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Recently incarcerated homeless men's opinions on rehabilitation programs

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Recently incarcerated homeless men's opinions on rehabilitation programs

Abstract

Homelessness and incarceration have been recognized as national social problems that affect millions every year. Currently, about one-third of homeless men have also been incarcerated. The existence the population of doubly marginalized homeless felons indicates a very serious deficit within the status quo. This study utilizes a grassroots qualitative approach to further understanding aspects of this social problem. A snowball sample was conducted in a medium sized city in a Great Lakes state homeless shelter. Research was collected through in-depth qualitative interviews with the recently incarcerated homeless men about their opinions and experiences of rehabilitation programs in prison. This study provides a venue for the voices and opinions of the recently incarcerated homeless men regarding the relationship between rehabilitation during their incarceration and their current conditions of homelessness. The connection between homelessness and incarceration became quite clear as the experiences and policies of the criminal justice system were explained throughout the interviews. The interviews revealed that the men's reality of prison is that it is a business, a warehouse, proliferates crime and has no rehabilitation. In one phrase, the men speak of the "prison industrial complex".

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RECENTLY INCARCERATED HOMELESS MEN'S OPINIONS
ON REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

By

Heather Eleanor Mooney

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

With Honors in Sociology

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan on this date

“Imprisonment,
as it exists today,
is a worse crime than
any of those
committed by its victims.”

George Bernard Shaw

Senior Honors Thesis

ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose/Significance of the Study.....	2
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	4
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	8
Research Design.....	8
Sample Selection.....	8
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	10
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	24
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	33
CALL TO ACTION.....	39
REFERENCES.....	40
APPENDIX A Interview Questions.....	42
APPENDIX B Letter of Introduction.....	43
APPENDIX C USHRC Letter of Approval.....	44
APPENDIX D Informed Consent Form.....	45

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction/Statement of the Problem

There is a large population of men with criminal backgrounds within the homeless community, which seems to indicate that the current rehabilitation programs are not fulfilling their aim. “Studies have found that more than half of all homeless persons have previously been in jail and (some with overlap) about one-fifth in prison, with prior incarceration highest among homeless men” (Baumohl 189). Perhaps part of the reasons for this is that there have been decreasing numbers of rehabilitation programs in the criminal justice system since the 1980s, more recently it can be noted that “In 1991, one-third of the inmates with addiction problems got treatment; by 1997, only one-sixth did” (Cohen). In addition, when prisoners are released, they are released with relatively no money and little to no job experience; thus the majority either find themselves homeless or part of the 50% recidivism rate. “In 2001, there will likely be more than 2 million people in jail and prison in this country and more people on parole than ever before. If parole revocation trends continue, more than half the people entering prison that year will be parole failures” (Petersilia 11).

A large percentage of the homeless population has mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues that have never been adequately dealt with. Often times released prisoners will find themselves in these populations as well. Most recently incarcerated men that find themselves in the shelter have a hard time getting a job and establishing themselves back into the community. It was noted in the study done by Rose, Clear and Ryder that “Ex-offenders and their families frequently use available services such as the homeless, shelter, AIDS-related services, food banks, food stamps, and job training, but these programs are not specifically designed to address the problems encountered when a person transitions to or from prison” (98). This is where it would be incredibly beneficial to have had rehabilitation programs previously or have them at this current time of reentry into the community. There does not seem to be a large support system or much adequate help to fit the needs of this population, and consequently they end up fighting recidivism rates, homelessness, mental health issues, substance abuse issues, and feelings of displacement and so forth without any type of assistance. The current concept of

rehabilitation needs to be questioned not to mention that “We still know little about the transitional resources (formal or informal) that enable individuals and families to “exit” from homelessness or to avoid it in the first place. Without such knowledge, designing – and advocating for – effective programs to resolve or prevent homelessness remains a hit-or-miss affair” (Hopper 185).

Purpose/Significance of this Study

The research question that defines this thesis is what are recently incarcerated men’s opinions of rehabilitation programs in prisons. The purpose of this study will be to better understand the opinions of recently incarcerated homeless men regarding rehabilitation programs they have participated in while incarcerated. I will be interested in learning what recently incarcerated homeless men perceive as the most helpful/rehabilitating programs that were offered, and what they believe should be offered to help create a successful transition from incarceration to the community. Ultimately I hope to understand what types of rehabilitation programs are successful as viewed by participants of them as well as what programs would be beneficial to re-implement or implement for the first time for rehabilitation purposes. In addition to understanding the rehabilitation aspects of their prison and release experience, I wanted to discover if there was a direct correlation between their release and their experiences with homelessness. Nearly all of the previous research (Baumohl, Hopper, Petersilia) acknowledges the large majority of men who have spent time in jail or prison, end up in the homeless population or back in the criminal justice system. The stigmatization of being incarcerated, along with the financial difficulties of finding a job and affordable housing quickly align released prisoners with similar, if not worse, disadvantages as the majority of the homeless population.

This research will be critically of importance to the discipline because it utilizes a grass-roots methodology. The research method of a grass-roots methodology will be in-depth, exploratory qualitative interviews. This particular method was chosen because it provides a free flowing, open-ended, and illuminative process. The interviews will allow the recently incarcerated homeless man to speak on the issues he feels would be most

beneficial to his reentry into the community. He will also be free to speak about the programs with which he is currently involved. This type of traveler interview allows for the interviewee to direct the most of the conversation. It allows for the interviewee to be more assertive and validated with his responses than other interview structures. This thesis will provide a voice for this specific group of doubly marginalized men to express their thoughts, experiences and opinions on programs that were created, in theory, to help rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society. This research work acknowledges each man as a human being, and listens to his own experience, observation and genius on the social problem of homelessness and incarceration both of which he can directly speak about.

This thesis will be of utmost importance as a contribution to the field of research on homelessness and incarceration. Due to the transient nature of the homeless population and the legal inability to interview inmates, these select interviews that were collected are an incredibly valuable research. The fieldwork involving recently incarcerated homeless men is limited in the amount of studies and research that has been published. This thesis can have significant relevance to the field of study, as it will provide further support and perspective to the social problems of homelessness and incarceration. The overwhelming value of this thesis derives from the fact that the men are the featured voices in what their prison experiences were, what they thought of the rehabilitation programs and what rehabilitation programs they perceive would have been the best to help them reintegrate into society. It allows them to voice their frustrations and concerns where even now many of them are still struggling with “successfully” rehabilitating into our society. This thesis provides a venue for them to explain the shortcomings or difficulties that they have encountered while trying to succeed in the free world.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Baumohl, Jim. Homelessness in America. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1996.

This text provides a comprehensive look at the social problem of homelessness in America and its construction. The text begins by discussing the historical and theoretical interpretation of the rather nebulous concept of homelessness. It then provides the reader with how homelessness has been defined in academic research and its findings there. The text continues to discuss the complex and interconnected causes of homelessness, oversimplification of the problem, the housing, employment and legal ramifications related to it and the different populations within homelessness. The last main section of the text discusses what the public, on both the government and activist level has done.

Benda, Brent B. "Predictors of Arrests and Service Use Among the Homeless: Logic Analyses." Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal 17.2 (1993): 145-161.

This research study utilized 444 homeless people to provide further understanding of the interactions between elements related to present arrests and the use of services. There were several logit models, each compiled with different factors that were examined. The best predictors of arrest in the homeless community were previous imprisonment and alcohol treatment. The service utilization was predicted by having an interaction with current drinking, having past psychiatric hospitalization and the effects of present hallucinations. The implications of these findings in relationship to providing services for the homeless community were further discussed.

Clear, Todd R., Dina R. Rose and Judith A. Ryder. "Drugs, Incarceration and Neighborhood Life: The Impact of Reintegrating Offenders into the Community." Property of National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) July 3, 2003 <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/195173.pdf>

The focus of this qualitative study was to look at the impact of incarceration on the quality of community life in areas that experienced high levels of incarceration. The study used a snowball approach to interview 30 prominent community figures and 39 people that lived or worked in the neighborhoods. The resulting analysis provided four

main domains, 1. Stigma, 2. Financial, 3. Identity and 4. Relationships, where the disruption of incarceration affected individuals, families and the community. The study provided 16 different comprehensive programmatic responses to the issues that are created within community and individual in high incarceration areas.

Hopper, Kim. Reckoning with Homelessness. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

This text provides us with an ethnography study of homelessness that reemerged in New York City in the 1980s to the late 1990s, with specific focus on men, as they are the predominant homeless population. The study is prefaced with a discussion on the classification and history of the issues of homelessness with focused attention on the concepts of abeyance and liminality. The study reveals the alternative utilities of public spaces, and the implied aspects of a survival niche. The final part of the text explicates the history of homelessness advocacy and levels of engagement that is involved.

Michigan State. Michigan Interagency Committee on Homelessness (MICH). The State of Homelessness in Michigan: A Research Study. Presented by Richard Douglass. Lansing:MICH, 1995.

This research study was focused on questions that were of relevance and interest to the member agencies and departments involved in the Michigan Interagency Committee on Homelessness. Each section of the fieldwork, both quantitative and qualitative, were related to all the State agencies and departments that sponsored it. The study provides results on the homeless client's perspectives, their characteristics, the homeless economics and causes of homelessness in the State of Michigan. It also discusses education in relation to homeless populations both adult and youth.

Petersilia, Joan. "When Prisoners Return to the Community: Political, Economic and Social Consequences." (Series) Research in Brief – Sentencing and Corrections: Issues for the 21st Century. (pub) National Institute of Justice, No#9 (Nov 2000) 22 pages

This research in brief discusses the overwhelming amount of prisoners that are being released into our communities and the consequences of this. The issue of parole is discussed in depth in regards to the length of time, the quality of the program and that 2/3

of parolees will return to prison or jail. The research discusses the changes that have been made in the parole system; supervision replacing services and what parolees needs are going unmet. It discusses community side affects such as homelessness, political alienation, economic challenges and how family dynamics are challenged and change.

Rossi, Peter H. and Anne B. Shlay. "Social Science Research and Contemporary Studies of Homelessness." *Annual Review of Sociology* v.18 (1992): 129-160.

This review considers and assesses the current social science research on homelessness. It looks at the increasing awareness and visibility of homeless people, and how this has affected the wide range of perspectives in regards to the issue of homelessness. It discusses the diverse aspects of the homeless population, looking at the men, women, youth, children that are affected by it and their experiences. Many of the homeless deal with mental illness, criminal histories, foster care, alcoholism, physical disabilities and health concerns. The review looks at the debate over the causes of homelessness and what policies have been implemented to help alleviate it.

U.S. Dept. of Justice. Office of Justice Programs: Reentry. MI Dept of Corrections – Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative Grantees.
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/sar/pdf/wp1-mi.pdf>

This project is called the Michigan Reentry Initiative "Walk With Me" (MRI-WWM). The over arching goal of the program is protect the public safety by reducing the highest statewide recidivism rates in Wayne County. The program also aims to provide supportive services to aid in rehabilitation and increase the chance of successful reintegration to the community. The program focuses on three phases as follows: Phase One – Going Home (Protect and Prepare – Institutionally-Based Programs); Phase Two – Welcome Home (Control and Restore – Community-Based Transition); and Phase Three – Staying Home (Responsibility and Productivity – Community-Based Long Term Support).

Yeich, Susan. *The Politics of Ending Homelessness*. Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1994.

This text provides a practical way to solve homelessness by restoring low cost housing, livable wage jobs and raising benefit levels. It discusses the aspects in which homelessness and poverty are forms of oppression. The text provides an in-depth analysis of the causes of homelessness, looking closely at the major changes in the economy, housing market, and political system. The text advocates that the only successful movement to combating homelessness is to have the low-income and homeless people organize themselves and bring forth a protest movement.

Young, Niki L. "There's no place like home: An analysis of homeless testimonial narratives." Midwest Quarterly 37.3 (1996): 328-340.

This analysis provides a look at the conflicts of homelessness through the language that the homeless community uses. Specifically 16 homeless individuals testified at four different Congressional hearings. The analysis highlighted the common features that were expressed within them all. The features were the challenge to talk about the problem, the catalog of difficulties, the loss of hope, the failure of the system, the quiet plea, the survivor testimonial and the claim to uniqueness.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research method utilized for this thesis was a grass-roots qualitative methodology. This research was conducted in an inductive fashion, from which the daily-lived experiences of the participants emerged. I researched in an overt fashion, meaning that the participants were fully informed that I am a researcher, and they were fully informed of the purpose of this research. The participants are already members of two marginalized populations, so it is imperative for them to be fully informed. The research was collected in the form of in-depth qualitative traveling interviews. These interviews were guided by asking questions about the general experiences and opinions of prison, rehabilitation and homelessness but as the interviewer I allowed for the men to speak as openly and nearly about anything that they felt was applicable.

The interviews were conducted in a neutral, public area (the downtown library in a private study room with glass windows) and all of them were tape-recorded after permission was granted. The interviewees were able to walk to the interview location, given that it is located only five blocks from a day shelter where most generally spend some part of the day. The interviews did not have any set time limitation, so they ranged from one hour to four hours long depending how much the interviewee wanted to talk.

Sample Selection

My population of interest was recently incarcerated homeless men in a medium sized city in a Great Lakes state. The sample was pulled from residents and clients of the local men's homeless shelter. This shelter offers the only homeless shelter in the county, as well as free meals and other client services. They are the sole provider and main point of entrance to the local homeless community in the county.

The sample was recruited by means of a snowball sample. I work at the local organization that operates both the men and women's shelters. During the time I have been working there, many clients have mentioned that they were incarcerated. A few clients offered to talk with me previous to my thesis about their experience in prison.

These select clients were asked, if they wanted to participate in the interview. From there those few passed by word of mouth to other potential subjects the offer of the interview. This process was selected because of the very private and sensitive nature of a criminal history. Additionally, given their status as dually marginalized (homeless and recently incarcerated), requests to be interviewed might be experienced as coercive, even if not intended to be so. I do not want to reify a stereotype by randomly approaching men under the assumption that they have been previously incarcerated. Therefore the best way will be to have a few subjects pass the word and wait for other interested subjects to approach me with their willingness to be interviewed.

The shelter has the capacity to provide for 35 men, but the sample size will be limited to 10 men. Given research evidence that, in general, about 1/4 of homeless men have been recently incarcerated (Benda 155), we could expect to find approximately 10 in this setting to have been recently incarcerated, as well. Only men who have been incarcerated for at least 3 years will be interviewed, in order to insure a reasonable expectation of experience with rehabilitation programs.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA

There was an overwhelming wealth of data that resulted from the ten interviews with the recently incarcerated homeless men. Select data will be presented to illuminate the four major findings of this research project. The first section explicates the reality of the prison as experienced and understood by the men. The second section provides commentary by the men about the connections between homelessness and being recently incarcerated. The third section discusses the predominant current rehabilitation programs that are offered in the criminal justice system as experienced and reflected upon by the men. The fourth and final section presents the suggestions and innovative ideas that the men would ideally like to see implemented as rehabilitation programs.

The Reality of Prison

“Yeah, yeah it’s to me all it is is a money making thing. You know there is nothing about rehabilitation. There is nothing at all about rehabilitation. It’s just a place that you know to stock house people. Yeah, you know you committed a crime, you know some of them should never ever be allowed to see people you know, but there are so many that have been locked up for awhile that deserve a chance. And there are some that should never even have come to prison.” All of the interviews illuminated again, again four resounding viewpoints that define the prison system. These four main points are the cornerstones of perception to the prison environment, it is from these points that the men understand and explain the prison system that they were in.

The first viewpoint is that the prison system is a business. “Like for my age group they spent 45 thousand dollars a year for me to be in prison, that’s what the prison system got paid to keep me in prison. But yet I barely got 9 dollars worth of food a day, my uniform...So that other 37 thousand dollars is straight up profit. Because see they charge the state, who charges the taxpayers for every cell, they charge rent on the cell.” Each one of the interviewees had a story, an antidote, and comments about a certain aspects of the prison system that illustrated the business profiteering component to it. “The officers that work in ad seg [administrative segregation i.e. isolation] get paid more money than the ones in other places. The longer you are in the hole the longer I can keep my paycheck bigger than yours.” From the discussions about the factory prison jobs, to the kickbacks

that certain companies are granted to exclusively sell their wares to the inmates, to the parole bills that they were charged, the incidents went on and on. “I worked in metal parts where we used to fabricate everything you can imagine. If you can make it out of steel we made it for the whole prison system. Cuz either we made it for the prison system or we made it for the whole state government. And not only do we make it for the whole state government, we made it for any state’s government who would make a deal with the [Midwest state] DOC, they would buy the stuff from us. But we couldn’t sell it to the private sector because then we would be competing for jobs and they didn’t want that. But they tried, (chuckle) they tried several times a year for private contracts.” Example after example was provided of ways in which the prison system was profiting off people’s incarceration.

The second viewpoint is that the prison system is a warehouse.” You just go in there and do your time and get out. If you doin’ 3 years, 5 years that’s what the only thing the penitentiary does. Just a warehouse.” Every single interviewee acknowledged in some form or another that the prison system wasn’t anything more than a warehouse for the inmates. “But it’s still the biggest warehouse in the world and that’s basically, (exhales) what most prisons have become.” The interviewees mentioned how lazy people get in prison, how much TV one watches, continual incidents of being sent to the “hole” (isolation), the monotony, overpopulation and stockpiling of two men to a one bed cell.

The third point is that the prison system perpetuates crime. “You learn how to do a crime a little bit more better. It’s nothing but a high school. Once you graduate, go back out on the street and see how you do...Prison is basically a revolving door.” Every single interview mentioned a story, or incident if not about themselves then other inmates that clearly illuminated the ways in which crime is perpetuated and thrives in the prison system. “I can buy, in the prison system, I can buy anything that you can get out on the street. Alcohol, drugs, women, it’s all there. Yeah, anything you can get on the street I can get in prison, it’ll just cost more. There are female guards that turn tricks.” From the wardens embezzling millions of dollars, to guards setting up inmates for failure, creating inmate fights, anything that will keep them in prison longer, to simply the lack and poor quality of programs that are offered within the prison system there are numerous intricate methods specifically utilized to perpetuate crime in the prison system and other elements

that as one of its results perpetuates more crime. “There are people that come in to prison to do crimes. They come in to deal drugs.”

The fourth point is that the prison system does not offer rehabilitation. “There is no rehabilitation in prison. XDOC stands for [Midwest state] Department of Corrections. But what it should say is [Midwest state] Department of Corruptions, everybody that works in there is corrupt in one way or another.” Over and over again in the interviews, the men commented that there was no rehabilitation in prison. “So as far as the rehabilitation aspects in there, if you want to be rehabilitated you better try to save yourself, you know, do your time and then get out.” They explained that while there are some programs for rehabilitation in theory, they all stated that those existing programs are only there as token programs or because somehow the criminal justice system can profit off of it. “By the time you pass court, once you are in prison, you get these officers that can mess with you. They know you are going to file to move away or going to parole soon, that’s when they come and mess with you. So you get write-up, after write-up, after write-up, oh guess what the parole board gets to flop you now.”

These four points construct the reality of prison. Any institution that is predominately focused on being a business, a warehouse and perpetuating crime obviously is not offering any productive forms of rehabilitation. Just to clarify the prison system is a business, it is a warehouse, it perpetuates crime and it does not offer rehabilitation. Not only is this the reality of prison to the interviewees, this prison reality resonates exactly with what Angela Davis calls the “prison industrial complex”. The “prison industrial complex” refers to the exploitation of prison labor by private corporations that involves an intricate network of relationships that link the corporations, government, correctional communities and the media. “Social historian Mike Davis first used this term in relation to California’s penal system, which he observed, already had begun in the 1990s to rival agribusiness and land development as a major economic and political force” (Davis 84-85).

Homelessness and Incarceration

Eight out of the ten men interviewed arrived at the homeless shelter directly following their release from prison. “It was terrible when they let me go from [Midwest

state] prison they would put me up in the motel for two weeks and give me \$100 dollars and say now go find a job...and a place to stay after those two weeks are up. If you don't find a place to stay and have a job go stay in the shelter." Nearly every single interviewee identified the manner in which they were released from prison as one of the most difficult aspects to reintegrate, rehabilitate into society. What makes it most difficult is that the majority of the released prisoners don't have anywhere to go once they are released. Prisoners don't have a place to go for a multitude of reasons. "Well I tried to go by my ma's place [upon release] but uh, she left and didn't tell me where she was moving to." Many interviewees get released and want to be able to establish themselves on their own. "You know there are certain people that don't have no place, I mean I could go back to [Midwest state] to my family, transfer my parole back there but its' no good. My mom lives in a town that's got 10,000 people in it, she lives out in the country. I don't want that. I mean I'm 47 years old, I don't want to live with my mother. You know, and I don't want to have her to have the extra responsibility and expense."

There is a landslide of barriers for released prisoners to face, usually beginning with finding affordable housing, let alone a job upon their release, but their own personal health can sometimes be the biggest challenge. One of the most life threatening aspects is that prisoners are released with only two weeks of their medication and are not provided with aid to obtain more of their medications. "I was walking around tryin to find work after penitentiary work, it's hard to get a job. So when my diabetes. They let me out they just gave me medicine for two weeks. So you know, so I'm runnin around tryin to find a place to live, to find a job, I thought I was doin right by staying away from sweets. I didn't know enough and all that stuff turns into sugar. So I got real sick and I almost died and cause I went to the hospital my sugar was 880, where it only supposed to be 190." The men are released with only two weeks of their medication, be it life saving diabetes medication, mental health drugs, or any daily medication without any further education on where and how to obtain more medication for themselves, let alone the money to purchase them.

No transitional housing programs are offered and there are rarely three quarters houses for them to go to. The state only provides them with enough money for a motel for two weeks. Clearly two weeks is barely time to adjust to the free world again, let

alone set up housing and a secure a job. Most of the time the money that is used for the first two weeks at the motel is in the form of a parole loan that the released prisoner will be forced to pay back at some point. “I get out with no job and all that, they tell me I got to pay 900 dollars parole...premium parole to the parole board. 900 dollars.” Thus it quickly becomes very clear why the majority of the prisoners end up homeless; there is nowhere for them to go and no form of stable income readily accesible. “ I do not have a place when I’m released from prison. The biggest challenge is trying to get out of here and find me a job so I can get money to get me a place. Cuz I’m not going to sleep forever in a tent.”

The released convict faces a difficult transition into society regardless of whether he has a place to stay. Even though nearly all of the interviewed men were released and ended up in the shelter, which may have provided them with a place to go for a limited time, there are still issues of concern because the homeless shelter is not the ultimate solution to successful rehabilitation. One of the first issues of concern is the conflict of interest that is created in the shelter environment. “..it’s one of their parole rules, you are not allowed to associate with other felons. And that’s why I say then they put you in a shelter which half of them have committed a felony.” There appears to be a contradiction somewhere if it is so serious a parole rule if broken that you can get sent back to prison for associating with other felons. This prevents released felons from getting affordable housing together but yet everyone turns their head if all the felons are associating at the homeless shelter. Other interviewees expressed frustration at trying to get a job and adhere to the requirements to stay in the homeless shelter, “I try to be like the shelter, and they just kick me out on the street. For not getting a job, not taking care of business or getting a job, but I’m trying to do. I’m trying everything that I can do.” The ex-con is a stigmatized and marginalized position in our society. To add the additional stigmatization and marginalization of being homeless atop that, only further exacerbates the situation.

Atop the difficult issue of finding affordable housing, is the equally difficult task of finding employment. All of the men encounter intense discrimination while seeking employment due to their criminal status. “So I came in the next day to get the job and I sat there for about a half hour, and she’s calling people back but then she got to me, she said I cannot hire you because of your criminal background, even though you were

honest with us, I cannot hire you cuz you are working with the public...but what she doesn't realize is that I'm living out here in the public, you know just because you don't have nobody to supervise me, who's supervising me right now?" The men are entirely aware of this level of discrimination when they go to apply for jobs. "...there are certain jobs that I just can't go and put in an application and expect them to call. The only way I am going to get a job is if I can talk to the person that is going to hire me. I have to sell myself...They say be honest on your application well if I put yeah I'm convicted of a felony, that one is going in the garbage." This continual struggle with obtaining employment can easily lead to perpetuating the men's state of homelessness. "People put in a 100 applications and nobody calls. And you're sitting down there in that shelter, you got 90 days in that shelter, so what happens, like me I got forced into a situation basically I got in trouble and I had no place to go. So you know after 90 days, you know then what happens?"

Current Rehabilitation Programs

There are actually a decent amount of programs that are offered in the prison system that can claim to be rehabilitation quality programs. This section will cover five of the most prominent rehabilitation programs, all of which were mentioned in every single interview. The five programs will be discussed as follows, GED, substance abuse (AA/NA), anger management program, prison work, and the caseworkers. Caseworkers are not, in fact, a rehabilitation "program", but each prisoner is assigned a caseworker who is supposed to help facilitate their stay and aid in their obtainment of services. Because the caseworkers play such a critical role in enforcing program attendance, getting prisoners into the programs, and so forth, it is necessary to look at their perceived impact and role in rehabilitation.

In order to set some contextual grounding, the following interviewee explained the process when you enter the prison system. "...like you come into prison, you go to RGNC, quarantine, everybody comes into the system whether it's your first time or you're 100th time, you get back to quarantine to get re-assimilated into the system. That's where they settle your record, tell you where're you're going to go, how many points you get, and lastly they give your classification and what type of prisoner you are... When

you get to quarantine, they have what you call your recommendations. They have this one group of counselors that will sit there and read your file, and just from your file, and your file alone they will tell you that you need so and so programs. But they don't know nothing about it." Directly after this process, theory and reality quickly separate. The theory is that each inmate will benefit from these programs, complete them all and be happily on his way to rehabilitation; however the reality of these programs and the concept of rehabilitation in prison are much different than that. "They got programs in there. But nothing like, you can follow one, complete your program and still not get paroled. What's the use?"

Nearly every single prisoner is required to complete the GED program if he does not all ready have his high school diploma. This application of an educational rehabilitation program is an excellent one, in theory, but again the reality of the program differs vastly. "There's teachers. They have a little school system. I mean it's tripped out. Everything is like PC, it's got it's own system for everything. It's just that the system is run like garbage because it's run by people who don't give a damn." All of the interviewees were required to complete the GED program, more than half of them had all ready gotten their high school diploma before entering the criminal justice system (CJS) and disregarded the GED program as a waste of time. One interviewee pointed out "...that they [XDOC] are getting government funds from so they got to have people in it. (laughs)..because every person that goes to GED they [XDOC] gets paid for." This suggests that the only reason that they even had the GED program was because the XDOC gets money from the state for each prisoner that completes the program. As the interviews continued it became clear that there was very little actual educational quality to the GED program, hence the overwhelming commentary on it being a substandard program by the inmates, because the program exists not to necessarily benefit the prisoners but to benefit the bank account of the XDOC. There is no vocational schooling, or further education programs on a college level offered. The one saving grace of prisons, though, is that they are equipped with usually pretty good libraries. "That's one thing the prison system has is huge libraries. Mandated they have to have law libraries that are up to date staffed with law clerks and paralegals...They have to by law for inmates."

A vast majority of the inmates have been identified as working with drug or alcohol issues. The rehabilitation program of choice to work with these issues in the prison system is AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous). All of the interviewed inmates disregarded these programs as pretty much entirely useless and a waste of time. “And they say ok well uh, you need to take substance abuse class. Well they are a joke. They are nothing. I mean like, they tell you about what drugs do. Everybody knows, a drug addict knows what drugs do, an alcoholic knows what alcohol does, you know.” One interviewee explained that “ My experiences with the programs [AA, NA]...old war stories, you sit there with a cup of coffee and you all sit there at AA talking about how I got all trashed and everything, state and share and tell everybody else your old stories and you tell everybody else but you know you’re not going to follow through.” Purely drug glorification classes. Inmates maybe required to take the NA/AA class but one interviewee explained “See if you need NA or AA, usually the secretaries are the people that work in the prison are inmates. So if you have five dollars, you got to show up to two classes and give them the five dollars and they give you the certificate for the whole 16 classes. So you don’t have to go. They don’t have role taken.” Another interviewee pointed out that “...the thing about having that type of rehabilitation in prison is that it’s easy for them not to take drugs because you take them out of society so it’s really, a real big waste of time, because as soon as most of them get out its’ the first thing they are going to do. Cuz now they’re stuck back into society where they didn’t have to worry about temptation that’s one reason why this rehabilitation doesn’t really work because they are taken away from temptation.”

Anger management was another program that was assigned to nearly all of the interviewees. “...everybody gets anger management. Because they know when you go into the prison system, whether you are guilty or not you’re going to be angry...” Again though, all of the interviewees didn’t think that the program amounted to anything further than a joke. “It’s a token program. But I mean it all depend on who you get as a psych, see that’s what makes these programs work.” The interviewees clearly stated that anger management is just a token program; it appears to be confronting the situation but is only attempts to cover up the problems. The presence of the program makes the DOC appear to be interested in dispelling anger yet the tactics and methods utilized in the prison

system clash intensely with this program's front. Conversely one of the biggest challenges into rehabilitation in society is dealing with the anger that prisoners learn to live with on a daily basis in the prison system. "And when you get a lot of freedom, people are like I haven't been to a club in such along time or see you get certain mentalities that you get in prison. Unfortunately you get a lot of violent tendencies, because you are always in an extreme violent situation, cuz at any moment in time someone could fuck you up, oh sorry, somebody could mess you up at any given moment in time. So you always go to be aware of because there are violent people in prison. So getting out into real society you got to like turn all that crap off."

Prison jobs are the only programs that the men seemed to be appeased by. "...your job is like a work program so that is the most beneficial thing that I can think of that you would get in the prison system because a lot of these cats don't like work." It was one of the only programs that were on some level, although often minutely beneficial to them. "...everyone is supposed to have a job in the system, the system wouldn't run without the prisoners doing work." All of the interviewees stated that if you could work, then the prison mandated you to work. "Only thing you forced to do, you have to have to do a job you either gonna clean that bay, deal in that yard crew, or you goin to that kitchen." However there were often less jobs than inmates at prisons, you could pay some other inmate to do your job or a large majority of the jobs could be completed in less than a few hours. The majority of the prison jobs only have an hourly "slave" wage of 50 cents to maybe a dollar an hour. There is some opportunity for higher wages usually in the prison factory jobs or as one interviewee mentioned he "Worked on a work crew, as a leader for work crew. They paid me \$2.50 a day, which is about 50 dollars a month...State draw...I'm cutting down trees, right with a tractor and wood chippers."

The interviewees had jobs ranging from working wood chippers, park maintenance crews, to highway pickup, prison yard pickup, maintenance work, work in the bakery, prison transport driver, porter jobs and doing nothing at all. The interviewees found the most benefit in these prison jobs because they wanted to learn/have some skills that they could use when they got released in society. The money that they made was part of the incentive, many of them liked their jobs simply because it gave them something to do.

Each prisoner is assigned a caseworker/therapist or bloc counselor that they can utilize if they need to. However all of the interviewees stated that they rarely, if even once or twice saw these assigned workers. “I don’t think I ever seen my counselor.” One interviewee spent up to five years in the “hole” (administrative segregation) he stated “They sent out a counselor once every 90 days... You can sit there and cut yourself, I’ve seen guys do it. Well I’m [caseworker] busy right now I got to go get something, I’ll holler at you when I get back and you get some stitches. Going to be about another six months from now. That’s how they do you. They don’t care. They do not care.” The men acknowledged the caseworkers have extremely high caseloads so it is difficult to deal with all their work. “But they try to do as minimal as possible because they have got so many people. They may have like..well, in the bigger ones, they may have 300 to 400 inmates to a counselor.” But more over than that the men noted that the workers generally don’t exhibit any humanitarian signs to the men nor do they often actually pursue issues or help the men out with a certain task. “They are just therapists, who really don’t do any work. If anything they do paperwork, and try to get the guys to do the work, you know, the ones that care they try to help you out if they could...but the majority of them are just there for a paycheck.”

Even though the current rehabilitation programs are the cheapest ones to run and/or the ones that the XDOC financially benefits from, the interviewees explained that even these “token” or “joke” programs are still a privilege in the prison system. “Ok say ok you got to go to an anger management class, well go in there for an hour. You’re lucky you are in the program. You just got a visitor, or an emergency phone call or anything to get you out...Just to keep you from doing what you are doing to get your parole. Anything to stop what you are doing, any progress you are trying to make they [prison guards] will try to stop you at all costs.” On the whole, all of the interviewees agreed synonymously that there is no rehabilitation in prison. Whatever way they stated it, it all amounted to the same point. “... it’s not rehabilitation anymore in the prison system....Period.”

Ideas for Rehabilitation Programs

All of the men interviewed provided insightful suggestions and ideas for rehabilitation programs and services that they felt would have been beneficial for their reintegration into society. There was not an overwhelming demand or response for excessive rehabilitation programs, or situations that spoon-fed them back into society. In all the interviews, three central concepts for rehabilitation were mentioned, over and over again. The three ideas were humanitarian treatment, further educational programs, and some sort of transitional housing program for either before and after release from prison. Some of the ideas suggested encompassed nearly all three elements, for example "... in prison if they'd of had more constructive, not just AA, but some kind of program or some kind of people that everybody in there you have to go to this stuff, so you can learn more about your addictions and your crimes. Somebody that can talk to you about your crimes and what you can do to keep from coming through that revolving door, I think a lot of them would be more successful, because when you go to prison, the attitude is 'I'm locked up I ain't worrying about doin none of that, I'm in prison.' So they don't force nothing on you. You just stay there. You just do your time...you got to go to these groups, everybody's gonna go to some kind of group, or you're gonna be somebody's gonna come in motivate speakers talking to you about what it's gonna take to keep from comin here."

Perhaps the most forthright idea that nearly all the men commented on in some capacity is the notion of human treatment. They often stated that they wanted to receive services with a humanitarian approach. "have it more of a human thing" But not only do they want to be treated as a human being, they want to ability to process and learn about themselves as human beings. They recognize that people in prison have issues, but the treatment that they are receiving is doing nothing to help them work on their personal problems. One interviewee perceptively suggested that "They need some deep, some deep therapy that where somebody from the time they enter to the time they leave, they're gonna try to help the bad, put something good in their head, something positive, motivatin, and that's gonna be good to make them say 'When I get outta here I'm gonna make sure I don't come back now I know what's causing me with my thinking'." Many of the interviewees wanted the ability to talk about the issues that were central to their problem behaviors. One interviewee that was incarcerated for soliciting prostitution

suggested “it would be a program where you could understand your sexual tendencies plus you’d get credit [academic] for it too.” The interviewees displayed a desire for having counseling, or therapy because they acknowledge that their patterns or behaviors stem from some of these unresolved psychological or emotional issues that they don’t know how to deal with or perhaps even talk about. They perceive the power of emotion and discussion instead of the overbearing, brute force of intimidation, violence and fear that is the domineering method in the criminal justice system. “Naw I hope somebody, I hope y’all find a solution, cause later on the future cause its getting worse here, it ain’t getting no better, its getting worse out there. You hear all these young people still out here shooting each other. So and they going to the penitentiary for a long time, so I hope somebody gonna find some kind of solution that would can have a person to really look into theirselves. That’s what really counts. That’s what you really want to look into yourself and find out what the problem is.” Underlying this suggestion is the notion that violence begets violence, there will not be any successful rehabilitation if we punish with force and violence, it will only breed more hate and contempt. “ You gonna learn about yourself, you gonna get down inside yourself, and we gonna figure out whats the problem for you comin in here from the time you come through till the time you leave, this is what its gonna be about.”

Beyond acknowledging the desire to facilitate rehabilitation programs to promote emotional development and understanding, the men also suggested empowering and rehabilitating men with an education. “Firstly I believe that they need to get some kind of education. They say well you got to have a GED before you get out. But they don’t follow that, because a lot of them have like a learning disorder or something like that. Where they just can’t get it, they are not there long enough to get an education...so they let them out and if they have some kind of a trade while they are in there, even it it’s like taking off a six block location, the guys are going to get help. Vocation schooling will give them some type of trade, for then they get out to not go back out to the same situation. Prison just houses them. They don’t do nothing. So when they get out, they are the same. They are back out in the same situation, you know worse situation because everybody in there is all tied up in drugs, crime, stuff like that where you know, easy money and it’s just not going to work for awhile.”

The majority of the interviewees all stated that they would have wanted to pursue their education further, whether that involved getting their GED, a college degree, or vocational school. “You know trades to help you get a job...learn how to you know, use a ruler, or measure tape, you know how to figure out how much concrete I have to lay just to do that one block on the sidewalk...You can give them a job at the institution that can help them that doesn’t put them back on the street.” The interviewees recognized the value of an education; mostly they see the ability to actually get a decent job through a better education. “ So it’s good to have education you know, can’t never get enough education, but if you were taught a vocational trade it would help them. And show that they are, because most of the vocational classes are like six months classes, just them completing that six month vocational program, I think gives them a little bit better more outlook you know, hey I completed this, I completed this you know basic carpentry, or electrician programs you know. Something like that, basic welding, completed this. Now that I’ve done this, maybe I can go on in technical school and get more of it, you know.” With all the challenges of just getting released, taking care of yourself, finding a job and house, there is virtually no room to fit in the privilege of higher education.

The idea of having transitional housing, halfway housing or some type of affordable housing was a prominent suggestion for a rehabilitation program. “See what I believe needs to happen is the people need to be put when they get out on parole should have you go into a halfway or house or something like that for six months. That you know, where they have a job gradually, they ware working, something like that. Especially for ones like me where we don’t have no place to go, I should have never been put out in a motel for two weeks and told good luck but don’t break the rules.” The need for a transitional type of rehabilitation program after release from prison was identified and suggested by the majority of the interviewees. “ And so people like me who need to find a halfway house, a three quarters house for them to go for six months. Plus it would, help them adapt to society, you know when you just take a person right out of prison put them in a motel and give them 100 bucks, basically what’s he going to do with that 100 dollars? You know, think about it. You know, two days later you are broke and then two weeks later you are down there at the shelter and you feel like, you can almost get by better in prison than you can in the shelter. You know except for the freedom, basically

you have a better higher standard clientele of people that are in prison than the ones that are in the shelter.” The need for housing of some sort upon release was mentioned by all of the interviewees as a form of rehabilitation that would be hugely beneficial and is absolutely necessary to the reintegration success of released prisoners.

Aside from humanitarian treatment, further educational options and transitional housing opportunities, it is important to note that the only other aspect in regards to rehabilitation that the men mentioned was the reality that no one can make anyone change. “The only way you are going to change yourself is to do it yourself. It’s point blank. If you want to stop doing drugs, stop drinking, you do it first. There is no program available out there that’s going, you know miracle program, that’s going to help you change. You change what you want to do.” Incredibly insightfully the men recognize that you cannot make anyone do anything. The most that you can do is offer them opportunities. “...self help, if you want to help yourself, the only person that’s gonna do it is you.”

This type of thinking illustrates the transtheoretical model (stages of change). This model of change acknowledges that behavior change does not occur in a linear way but in a series of stages. Each individual will move through the stages of change in their own way. There are five different stages in the transtheoretical model that go as follows: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. The first stage of precontemplation is where the individual has no intention of changing their behavior, for whatever reason, they may not be aware of their risk or they may not perceive their behavior as a risk. The second stage is contemplation where the individual recognizes that their behavior puts them at risk, they have begun to think about changing their behavior but have not yet committed to making change. It is a stage of awareness. The third stage is preparation where the individual intends to change their risky behavior soon and is preparing the changes that need to be made. This is also known as “ready for action” stage. The fourth stage is action, where the individual has recently changed their risky behavior. The fifth and final step is maintenance where the individual has maintained the behavior change for at least six months and has adapted to the change. It is critical to note that relapse is a normal process and can occur at any point throughout the stages of change.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF DATA

One cannot discuss the prison system and address the concept of rehabilitation without first taking a step back to recognize the primary underlying forces and structures that are in place, running the prison system. In this analysis, the attempt to provide a quick analytical contextual grounding for the greater whole of the prison system will be made. This overview of the prison will directly build off of the results of the data that were collected and represent a more in-depth analysis of the reality of prison as stated by the interviewees. The position of the “hustler” and the act of hustling will be discussed as the defining role model and method that is found pervasively throughout the entire prison system, behind bars or not. Besides hustling, we will discuss the dominant mentalities and lessons that are taught informally in prison but are really the underlying forces that shape people’s actions in prison and once released. The dominant mentalities and lessons that we will discuss will be the implications of dehumanization and inmate “schooling.” These dominant mentalities and lessons are all derived from different aspects of the current rehabilitation programs, and shaped by additional commentary the men provided in the interviews. The underlying elements coupled with Erving Goffman’s notion of the “spoiled identity”, the concept of defeatism, “learned helplessness,” and the fact that privilege prevails even in prison will help to further illuminate the connection between incarceration and homelessness

Overview of the Prison System

The structure of the prison system clearly does not seem to lend to empowerment, motivation or even the advocating of knowledge. This can be seen when the interviewees speak of issues such as defeatism, apathy, violence, the prison run by “respect” and run by other prisoners themselves. The pervasive corruptness of the prison system is found within the DOC directors, the wardens, the correctional officers (COs), and the prisoners themselves. The psychology of the prison is dehumanizing, demeaning, and so forth. But what is at the root of this whole prison system debate must be the methodology and concept of punishment. It seems that, as discussed by Foucault, as humans have evolved, we have evolved our punishment systems, and the best one discovered yet is the

punishment of the mind. Hence the current prison conditions of small cells, lack of involvement, and numerous amounts of people in maximum-security isolation. In theory, if this system was only used for actual criminals, and people with serious consciousness issues, it may potentially be productive for society until we can further evolve and understand better ways of handling the situation. As of yet, we are drastically behind this step. First we need to note that the U.S. Department of Justice is incarcerating mainly marginalized populations (i.e. Native Americans, African-Americans, Latinos, drug addicts, mental health clients etc.) and utilizing them as labor for the government in the public prisons, and for pure business profit in the privately owned prisons. There is no real counter argument to this at all, point in case, prisons are on the stock market. There is no rehabilitation in prison systems. The majority of the interviewees mentioned that the prison programs have been continuously cut and that the few that are offered now, are no good at all or are simply token programs. Even with some rehabilitation programs, looking at the underlying structure and certain techniques used by the COs and various other prison workers it is demonstrated that there are alternative motives behind everything. In this case, it is all about the “prison industrial complex,” it’s all about prison profit. There is no rehabilitation.

Everybody’s a Hustler

The image of the “hustler”, and the act of hustling is the defining role model and method that is found pervasively throughout the entire prison system, for the prisoners as well as the prison employees. The basis of the concept of hustling is making money aggressively, making profit unethically. Hustling is the ethos of the prison system. When money and profit is the bottom line, there is no consideration for rehabilitation. This financial consideration is indicative of a business. It can be noted from the top of the criminal justice system right down to the inmates, everybody is hustling in the criminal justice system. “So everybody in there hustling. Everybody in there hustling.” The prisoners are hustling by setting up their own little “stores” where they sell candy, coffee, cigarettes and other free world items, usually one for the price of two. It was reported that the guards are hustling often by bringing in the drugs and other contraband, or some female guards even turn tricks for the prisoners. There were multiple mentions for

funneling funds from one's account to another one sometimes it is other inmates, sometimes it is prison workers doing the scamming. Each interviewee in one aspect or another commented on another way in which the hustle was happening in the prison system. Prisoners would figure out ways to bypass limits on care packages, by sending them to other inmates who didn't receive them in their name and give them a cut of the package. Prison guards were caught stealing the incoming money that was sent from family and friends to inmates. Wardens of the prison have been caught, not once but sometimes twice, embezzling millions of dollars from the DOC.

The image of the hustler is the undercurrent to the majority of all activity that occurs within the prison system. This greed, this intense focus of profit, is an intricate part that aids in the proliferation of crime in the criminal justice system. The desire for the dollar, as advanced by our capitalist system, does not disappear even within sections of the currency-less prison society. From the incidences and examples listed above, it is clear that crimes are continually committed in the name of the dollar from the inmates to the wardens of prisons, yet these are the white collar, the capitalist crimes, that largely go unnoticed or unpunished. These crimes perpetuate so prolifically and virtually without a bat of an eyelash for the simple reason that our culture perceives it as rude to talk about money, to inquire, to question, to point out classism - the sanctity of money must be obeyed.

We must begin to discuss these ingrained values of classism and money, or we will not be able to successfully combat the very ethos of hustling in the prison system. The following poem is from Stone Hotel, and was written by Raegan Butcher during his eight-year sentence in prison, the poem clearly explicates the concept of the hustle in prison.

the hard dollar

prison
is hardly
the free ride
it's perceived to be
from out
on the streets.
they make us pay
for everything

including
room and board.
i thought
i had escaped
the tyranny
of the timeclock
but prison
is just like
the free world;
everyone is hustling
for the hard dollar.

The Implications of Dehumanization

The interviewees believed that the prison system is home to mass injustices against humanity. Each interviewee mentioned, if not went into detail, some of the most horrific stories of gross dehumanization or the results thereof. The inmates are subject to no personal space, no personal privacy and the constant reminder by the prison guards that they own them. “Even the most violent person in super max is still a human being. Without a doubt, I mean they are locked down 24 hours a day, when they take a shower they wear a belly chain and lock box. They were in double leg chains, and stuff so it’s really hard to walk. So its’ sort like suppose you walk, still you’re only allowed out one hour every 24.” The continual strip searches, the drug tests, the process of showering to the treatment of prisoners in the forensics (mental health) program, and the administrative segregation are all painful reminders and illustrations of the levels of dehumanization that the inmates are subject to everyday. “That’s why they have forensics. So they can stick you...in a little hole and give you medication, so they don’t have to have security, so there are no fears of anything happening. You know like, you see people in the middle of the night um...they get raped so much or beat so much that they hang themselves in the middle of the cell.”

The ultimate form of dehumanization within the prison system is most apparent in how “lifers” (prisoners sentenced to life) interact with the CJS. Interviewees mentioned that the officers don’t care at all about the lifers. “It was common knowledge that there were inmates who were welded into their cells, it was behind the maximum security in [name of prison].” They don’t want to deal with them at all, they don’t want them to do anything wrong. This attitude explains why the lifers that are welded shut in prison cells,

basically put in cages forever, resort to animalistic behaviors. They are treated like animals. "...if you're a prison guard working behind the walls in {prison name} it's like working in a zoo with a bunch of apes. They are gonna throw anything they can at you shit, piss, semen, spit on you, whatever they can do." These actions of smearing feces everywhere, or throwing feces and other body secretions, makes sense in that they are attempting to receive some form of human validation and apparently they feel that is the only sort that gets them acknowledged. It is imperative to acknowledge as one of the interviewees astutely pointed out that "...all of it's the environment. The mentality is I'm locked up for the rest of my life what can you do to me?"

The prisoners are locked down with nothing for the rest of their life with no human contact; it follows from basic social psychology that there would be some adverse effects to these prisoners. Even negative reinforcement is a type of human acknowledgement and contact. Human beings are social creatures, without proper social interactions the deprived individual suffers as well as the entire community. Within the prison community, one interviewee noted that "...there are certain people doing life you know I'm getting ready to go home will try to mess you up. I can't get sent home so see if you can. That always happens to someone, so you always got to be on the watch." The lifer is a human being, the prisoner is a human being and all of them will be affected by the immense dehumanization that is a central part of the prison system. Their experiences and their reactions are some type of an indicator for the conscious, existence of our society that will manifest as dehumanization in everyone's world.

The psychological and emotional implications of these behaviors and incidences are clearly not resolved or dealt with in any capacity in the prison system. Instead, the effects are left to fester in each individual's mind, and they must deal with the consequences of those experiences in their head, however they see fit. This is cause for huge concern. The men are going to be released with these issues unresolved and no references or acknowledgement to deal with the magnitude of these situations. We must recognize that each prisoner, regardless of his crime, is a human being. We cannot continue to dehumanize people without realizing that there will be repercussions. These repercussions can range from high recidivism rates, mental health concerns, homelessness, further violence, institutionalization etc. "They mistreat you like crazy. And

then they wonder why people get these knives and mess up staff.” The majority of the prisoners will be released with in 4 to 5 years, these prisoners will return to the free world with this imprint of dehumanization upon them. It is not only in prison that these implications can have repercussions but out in the free world, as well. The implications can be summarized by the colloquialism “you reap what you sow,” if it is dehumanization that the prison system administers then it is dehumanization that will be released into the free world.

The Prison System “Rehabilitation” vs. Inmate “Schooling”

The interviewees discussed the fact that while in prison, the inmates teach the other inmates the tricks of the trade. Even though those convicts in prison got caught, many of them were still extremely talented con-men in their crime of choice. It is common knowledge among the prisoners that you can learn anything you want to in there, how to deal, how to kill, how to steal what have you. “But yeah there are people. That if I want a trade, I could learn how to be a killer, a safecracker, anything you want to learn for outside the wall, anyone will teach you. There are some excellent teachers, just because they got caught doesn’t mean they weren’t good. In a way, yeah, it’s the alternative to what’s being offered.” Many times due to the psychology of the system, it is potentially more appealing, or one of the few realistic options is to return to crime. Without proper resources, education, or rehabilitation skills, these inmates will not be able to access the best possible situations for themselves, they may not even be aware of alternative options from their previous lifestyle or of the life choices that they could pursue. “I learned from time, people were the best teachers.”

These convicts on some level, should rightfully be regarded as genius human beings, who unfortunately have not always found the correct way to access that part of themselves. If the ex-offender notices that release from our current prison system at best offers the life of being kept down, stuck to the lower classes, forced to work the minimum wage jobs, deal with the governmental programs because there are no services, then it is easy to see why one would deal drugs instead. The individual can then afford to get an education, learn scholastically and/or in the trades which would otherwise not be a possibility. It is an incredibly sad statement that inmates can provide a better system of

“schooling” in crime and how to survive on the streets than our own government with their multi-million dollar nationwide correctional programs. You can understand why, then, the released prisoner is returning to dealing drugs or what have you; ultimately, all these crimes are incurred for the benefit of a more lucrative profession. Dealing drugs, making lots of cash fast, beats a job at Burger King for minimum wage. Without providing education and alternative rehabilitation programs in the prison system, we are merely perpetuating crime within our criminal justice system.

Incarceration and Homelessness

The data were straightforward with its connection between incarceration and homelessness by illuminating the major barriers to finding employment and affordable housing for recently released prisoners. In addition to the logistical barriers of income, housing, securing personal medications if needed, and other governmental services there are four different points of analysis that further connect the path between incarceration and homelessness. These four barriers are as follows: managing a “spoiled identity”, defeatism, “learned helplessness” and the fact that privilege prevails even within the prison system.

Sociologist Erving Goffman was the first to introduce the concept of “spoiled identity,” which refers to a marginalized group of people that receive negative stigma for a certain facticity about them. Clearly both homelessness and being recently incarcerated each carry their own media influenced stereotyped “spoiled identity”. This population of study is a doubly marginalized population not only are they discriminated against for their ex-offender status, but they are additionally discriminated against for being homeless. Both of these labels, of “ex-con” and “bum” will be applied by society as master statuses.

In addition the men internalize this “spoiled identity.” During the interviews, the men would discuss how difficult it is to gain employment of nearly any kind. The men know that if they honestly check off that they committed a felony, their application will go straight into the trash. The men knew when they are looking for housing, landlords discriminate against them for their criminal history, their credit history, or their appearance. The men feel the weight of the “spoiled identities” heavy upon them, as they

are labels that will stick with them for potentially a very long time, and may become a circular engagement.

Prolonged effects of the “spoiled identity” could potentially result in defeatism. “Well, I think a lot, you see a lot, see a lot of defeatism, people keep trying and trying and trying and knocked down and then knocked down and then knocked down and keep trying and knocked back down. You see a lot of defeatism, what good is it going to do me to do this that and the other thing, when I’m just going to be kicked back down again. Then they get back out there are no jobs, there’s no this, no that, no follow up, you get on parole or whatever, or you find a job at McDonalds you’re not making enough money but you look at the guy on the street slinging dope, making big bucks. Ok so you’re going to flip burgers or sling dope?”

Defeatism is exactly as it appears: the experience, the feeling, the personal reality that you have been defeated by the government, by the system, by the world. Clearly from its point of origin, defeatism is not conducive to successful rehabilitation, and is a side effect of insufficient rehabilitation. Defeatism is conducive to keeping the man down; perpetuating the “prison industrial complex,” and perpetuating the vast divide between the rich and the poor. Both high recidivism rates and homelessness could be said to be influenced by the concept of defeatism.

The concept of “learned helplessness” is an accurate description of the relationship between the DOC and the prisoner. This “learned helplessness” is like a parent/child relationship, where the DOC presents itself as the authoritarian parent figure, demanding this and instructing to do that. While the prisoner assumes the child role, following directions and the process of institutionalization, the child prisoner becomes dependant upon the parent, DOC, for life.

The structure of the prison and the strict regulation allows for the individual to become completely reliant upon the system. The prisoner becomes used to the system, to the schedule, has all of his basic needs provided for him, and so upon release, is in a bewildered state. “...the problem that comes with the prison system is the people who get used to it. It becomes a routine, they don’t have to worry about anything, they get up and everything is told to them. Same thing day in day out.”

Since the DOC does not provide adequate rehabilitation programs, or really any type of transitional programs upon release, many ex-offenders find themselves “helpless” in the free world. They don’t know how to set up government assistance, find housing, or programs that could help them to locate a job. In some instances, the situation of parent/child becomes so dependent that the child figures out how to manipulate the system as a support system. “I know people stop right in here in the wintertime, in [city], when it starts to get real cold. They’ll go out and do something so they land in jail for the winter and get out in early spring. So they don’t have to be out in the cold, they got a cot to sleep in, they got meals, they got the TV, indoor recreation.” Thus, this “learned helplessness” is another aspect that lends to the increasing homelessness directly after incarceration.

The element of privilege continues to prevail even within the prison system. The most predominant way that this can be seen is that the most successful individuals from this study were the college educated ones, or ones that can figure out how to navigate the whole system by themselves. Both of the individuals that had college educations explained that they had devised game plans previous to their release. Once they were in the free world, they had a list of places to go and things to do in order to establish everything that they needed to create a sustainable and successful life. Both of them are housed and have established income even to this day while the majority of the other interviewees are at differing stages of the struggle.

Other interviewees discuss that people that have money can evade the whole system; you can pay other people to do your prison job and be able to afford all the prison store and contraband items that you desire. There are prisoners that have family members sending them money every week or month to be put in their prisoner account. Just the same as the outside world, behind bars the people with the most money are able to dominant the situation. The prisoners that get the most cash, are usually the drug dealers or those who have a financially well-to- do family that can support them. Thus stratification systems are visible within the prison social structure itself, as evidenced by higher rehabilitation rate of the more affluent prisoners. With or without the direct presence of currency within the prison system, the elements of the classist system are still apparent and discriminate against those without money.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

“Back then they had all sorts of trade programs which you know really help a person. They cut all that out...you know, all they are doing is just to me, is just stockpiling the people. There’s a lot of people that need to be locked up for security. There’s a lot of people that don’t deserve to go to prison, they should just be on a program, be out there cuz there is nothing in prison to help a person while he is in there. It’s, it’s just dead time.”

Summary and Conclusions

The overwhelming finding of this study has been that the prison is perceived as a business, and a warehouse which perpetuates crime and does not offer rehabilitation. The current rehabilitation programs offered are either a token, “joke” program, or are creating profit for the DOC. The men provided outstanding suggestions for rehabilitation mostly centering around humanitarian treatment, transitional housing programs upon release, and increased educational programs. The connection between homelessness and incarceration was illuminated by the difficulties in obtaining employment, housing, and government assistance upon release. Additionally, elements such as the concept of defeatism, “learned helplessness,” implications of dehumanization, “spoiled identity,” and privilege prevailing are all attributed to having an impact on the connection between homelessness and incarceration. The prison system offers its inside alternatives of inmate “schooling” and hustling as the predominate forms of rehabilitation that have evolved out of the underlying structure of the prison system and the lack of successful rehabilitation.

The reality of the prison system when seen in this light brings us again to the framework of the “prison industrial complex.” There are multiple references and acknowledgements of the involvement of corporations and the privatization of prisons in the literature. Historically Emma Goldman discussed the issues of prison labor when she noted even in the 1800’s, convicts were making “slave labor” wages. The prison system has a long-standing history of utilizing prisoners for profit, either for the government or the private owner.

Prisons as a business is really not a secret - they are listed on the stock market today. Multi-national corporations are in charge of a large percentage of not only national prisons but global prisons, as well (Davis). The concept of the “prison industrial complex” is not unique to just the United States, many leading US corporations are dispersing models of prison profiteering internationally. As Davis has noted “The notion of a prison industrial complex insists on understandings of the punishment process that take into account economic and political structures and ideologies, rather than focusing myopically on individual criminal conduct and efforts to ‘curb crime.’ The fact, for example, that many corporations with global markets now rely on prisons as an important source of profit helps us to understand the rapidity with which prisons began to proliferate precisely at a time when official studies indicated that the crime rate was falling” (2003; 85). Clearly the long-standing establishment of the “prison industrial complex” only benefits the proliferation of crime and does nothing for rehabilitation in prisons.

The current rehabilitation programs offered in the prison system that the interviewees discussed were such programs as GED, substance abuse classes, anger management classes, and prison work. It is not just within this research, however, that rehabilitation programs were found to be highly inadequate and simply serve a token purpose. As Petersilia has noted, “Today, just one-third of all prisoners released will have received vocational or educational training while in prison, despite serious deficiencies in these areas. And despite the fact that three-quarters of all inmates have alcohol or drug abuse problems, just one-fourth of all inmates will participate in a substance abuse program prior to release. Even when they *do* participate, the treatment programs consist mostly of inmate self-help groups rather than the intensive therapeutic communities found to be most effective...virtually all prison programs have long waiting lists. Moreover, while no one argues against the benefits of having inmates transition to halfway house facility prior to complete release these programs have all but disappeared in America” (2003; 93).

Many of the interviewees, as well as much of the literature (Lin, Petersilia), revealed that the DOC has been systematically slashing all rehabilitation programs that cost anything to run, or could be productive to the prisoners in any form. There are barely

any transitional housing programs, not to mention any sort of rehabilitation program of much success available upon release in this country, as a direct result of budget cutting.

Multiple other researchers have spent limitless amounts of time, conducting their own research and making recommendations for other forms of rehabilitation. Some suggested following the more successful reform programs that have been implemented in Oregon, Minnesota and Ohio to name a few of the states that have programs that cost more but focus on recently released prisoner work programs and transitional housing. Other scholars have alluded to the need for more community-based reintegration programs; on the whole the release process from prison is identified as a huge downfall and tripping block to successful rehabilitation “But with over 1.3 million prisoners incarcerated in the U.S., the vast majority of whom will be released; with the amount of money spend upon maintaining prison systems; with the fact that the time away from jobs, families, and daily functioning is inevitably a barrier to a released prisoner’s ability to find and hold a job, nurture a family, or act as a responsible citizen; with all of these consequences, treating prison as if it were unconnected to policy goals or to the future chances of prisoners is a fiction we can ill-afford to indulge” (Lin 161). Again and again the recommendation was made for prison reform, after conducting research within the prison system I am hard pressed beyond the government to note any person that would not make the recommendation for the immediate need for policy change within the DOC. Among the research community there is immense acknowledgement that prison reform must begin, if that takes place a policy level or implementation of new programs or what have you the need is blatantly obvious and will continue to fester and suffer until adequate attention and programming is implemented to combat these ineffective programs and configurations of operation within the prison system.

The dominant connection between homelessness and incarceration is the need for affordable housing in order to take the first step to successfully move out of those marginalized populations. “ There is abundant evidence that homelessness is related both directly and indirectly to the shortage of inexpensive housing for poor families and poor unattached persons that began in the 1970s and has accelerated in the 1980s (Rossi 181-182).” The issue of affordable housing has only increased in today’s society. There have been no further polices or initiatives to build any type of affordable housing that will

lessen the need and demand for them. Beyond the lack of affordable housing we are quickly approaching an overwhelming amount of individuals in the shelter system, three-quarters housing or halfway houses. All of these transitional to emergency housing are nearly always full, and have ample waiting lists for anyone that needs to utilize their services. The problems are increasing but there are no solutions being offered or strengthened to help with the inadequate housing and shelter situation.

Hand in hand with the need for affordable housing, and transitional living programs is the need for employment. “Thus, rehabilitative and economic response must be *paired* so that affordable housing is provided along with the jobs, services and supports that will allow vulnerable people to stay housed” (Baumohl 33). As discussed in the thesis, merely the process of finding employment can be an extremely daunting task for the recently released individual (Petersilia). Multiple other sources of literature and researchers acknowledged that in a struggling economy, with the issues of outsourcing and increase of discrimination against ex-offenders, the job market becomes more difficult to navigate each day. Clearly without some sort of income, the obtainment of affordable housing is useless. There is an unmistakable need for educational programs, vocational programs that can help to educate the offender so that upon release he has some skills and abilities that will help to increase his chances of getting employment. The concept of programs that help to locate jobs for recently released men would be incredibly beneficial as well. Any type of program that could help the ex-offender reacclimatize into our society while engaged in the community with productive means would be an excellent start to successful rehabilitation.

The concept of defeatism becomes all too familiar within both populations of incarceration and homelessness. Both of these marginalized populations encounter repercussions from society based upon their “spoiled identity” (Goffman). Society has taken the liberty of writing off these individuals, inciting their moral or inherent existence to their social status. Further attributing connotations of worthlessness, and disregard to not just their social image but to each individual as a human being. These are the attitudes that ex-offenders encounter upon release into the free world that resonate nearly the same as the implications of dehumanization that they encountered while in prison. Kim Hopper acknowledges this type of social reaction, and provides multiple labels or ways in which

society regards the homeless individual such as social signifier, deviant subculture, waste products or disease, victims or disaffiliated (62-63). These social stereotypes and cultural constructions around homelessness and incarceration become barriers for bringing education and compassion to society, and allows for corporations and politicians to manipulate the societal outlook on these marginalized populations. “The victim-blaming response to homelessness has in fact been very successful at deluding the public into believing that homeless people are to blame for their own condition... Numerous research studies, have examined ‘deviant’ characteristics of homeless people, such as mental illness and substance abuse, and defined these characteristics as the cause of homelessness (Yeich 26).” These types of misrepresentations are extremely detrimental to humanity as a whole. While these may only be social constructions that are predominant in our society, they have the same power and similar adverse side effects as the implications of dehumanization within the prison system.

“Last, but not least is the growing realization of the barbarity and the inadequacy of the definite sentence. Those who believe in, and earnestly aim at, a change are fast coming to the conclusion that man must be given an opportunity to make good. And how is he to do it with ten, fifteen, or twenty years’ imprisonment before him? The hope of liberty and of opportunity is the only incentive to life, especially the prisoner’s life” (Goldman 10).

Limitations of Study

The most unexpected element of the study was the immense wealth of data that was found within the ten interviews. There were so many aspects of homelessness, the prison system and rehabilitation that it was difficult to refocus and narrow the study all the time. The level of feedback and the genuine interest from the interviewees to tell me their stories and express their opinions was overwhelming. I had interviewees that went on up to four hours in length. In some ways the availability of too much data was limitation in the fact that it brought on some heuristical overloads with too many thoughts and overlapping social constructions working out in my head. Aside from some drawbacks with ineffective tape recorders, there were relatively few limitations that were perceived within the study.

Possibilities for Further Research

There are a plethora of possibilities for further research resulting from this study. One of the predominate sections that could lead to other research would be the construction of the “hustler”, and how the capitalist system has shaped the prison system. The evidence that privilege prevails within the prison system is another aspect that could lead to further discussion looking into the class elements that construct the prison system. It would be fascinating to look into researching the populations that utilize the jail or prison system as a type of detox, welfare program or shelter system. Is the duality of the programs meant to fit what social services are not covering? Beyond research into the monetary elements and influences of the prison system, there is always needed research on rehabilitation programs that could be beneficial to implement into the prison system. The more research, pilot programs and modeling after successful alternative programs that we have the sooner we can begin to create social change. Transitional housing, halfway housing, and any type of group living situation would be another outstanding focal point for further research. Because there has been a current decline in any type of group housing, studies would be greatly beneficial in pointing out perhaps why we are seeing this decline, what effects it is having on certain communities, and what the results would be if more were instated. Mental health care in the prison system is another excruciatingly important aspect of rehabilitation that should be pursued for further research as well. The current condition of the mental health care in the prison system is in highly questionable status, it would be most insightful to look into the counselor and inmate relationships, overmedicating or under medicating of inmates, the suicide rates and diagnosis that are most common within the prison system. Eventually it would be wonderful to look into specialized rehabilitation programs for those that are mentally ill and have been found to have criminal behaviors. Practically every aspect of the prison system and homelessness could benefit from research. A few of the interviewees pointed out that their only way that there is going to be positive change for the prison system is if the powers motivating the prison reform are on the outside. It is up to the free world that has the resources, the abilities, and the power to listen to the issues, concerns, and to look into the situations and work with the people to create the desired change for the benefit of the whole system.

CALL TO ACTION

National Center on Institutions and Alternatives

<http://www.ncianet.org/>

“The mission of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA) is to help create a society in which all persons who come into contact with human service or correctional systems are provided an environment of individual care, concern and treatment. NCIA is dedicated to developing quality programs and professional services that advocate timely intervention and unconditional care.”

Center for Community Alternatives

www.communityalternatives.org

“The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) is a leader in the field of community-based alternatives to incarceration. Through innovative and pioneering services as well as the research, public advocacy and training of its Justice Strategies division, CCA fosters individual transformation, reduces reliance on incarceration and advocates for more responsive juvenile and criminal justice policies.”

The Sentencing Project: Research and Advocacy for Reform

<http://www.sentencingproject.org/>

“The Sentencing Project, incorporated in 1986, has become a national leader in the development of alternative sentencing programs and in research and advocacy on criminal justice policy.”

Prison Reform Advocacy Center

<http://www.prisonreform.com/index.shtml>

“The Prison Reform Advocacy Center (PRAC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to progressive prison reform. PRAC is designed to help inmates secure their civil rights; it does not do criminal defense work. PRAC's current efforts revolve around four main initiatives: Grievance Project, Litigation Project, Women's Project, and publication of the Ohio Prisoner Manual. The Board also has decided to initiate a project to promote anti-death penalty advocacy.”

Stop Violence

www.stopviolence.com

“StopViolence collects resources about non-repressive responses to a variety of violence, including school shootings, sexual assault, and hate crimes. The underlying belief of StopViolence is that punishment *after* a crime is not effective *crime prevention*; a safe and peaceful society requires justice, not overdoses of prison, chain gangs and executions.”

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Appendix A – Interview Questions

Where did you grow up?

Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

What was your life previous to incarceration like?

What is your life now like?

Where did you serve your time?

How long were you in prison? Jail?

How did you end up in prison?

Did you encounter issues with substance abuses? Before/during/after prison?

How did you end up homeless?

Do you think you learned any valuable lessons while in prison?

Were you involved in any rehabilitation programs while incarcerated?

What were your experiences with the program?

What is your opinion of it, did it help or not help you?

Were you involved in any rehabilitation programs once you were released?

What was the program?

What was your experience with the program?

What is your opinion of the program?

If you had both state and non-profit funded rehabilitation programs which one do you think was more beneficial? Why?

What kind of rehabilitation program do you think could have been the most beneficial to you while in jail? Once released from jail?

What do you see as your biggest challenge in becoming rehabilitated?

How important is rehabilitation to you?

What are the most important elements to rehabilitation?

Are there any questions that I have not asked you that you feel would be important to discuss?

Appendix B Letter of Introduction

November 1, 2003

Greetings,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce you to Ms. Heather Mooney. She is currently completing her undergraduate Honors thesis under my direction, at Eastern Michigan University. Ms. Mooney is interested in knowing your opinion about rehabilitation programs that you may have been involved with during your previous incarceration, as well as what your current needs might be.

Ms. Mooney is requesting an interview from you, which should last about an hour. The information that she gathers from you will not be used for any purpose other than her Honors thesis, and only Ms. Mooney will know that you have participated. Even though Heather works at the shelter, this research is in no way connected with the shelter, nor will the shelter Director be informed of your participation. Your participation is, of course, strictly voluntary. You do not have to grant Ms. Mooney an interview, and you do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering. We cannot pay you for your time, but we would certainly appreciate your cooperation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. You may also contact either Dr. Patrick Melia or Dr. Steven Pernecky, who are members of our human subjects committee, at the numbers listed below. In addition, if you find that discussing your past experience with Ms. Mooney leaves you feeling disturbed for any reason (for example if it brings back troubling memories), please contact your community support person (shelter support staff, social worker, mental health professional, probation officer, etc.). I thank you in advance for your participation. It is our hope that your experiences may help to create more successful rehabilitation programs.

Respectfully,

Denise Reiling, Ph.D.

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734.487.0012

Patrick Melia 734.487.0048
Steven Pernecky 734.487.0379

Appendix C USHRC Letter of Approval

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

Please read each of the following elements of informed consent. If you agree to participate in this research after reading each of the elements and having them presented to you orally, please indicate so by signing on the line below.

- I have been informed that my participation in this research is voluntary. I have been informed that voluntary participation includes the right to refuse to consent to participate in the interview, the right to refuse to answer particular questions, and the right to terminate my participation at any time. I have been informed that I will not need to provide an explanation for my refusal.
- I have been informed that participation in this research constitutes granting an interview, which may last about an hour.
- I have been informed that my participation should not cost me any expense, nor will I be compensated in any way for my participation.
- I have been informed that this research is being conducted to more fully understand recently incarcerated homeless men's views of rehabilitation programs.
- I have been informed that the results of this research will be for Ms. Mooney's Honor's thesis, at Eastern Michigan University.
- I have been informed that my participation will be kept confidential. No one will know that I have participated in this research, including other people at the shelter.

I have read each of the elements of informed consent. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate by giving an interview.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

I agree to have the interview tape-recorded. I understand that each of the above conditions of informed consent apply to this process. In addition, only Ms. Mooney will hear the tapes, and the tapes will be destroyed after use.

Printed Name

Signature

Date