorts and in classroom settings, individuals were not familiar with the term recidivism or had never heard the word before, but it affects everyone. Fallout from crime is not limited to the convicted individual; it touches everyone from the individuals’ nuclear family to businesses and citizens for which the criminal activity was thrust. No one is exempt, and no one can pretend as if they are beyond the clutches of crime. Everyone is vulnerable to crime from an assault on the street to cyber-crimes, an assault via of technological advances. Therefore, it behooves the state, and other agencies to uncover and implement effective practice that reduces the rate of prison recidivism and create a safer community for us all.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research is significant for the State of Alabama and me because the educational program for Draper Prison, one of Alabama’s State facilities, was developed by John M. McKee,
a leader in curriculum development for correctional education (Messemer, J. E., 2011). McKee implemented the successful Draper Project in 1962 causing Alabama to become a landmark state in correctional education. The state also led the nation in prison decline in 2004 and can serve as a model for correctional education and prison reduction again with a bit of ingenuity.

The current Alabama Department of Corrections’ programming could be enhanced fairly easy. Early released individuals in the State of Alabama are released under supervised monitoring with scheduled monthly appointments. The ADOC could collect data from these individuals regarding programming and services that have been beneficial in deterring their criminal activity and remaining free from incarceration. The Department of Corrections could easily prepare a questionnaire that the individual could complete as they await their appointments. This process would provide constant statewide feedback in which trends could be followed, and areas of weakness could be identified. In addition to state questionnaires, the state could also conduct a pilot program at one of its facilities extending the pre-release program from the current one-to-two weeks as well as offering the program 90-days prior to the individuals’ release date.

Similarly, if a questionnaire seems to be too much of an effort, a rotating advisory board consisting of released persons could be established. This advisory board could provide feedback regarding programming and services that have been beneficial to them after their release as well as the opportunity in identify programming that has not worked and either revise, restructure or eliminate.

All participants of this study were asked the question: If you were to create a program to help people stay out of prison, what would it consist of? The collective answer to this question
consisted of housing, training, gainful employment, food, transportation, healthcare services (in general, including treatment for depression and addiction), mentors, job etiquette and interviewing techniques in a faith-based program. The participants thought this “ideal program” should provide the mentioned services for at least six months up to one year; beyond that time the individual should be able to survive on their own.

The Alabama Therapeutic Education Facility (ATEF), a residential reentry facility that uses cognitive behavioral treatment and vocational training as a means of positive reentry for individuals received praises from Travis. Because of its structure and its approach, a study that explores the ATEF’s rate of recidivism versus the recidivism rate of the traditional prison should be implemented. If the results were skewed, favoring the ATEF’s structure and approach rehabilitating individuals, this would result in a reduction in prison recidivism, cost to taxpayers and a safer community.

Future areas of study should also include examining the rate of recidivism for persons who received treatment for depression or addiction during their incarcerations, but did not continue treatment for depression or addiction after their release versus those who did continue treatment. The results could possible indicate the need for continued treatment or the possible success of initial treatment received during incarceration.

Finally, one area of discovery that was not expected was to encounter a participant with a physical disability. A potential study could explore community reentry from the eyes of released individuals with a physical disability. This study could explore the added challenges faced upon release from incarceration and how they overcome these challenges.
Summary

This research study was undertaken to seek out and uncover effective practices that can reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. The research intent was to capture the voice, the views and the experiences lived by the participants of this study.

Guided by the social learning theory (Akers & Jennings, 2009), this study has uncovered explanation as to why the participants initially engaged in criminal and deviant behavior. Two leading causes of their behavior as revealed by the participants were their environment and depression. Employing the life course perspective (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005), the researcher uncovered transitions or events such as employment and relationships or parenthood even, that may increase (social) bonds thereby altering the negative trajectories (Bahr, 2005). These turning points were a key component in this research study because these points caused the participants to change their directions. While incarcerated, the participants discovered they could not rely on their network of friends; they only received support and encouragement from their family, which strengthened that bond. Job and skills training, employment and supervised release were all helpful and represent transitions that have altered trajectories. Three of the six participants of this study were employed during the interview process, using skills attained while incarcerated. A fourth participate was employed, and the remaining two were residents of a halfway house continuing rehabilitation and working within that enterprise. Social services especially counseling and mentoring, as well as special programs all caused turning points in the participant’s lives.

This research study searched for effective practices that would help to reduce the rate of prison recidivism in the State of Alabama. The effective practices found, however, are
applicable to any state. The effective practices identified by the participants of this study and the information gained from this study may help future individuals desist from crime. The practices uncovered by this study may improve existing programs and possibly indicate a need for new or more innovative programming that will ensure a more successful reentry of the individual back to the community and create a safer environment for all.
References


Lovelady (n.d.) The Lovelady Center. Retrieved from [http://www.loveladycenter.org/Miss_Brenda_and_the_Loveladies.html](http://www.loveladycenter.org/Miss_Brenda_and_the_Loveladies.html)


Appendix A

Request-Script for Participant Recruitment

Institution: Northeastern University, Doctor of Education Program

Investigators: Sanders Thomas, Student Researcher and Billye Sankofa Waters, Principal Investigator

Title of Project: Correctional Curriculum Evaluation: An Uncovering of Effective Practices that Reduce the Rate of Prison Recidivism in the State of Alabama

Hello, my name is Sanders Thomas; I am a resident of Huntsville, Alabama and graduate student at Northeastern University, working towards a Doctor of Education degree with a concentration in Curriculum Leadership.

I was referred to you by __________, and I am inviting you to take part in a research study that I am conducting as part of my dissertation work for Northeastern University. I have decided to research the topic of prison recidivism (individuals returning to incarceration after being released), focusing on effective practices that reduce the rate by which individuals are returning to incarceration and the effectiveness of the State of Alabama’s existing Pre Release / Re-entry program from the parolee’s perspective. I am requesting your participation because you were a part of the State of Alabama’s correctional system, released within the past three years and can offer valuable insight based on your personal experiences. If you are interested in taking part in this study we will ask you to participate in an interview that will last approximately 60 - 90 minutes. You will be given the opportunity to review the written analysis of your responses. The interview and the follow-up can take place at a mutually convenient location or over the phone, your choice.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can ask me questions at any point during this conversation. There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. Discussing your experiences of what worked or what did not work allows your voice to be heard and may ensure the success of future parolees.

Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers of this study will see the information about you and the information that can identify you. You will be given a $25 gift card for your participation in this research study. Do you have any questions? Would you be interested in participating in this study? If so, you can contact me at 256.890.1145.
Appendix B

Consent Form

Institution: Northeastern University, Doctor of Education Program
Investigators: Sanders Thomas, Student Researcher and Billye Sankofa Waters, Principal Investigator
Title of Project: Correctional Curriculum Evaluation: An Uncovering of Effective Practices that Reduce the Rate of Prison Recidivism in the State of Alabama

Request to Participate in Research

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.

The initial interview will last between 60-90 minutes and the follow-up review will last between 15-30 minutes after the data has been transcribed. This interview will take place in a location convenient for the interviewee (e.g. local library, office) and will be asked to answer a series of questions.

There are no foreseeable risks or harms that you will experience during this interview process. If you should feel any discomforts or inconvenience you can refuse to answer any question and the interview can cease at any time. No incriminating questions will be asked nor will any questions be asked regarding illegal activity. If information arises that indicate you plan to harm yourself or others I will be compelled to alert the proper authorities.

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from this study may help future parolees desist from crime, improve existing programs or indicate a need for new and more innovative programming.

Your part in this study is anonymous. That means no one will know if you took part in this study and no one, including the researcher, will know what your answers are. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.
You will be given a $25 gift card for your participation in this research study at the conclusion of your interview.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Sanders Thomas at (205) 706-8685, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters at (617) 390-3852, the Principal Investigator overseeing the research.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Reducing Prison Recidivism

In the state of Alabama, 41.9% of the inmates incarcerated are previous incarcerations. Prison recidivism (individuals returning to incarceration after being released) affects the family, the community and the economy. Recidivism occurs for many reasons but most often due to a lack of training, preparation and the ability to deal with life’s nuances after release. A growing number of people now under confinement are being released into the community after serving their prison terms. In 2007, 11,079 inmates were released from state or federal jurisdiction in the State of Alabama, returning to our communities. Unless inmates are trained, educated and receive marketable skill prior to release and taught what to expect upon release, the rate of recidivism will continue to rise.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of State of Alabama’s Re-Entry/Pre-Release program. We are interested in the parolees’ thoughts and feelings regarding the current curriculum and its effectiveness, where to improve programming and availability of the program.
Interview Protocol Form

Interview Protocol

Institution: ________________________________________________

Interviewee (Title and Name): _________________________________

Interviewer: _______________________________________________  

Date: ______________________________________________________

Location of Interview: ________________________________

Previously attained background information (assume this has already been collected)

Effective Practices That Reduce Recidivism Interviews

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes). Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions (under typical circumstances an informed consent form would be reviewed and signed here).

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience of being someone who has successfully desisted from criminal activity within the past three years. Our research project focuses on the experience of parolees who have been released from the Alabama Department of Corrections System. We have a particular interest in understanding how they have been able to remain free from incarceration. We are also interested in how existing programming has been to their benefit after release and what they feel should be changed or added to ensure an effortless transition to society and desistance from crime. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into how you successfully transitioned from inmate to parolee. Hopefully this will allow us to uncover effective practices that reduce recidivism and prepares inmates for reentry into society in order to reduce prison recidivism.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [If yes, thank the participant, mention you will ask them again for the record on the tape, and turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. I will be the only one privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. To meet our human subjects requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me [provide the form]. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is
voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form?

This interview will last about 60 - 90 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. Do you have any questions at this time?

**Interviewer Background**

1. When were you released from prison?
2. Was that your first time in prison? What were you convicted of?
3. Have either of your parents, siblings or offspring’s been convicted of a crime?
4. What is your highest level of education?
5. Did you attain any job skill training prior to incarceration, if so which training?
6. Were you employed before your incarceration, if so what line of work?
7. When you found out you were going to be released on parole, how did you feel?
8. What were you most concerned about just before you were released?
9. What did you think was going to be easy? Difficult after your release?
10. Can you recall what you did in the first few hours after you were released?
11. Did you have a place to stay/sleep when you were released?
12. Did you have any money?
13. How did you get around, transportation-wise?
14. Are you employed? In what line of work and for how long?
15. How long did it take to find employment after you were released?
16. Was your family/community supportive during this time? How?
17. Did you return to your same network of friends? If so, why and how did it affect you?
18. What was the worst aspect of being incarcerated?
19. Were there any good or beneficial aspects of being incarcerated?
20. Many employers require applicants to complete applications on-line or on a computer, was this a part of the pre-release program?
21. Did you receive any computer training prior to release?
22. Has your access (or lack of access) to technology helped or hurt you in finding a job, securing housing, or meeting the requirements of your release?
Part II: Objectives (40-45 minutes): Capture the participants’ voice and their views on how pre and post-release practices have helped or could have helped in them remaining free of prison recidivism.

Prefatory Statement: I would like to hear about your pre and post-release practices that you experienced in your own words. To do this, I am going to ask questions about the key experiences that helped or could have helped in your desistance to crime and returning to incarceration.

How has the Alabama Department of Corrections executed its re-entry program such that it achieves its mission of providing a positive re-entry for its inmates?
1. Which education and training offerings did you participate in during your incarceration?
2. Did you continue with a similar program once you were released from prison? If not, why?
3. Were there programs you were not able to participate in? If so why?
4. In your opinion, were there negative aspects of participating in any of the offered programs?
5. Have you been able to apply skills learned while incarcerated, outside of prison?
6. In your opinion, would specific vocational training have been useful to you? Can you give an example?
7. In your experiences, how are people prepared for release? Are they prepared at all? Was there enough content in the pre-release/re-entry program? How was the length of the program? Did you have anyone to contact for additional questions well after the program was over?
8. Were you given material that you or your family could pursue prior to your release that would have helped in your transition from prison (i.e., contact numbers for services available)?
9. Did participating in the pre-release program benefit you?
10. What rehabilitative services did you receive that you feel were beneficial in your success in remaining free from incarceration? What was lacking and how could it be improved?
11. If you were asked how a person should be prepared for release, what would you suggest?
12. Is there anything specific that should be included in a pre-release program or process?
13. Outside of everything we talked about, is there anything else you would like to add about the pre-release/re-entry program, being in prison, or staying out of prison?
What pre-release and post-release practices do parolees view as being most effective in remaining free of criminal activity and adjusting to life after their release from incarceration?

1. When did you first have contact with your parole officer after you were released?
2. What did you talk about with the parole officer?
3. Where they concerned with your housing, job or adjustment to being released?
4. What were your concerns during the meeting?
5. After release, what was the most difficult thing to get used to in your daily life? How did you deal with it?
6. How long did it take you to find employment after being released?
7. Have you acquired skills/education since your release? Have these skills/education been a benefit to you?
8. Was supervised release helpful to you staying out of prison?
9. When it comes to supervised release, are there any changes to the system that you would see helping people remain out of prison?
10. Before entering prison, were you close to your family?
11. Has your family been supportive of you since leaving prison?
12. How important do you think the role of your family has been in your readjustment?
13. Given your experience outside prison, would you say it will be difficult or easy to remain out of prison? Why?
14. Have situations ever reached the point where you thought incarceration was better/easier than life outside prison? Why?
15. If you were able to help the next person being released from prison, what would you tell them?
16. If you were to create a program to help people stay out of prison, what would it consist of?
17. Final question, is there anything else you can offer about what has helped you not to return to incarceration?
Appendix D
Confidentiality Agreement

During the course of my activity in transcribing data for Sanders Thomas, I will have access to sensitive information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way share, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

4. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the transcription duties that I will perform.

5. I understand that violation of this agreement could have legal implications.

6. I will transcribe the recorded information to the best of my ability, and I will not willingly leave any information out of the transcribed materials.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Jane Wallace ________________ 1/28/14
Printed Name Date

Jane S. Wallace ________________
Signature

Orian Transcription Services
Appendix E

Sample Coding

Example of coding process, pre-code transitioning to the theme social services

Interviewer:  Now if you were able to help the next person being released from prison what would you tell them? There’s someone down the street that you saw growing up as a little child and they’re coming out, what would you tell them as far as helping them stay out and never go back?
Participant 1: I would tell them its help if you want it and just to get around positive people that’s trying to go places and stay away from the negative. [Researchers: positive influence – Mentor]
Interviewer: Now if you were to, once again you’ve been released, you’re out and you know you’re not going back, if your parole officer said we want to hire you to develop a program to help people stay out, what would that program look like and what would it consist of? That same person you saw growing up as a child, you’re going to develop a program for that person. What would that program look like?
Participant 1: I would just guide them along the way, be like a mentor to them to help them out, show them the way to go. [Researchers code: Mentor]
Interviewer: So you would have some type mentorship program set up?
Participant 1: Yes
Interviewer: Because you said you were missing that one on one?
Participant 1: Yes
Interviewer: So you would make sure they have a mentor?
Participant 1: Yeah, somebody they can talk to if they need it because sometime people are scared to talk in groups, sometimes people have trust issues. And I think Mentors could help people because you don’t know what people are thinking. [Researchers code: Mentor]
Interviewer: If you were asked how a person should be prepared for release what would you say? This is speaking from, you’re incarcerated and getting ready to leave.
Participant 1: I think before you being released they should at least give you the study like the Re-entry Program, follow you up with stuff that’s gonna help you better yourself when you get out, stay connected with you at least 3-6 months to make sure you’re on the right track, give you a mentor, somebody to push you to find a job, find your own place and do whatever you need to stay out. [Researchers code: Mentor]

Interviewer: Okay. Now, is there anything else you can offer as far as what you think will help a person not to return to incarceration?

Participant 5: Try to keep positive man, and recognize the signs of depression and recognize the signs of them going down the wrong track they’ve been at, you know, like a buddy system that sort of like sponsor or something like that. [Researchers code: Mentor]
Interviewer: Okay, let's back up. So as far as establishing a program for someone coming out of incarceration, you would provide them with a mentor, maybe?

Participant 5: Yes, right.

Interviewer: Okay, now that is the response you would give that person you saw growing up, that you truly care about, but how about if you were designing a program for inmates who are about to be released. What would that program consist of?

Participant 6: I would say counseling for it. [Researchers code: Counseling] I would say developing a new way of living. Also, I would say a system, once again, with housing, okay, clothing, even introduce them or have someone there if they want to start their own business, so they could develop the community itself. To know that they can succeed. They do have a place in society.

Interviewer: How about job training?

Participant 6: Right, yes. Like I said, they could develop job training. It's hard for different people there who, the business aspect of it, different training.

Interviewer: Okay, so for the most part, you would offer counseling [Researchers code: Counseling], housing, clothing, entrepreneurship, and also job training for those leaving.

Participant 6: Right.

Interviewer: Okay, is there anything else you would add? That's a pretty good list.

Participant 6: I would even go into a little more depth, as far as, I would say for the counseling part, [indiscernible] multiple mental part [Researcher’s edit]. That's why being incarcerated is painful is a big factor upon you. You almost get like programmed or brainwashed. [Researchers code: Counseling]

Interviewer: Now you also said counseling, right?

Participant 6: Right, exactly.

Interviewer: Okay, you mentioned that you would offer counseling prior to release because you are seemingly or almost brainwashed, so that counseling within the Dannon Project is really beneficial.

Participant 6: Yes, yes, yes it is. The one thing I like about it is you don't have to worry about no one knowing exactly. It's a one-on-one thing. That's the part I like about it. No one knows, just you and your counselor, that's it. [Researchers code: Counseling]
Interviewer: Now this is a similar question as I asked before. Now, once again, you're on the outside now, and that same little person that you saw growing up, they've just been released from prison. How are you going to advise that person?

Participant 6: I would be there for them on every aspect. Even though he faltered in a way, I would still be there for him and let him know that if I could do it, he could do it. [Researchers code: Mentor]

Interviewer: So mentoring is important?

Participant 6: Right, exactly.

The underlined passages were the researchers’ pre-codes noted during his initial data analysis and editing of transcribers’ [indiscernible]. Mentor, mentoring, positive people and one-on-one counseling were all pre-codes that evolved into the category Mentor which during the final refining phase fell within the theme, social services.