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Male offenders' work experiences pre-prison, in-prison, and upon reentry: Interactions between work and crime

Kerry L. Edwards

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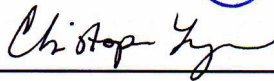
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**MALE OFFENDERS' WORK EXPERIENCES
PRE-PRISON, IN-PRISON, AND UPON REENTRY:
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WORK AND CRIME**

BY

KERRY L. EDWARDS

B.A., Criminal Justice, University of New Mexico, 1988
M.A., Sociology, University of New Mexico, 2002

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2011

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Joe and Maria, who I appreciate and love so much. They have taught me perseverance and have encouraged me to pursue this goal even though it meant less family-time. I also dedicate this to Tom, my love and my best-friend – my heart, who promised to love me regardless of whether I succeed in my endeavors, and through whose example I learned to have greater faith in God, giving me the strength to endure.

I also dedicate this to the study subjects and to other offenders who are plagued with doubt and have yet to recognize their potential, as well as to those who are on a path to reintegration and a more fulfilling life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Beverly Burris, who provided much guidance, perspective, and encouragement, as well as much needed editing. Without her help, I would not have been able to have completed this project. Dr. Burris also challenged me and provided me with opportunities to improve my analysis and writing skills beyond what I thought I was capable. These tools will no doubt continue to help me immeasurably in the coming years. I cannot thank her enough.

I also want to thank my committee members. Dr. Richard Coughlin helped with the development of the study design. Dr. Christopher Lyons went above and beyond the obligations of a committee member, providing invaluable feedback. Dr. Lyons graciously offered his expertise and directed me to much informative literature in the field. Dr. Paul Steele provided helpful guidance about analysis techniques, and steered me towards ongoing programs and research relevant to my research.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge the incredible impact that that these professors have had upon me over the years. From Dr. Burris I learned the complexities of the sociology of work, which inspired me and provided much of the framework for this dissertation. Dr. Coughlin, who introduced me, as an undergraduate, to comparative sociology and the issues of inequality, has influenced me significantly. Dr. Steele taught me, as an undergraduate, graduate student, and research assistant, much about the criminal justice system, was a great role-model demonstrating his compassion for all of those involved in criminal justice (including those on the front-lines, administrators, the courts, the victims, and the offenders), and motivated me by his passion for the field of study.

Finally, I thank all of the study subjects and the Wespen administrators. Not only did I appreciate the study subjects' cooperation, but I especially appreciated the candor that many of them offered. I hope that this dissertation has given them a voice to some extent and will aid efforts to provide rehabilitative programs. I truly thank the Wespen administrators who generously made me feel welcome, and were very helpful throughout the project. I admired their interest in their work and their appreciation for rehabilitative efforts.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored offenders' work experiences outside of prison and in-prison, and then compared these experiences to their post-release work experiences and outcomes. The subjects' criminal histories varied, but during the study's initial interview all were incarcerated at lower security level facilities in a western state. Several different types of in-prison employment were compared; these differences included the type of task, the skill level, the work-site, and the beneficiary of the labor. Outcomes were classified according to work measures, and whether the subjects had been reincarcerated within six months of their release.

The pre-prison findings suggested that the skill level of the work which the subjects' held affected their commitment to their jobs. However, the data also showed that substance abuse derailed the subjects, regardless of their commitment to their jobs. The in-prison findings revealed important differences between work programs, showed that the quality of the job is affected by intrinsic rewards, and that different types of intrinsic rewards foster different perspectives. In one of the work programs the subjects

worked with state forestry employees, performing land clearing, work on structures, prescribed burns, and wild-land firefighting. This program produced character-changing results, including increases in self-esteem, recognition of personal agency, increased sense of responsibility, and pride in their work. The subjects who participated in the forestry work program also were the least likely to have been reincarcerated within six months of their release.

The subjects reported that they encountered many obstacles upon their release from prison; some of the obstacles were directly due to their ex-prisoner status, such as stigma and parole restrictions. However, subjects who had strengths, such as overcoming substance abuse, positive social connections, and positive attitudes, appeared to have overcome the obstacles. These strengthening factors closely resembled the perspectives which the forestry subjects had adopted. These findings suggest that certain types of in-prison work can be rehabilitative, and that prison can be an effective arena in which to implement character-changing work-based programs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Theoretical Perspectives	4
Recent Research on Work and Crime.....	7
Offender Work Interventions	11
Chapter Outline	16
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	19
History of Inmate Work	19
Criminology Theory and Research on Work and Recidivism	27
General Criminology Theory and Research	29
Inmate Work – Theory and Empirical Research	36
The Experience of Work.....	46
The Transitioning Labor Market and the Meaning of Work.....	46
Human Capital	51
Rewards: Avenues to Commitment	53
Substance Abuse Prevalence.....	55
Identity	57
Discussion	64
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	71
Variables/Categories	71

Data Collection.....	74
Study Site	74
Interviews	75
Administrator Subjects	75
Inmate Subjects	76
Analysis.....	81
Subjects.....	82
CHAPTER FOUR: PRE-PRISON WORK EXPERIENCES.....	86
Positions Held and Employment Status at Arrest.....	89
Previous Work, Job Loss, and Commitment.....	90
Reasons for Job Loss.....	91
Substance Abuse	93
Too High to Work	95
Substance Abuse Crimes.....	98
Unskilled Workers	98
Skilled Workers	102
Substance Abuse Work Environment.....	107
Unskilled Workers	107
Skilled Workers	110
Effects of Work Instability	112
Unskilled Workers.....	112
Skilled Workers.....	114
Crime Under the Influence	118

Learning Substance Abuse and Criminality	119
Family Impact	122
Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards	124
Discussion	125
CHAPTER FIVE: IN-PRISON WORK EXPERIENCES.....	132
Wespen.....	133
Wespen Work Programs	134
Work Placement.....	138
Inmate Subject Perspectives: In-prison Work.....	140
Work Choice.....	140
Mobility.....	146
Work Programs Rewards/Perspectives	151
In-prison Work Rewards	151
Enduring Effect Work Rewards.....	155
Character-Changing Work Rewards	157
Conflict	166
Substance Abuse Programs.....	168
Discussion	170
CHAPTER SIX: POST-RELEASE WORK EXPERIENCES/OUTCOMES.....	177
The State’s Role in Parolee Employment	179
Labor Market Conditions	184
Post-release Employment.....	186
Currently Employed.....	187

No Work.....	192
Obstacles	194
Obtaining Employment	194
Maintaining Employment	199
Other Obstacles to Post-release Success	202
Strengths	206
Reincarcerated	212
Discussion	217
CHAPTER SEVEN: BEST OUTCOMES AND WORST OUTCOMES:.....	
PRE-RELEASE FACTORS AND POST-RELEASE OUTCOMES.....	227
Incarceration’s Effect Upon Outcomes.....	228
Negative Social Attachments	234
Substance Abuse.....	237
Work Experiences.....	243
Discussion	253
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	260
Findings.....	262
Pre-prison Work.....	262
In-prison Work.....	268
Post-release Outcomes	272
Theoretical Significance	277
Policy Recommendations and Future Research	281
Conclusion.....	282

APPENDICES	285
Appendix A: Wespen Administrator Interview Guide	286
Appendix B: Other Administrator Interview Guide	288
Appendix C: Initial Offender Interview Guide	290
Appendix D: Follow-up Offender Interview Guide	295
REFERENCES	300

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Pre-Wespen Themes Model 129

Figure 2: Wespen Work Themes Model..... 171

Figure 3: Post-release Themes Model 224

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Wespen Work Programs	140
Table 2: Pre-Wespen Factors and Outcomes	253
Table 3: Wespen Factors and Outcomes	254
Table 4: Post-release Factors and Outcomes	255

Chapter One: Introduction

In recent decades, the United States has seen tremendous growth in the number of prisons and the prisoner population. Since 1980, the incarceration rate has increased 240 percent (Schmitt, Warner, and Gupta 2010), reaching 2.4 million incarcerated persons in federal, state, or local correctional/detention facilities in 2008 (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2009). This population growth appears to be largely due to two factors – expansion in incarceration for alcohol and illegal drug offenses, and recidivism. As Pager (2003) has said, “Recent trends in crime policy have led to the imposition of harsher sentences for a wider range of offenses, thus casting an ever-widening net of penal intervention” (p. 938).

One recent perspective on the prison expansion is that the “prison industrial complex” is in a state of self-perpetuation, experiencing continual growth resulting from inequality and exploitation. Parenti (2008) explained that this perspective has asserted that because American society is so starkly divided, opportunities for those on the lowest rung to survive without breaking laws are limited. Therefore, prisoners are largely these disadvantaged persons who sought to survive through illegal means. Furthermore, the imprisonment of those at the lowest strata produces three results: removing them, and their disadvantage, from the public eye; removing them from the saturated labor market; and supplying labor to support the prison industrial complex, which is a system seeking government expansion, economic stimulus, and profit for the private sector. More recently, the argument has been that more behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use, have been criminalized to increase the number of prisoners. These critics have argued that

prisoner labor is exploited with several intentions: (1) to keep the prisons operating, which maintains corrections' jobs (both public and private) and keeps the system functioning, (2) to provide labor for public infrastructure purposes, (3) to recover state costs, and, (4) to provide private sector industry with prisoner labor for less than market value. For Parenti (2008), this situation, however, is not the result of a planned, orchestrated, diabolical strategy, but rather a problem stemming from class inequality and economic injustice; and, for him, the answer is "decarceration" (p. 243).

In order to better understand the relationship between work and crime, this qualitative study, conducted between August 2008 and June 2009, explored offenders' work experiences prior to their incarceration in a prison located in the western United States, their work experiences while they were incarcerated, and their experiences after their release from the prison. The study was designed to address the following questions: (1) What factors most affect offenders' work experiences, and how so? (2) How does prison work impact offenders? (3) How do the quality of work and the meaning of work affect crime, criminality, and recidivism?

It is clear that rates of both imprisonment and recidivism are high. The rate of recidivism, the rate at which prisoners subsequently return to prison after their release to the community, is generally between 50 percent and 67 percent within three years of release (Petersilia 2000; Uggen 2000; Wallerstein 2005). As Pager (2003) said, "While the recent 'tough on crime' policies may be effective in getting criminals off the streets, little provision has been made for when they get back out" (p. 938). Shortly after this study began, at the end of August 2008, the United States entered into an economic recession. As the study subjects were released from Wexpen, they were entering a

challenging job market, increasing the likelihood of poor employment prospects, and, perhaps, recidivism.

In 2001, the Reentry Policy Council (RPC) was established “to assist state government officials grappling with the increasing number of people leaving prisons and jails to return to the communities they left behind” (RPC 2010). Reentry research quickly began efforts to determine how to reverse the cycle of reincarceration. This interest in reentry is important. Corrections agencies, politicians, and taxpayers all have a stake in reversing this trend. The financial cost of growing imprisonment is obviously very high. Over 75 billion dollars were spent in 2008 for federal, state, and local corrections departments (Schmitt et al. 2010). There are other costs as well.

Approximately half of the recidivists are returned to prison for new crimes, rather than just for technical violations (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2002). Each of these new crime incidents represents one or more victims. Additionally, all offenders who are reincarcerated represent losses to the employment economy, including, vacating a job and less taxes paid. Lastly, the recidivist offender experiences repeated trauma and loss of his or her human potential.

Another issue related to the growing prison population is the increasing rate of incarceration for alcohol and illegal drug crimes. This is an issue largely within the purview of legislators, prosecutors, and the courts, although it also concerns corrections agencies, tax-payers, and others. The role of sentencing and the expanding range of crimes that are deemed felony offenses are to a large degree outside the focus of this study. However, the present research does explore the role of alcohol and illegal drugs

among criminogenic factors that have been found to affect criminal activity in general and the offenders' recidivism in particular.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Although he was not a criminologist, Marx's theory of alienation has implications for criminology (Smith and Bohm 2008). For Marx, alienation is a separation of people from their "species being," or human essence (Marx [1844] 1988). For him, the human capacity for conscious, creative, and social work is a central component of species being, and when people are alienated from meaningful work, they become dehumanized. Not only are they alienated from the production process itself, they are also alienated from other people and their human potential. For Marx, people turn to animalistic behaviors, such as "eating, drinking, [and] procreating" ([1844] 1988:74) to compensate for the loss of workplace creativity and sociability.

This alienated state of separation from the creative and the social self seems linked to extreme degrees of behavior, or non-conformity. Marx's assertion that alienation leads to animalistic behaviors ([1844] 1988) suggests a connection to deviance. It makes sense to expect that an individual's response to alienation would be to associate with others who are also alienated, such as suggested in criminology's differential association theory (Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill 1970) and research which links differential opportunity, differential association, and cultural identity (Moore 1978; Sánchez-Jankowski 1991). It also makes sense that these alienated persons would not feel attached to social conventions. Fromm wrote, "Man is not only alienated from the work he does, and the things and pleasures he consumes, but also from the *social forces*

which determine our society and the life of everybody living in it” (1955:125). How reasonable is it to expect the alienated man to conform to the societal norms imposed by the society from which he is alienated?

Fromm (1955) related Mumford’s dehumanizing characterization of contemporary society to alienation, and anomie. Mumford wrote, “Now this mechanical chaos ... affronts and humiliates the human spirit; and the tighter and more efficient it becomes as a mechanical system, the more stubborn will be the human reaction against it. Eventually, it must drive modern man to blind rebellion, to suicide, or to renewal: and so far it has worked in the first two ways” (Mumford 1951:16). Regarding Marx’s assertion that the alienated man is also alienated from others ([1844] 1988), Fromm said, “The alienation between man and man results in the loss of those general and social bonds ... ” until men are “little particles estranged from each other but held together by selfish interests and by the necessity to make use of each other” (1955:127). Given these characterizations of the alienated man as estranged from his creativity, his species being, his fellow man, his social bonds, and yet with a proclivity to careless rebellion, it is easy to see pathways between alienation and crimes against others, such as property crime and violence. Equally likely is a pathway between alienation and substance abuse related crimes, such as DUI and illegal drugs, as implied by both Mumford’s (1951) depiction of emotional problems and Marx’s ([1844] 1988) depiction of drinking as a response to alienation.

Another influential theoretical area is strain theory, or anomie (Merton 1938), which asserts that disjuncture between an individual’s needs and the ability to meet those needs creates strain, which in turn causes one of several different reactions, one of which

is innovation. The innovator chooses deviant avenues to achieve his goals when legitimate goals are unattainable. The application of this theory to work suggests that an innovator might turn from the pursuit of legal work to illegal income, such as larceny, burglary, robbery, or illegal drug sales. Under this assumption, illegal innovation could be ameliorated through providing the offender access to legitimate means for satisfying his needs.

The original form of anomie theory (Durkheim [1933] 1984), however, asserted that anomie, normlessness, represents an absence of shared moral rules, or the absence of communication of the shared moral rules. Durkheim [1933] 1984) argued that the division of labor in industrialized countries creates a need for organic solidarity and shared morality, or collective consciousness. He wrote, “[M]orality is the indispensable minimum, that which is strictly necessary, the daily bread without which societies cannot live” ([1933] 1984:13). Durkheim explained, “[W]e may state that an act is criminal when it offends the strong, well-defined states of the collective consciousness” ([1933] 1984:39). Durkheim said that adults “who are ignorant of these basic rules or refuse to recognize their authority ... are irrefutably symptoms of a pathological aversion” ([1933] 1984:34). For Durkheim, then, criminal behavior is caused more by a general state of weak norms, with the disjuncture between goals and means that Merton (1938) emphasizes of lesser importance. Durkheim believed that a stronger shared moral belief system was the way to reduce both anomie and crime.

Often including the concepts contained in strain and anomie theories, social disorganization theory and research (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Shaw and McKay 1969; Blau and Blau 1982; Bursik 1988; Sampson and Wilson 1995; Rose and Clear 1998;

Baumer et al. 2003) concerns the inability of members within a community to “maintain effective social control and realize their common goals” (Wilson 1996:20). For these theorists, poverty and lack of employment opportunity lead to social disorganization and therefore crime.

RECENT RESEARCH ON WORK AND CRIME

Wilson’s (1996) *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* discussed the ramifications of the “exodus” (xvii) of employment opportunities from inner-cities and the effects of lack of work on these communities. This trend began with the decline of manufacturing in the U.S., the relocation of the remaining manufacturing plants to the suburbs, and the relocation of those persons who had the resources to move from the urban areas to the suburbs, all of which began to have significant impact in the 1970s and have continued.¹ Wilson found that disadvantaged inner-city residents experienced blocked opportunities to employment, including lack of logistical resources to exit the inner-city or travel to the suburbs for work; Wilson called this logistical problem “spatial mismatch” (1996:223).

Wilson (1996) concluded that the job loss and decreased wages associated with these developments create strain on both individuals and communities. He also posited that the obstacles to opportunity include obstacles to developing an individual’s human capital, further limiting hope for obtaining sufficient work in the future. He wrote, “The strongly held U.S. cultural and economic belief that the son will do at least as well as the father in the labor market does not apply to many young inner-city males” (Wilson 1996:30).

Wilson (1996) depicted a complex interaction among many factors, creating a seemingly formidable obstacle to stability and growth. These issues include a breakdown in the mechanisms which provide social control (Toby 1957; Sykes and Matza 1957; Hirschi 1969; Briar and Piliavin 1965; Sampson and Laub 1990; Agnew 1991). He also explained how cultural and social factors, such as differential association (Sutherland et al. 1970; Matsueda and Heimer 1987; Warr and Stafford 1991; Thornberry et al. 1994) interacted with these other mechanisms. Wilson wrote “[R]egardless of the mode of cultural transmission, ghetto-related behaviors often represent particular cultural adaptations to the systemic blockage of opportunities in the environment of the inner city and the society as a whole” (1996:72).

Wilson (1996) concluded that most disadvantaged people share mainstream concerns, problems, values, aspirations and hopes, but that social disorganization derived from unemployment erodes these perspectives. Wilson wrote, “High rates of joblessness trigger other problems in the neighborhood that adversely affect social organization, including drug trafficking, crime, and gang violence” (1996:59). Two of Wilson’s (1996) study subjects illustrated these dynamics: One of the subjects spoke of substance abuse, stating, “[I]f you don’t get high you’re square” (p. 56); another subject said ““They [inner-city males] don’t see nobody getting up early in the morning, going to work or going to school all the time. The guys they – they be with don’t do that ... ’cause that’s the crowd that you choose – well, that’s been presented to you by your neighborhood”” (p. 56). Wilson concluded that disadvantaged inner-city residents’ “decisions and actions occur within a context of constraints and opportunities that are drastically different from those present in middle-class society” (1996:55).

Another approach is labeling theory and research (Erikson 1962; Goffman 1963; Becker 1973; Braithwaite 1989; Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2007; Pager 2007; Price 2010). This perspective contends that once a juvenile or an adult is labeled as deviant, then subsequent deviant behavior is more likely to occur because the individual incorporates the deviant label into his identity. Another dimension of labeling theory, however, is that when a deviance label is assigned to an individual by others, they then treat the individual differently because of the stigma. This dimension has direct effects on employment. Holzer et al. (2007) found that few employers reported that they would consider a felon for employment, or be likely to hire a felon.

Similarly, Pager (2003) also found in her experimentally designed study that felons were less likely to be considered for employment. She found that 74 percent of the employers in her sample had asked about criminal history in their job applications. She concluded that the application questions are apparently used “as a screening mechanism” to rule out applicants who have felonies (2003:956). Pager’s study revealed that both African American felons and White felons were much less likely to be considered for employment than their same-race non-felon counterparts, although the effect was larger for African American applicants.

In response to apparent employment discrimination due to felony status, four states have enacted “Ban the Box” laws, which prohibit employers from asking about criminal history on job applications (Price 2010). However, three of the four states only prohibit the question on public sector job applications (Price 2010). Additionally, “Ban the Box” legislation does not prohibit these employers from asking about criminal records during an interview.

Other legislation, the “Second Chance for Ex-Offenders Act,” has been proposed to offer felons with limited illegal drug convictions, and, with the exception of sex offenders, other felons who have had no more than two non-violent felony convictions, an opportunity to have their criminal record sealed after they have completed drug treatment, job training, and other program requirements. The Harvard Law Review Association (2000) reported that this legislation was proposed to remedy three problems for these offenders: (1) to motivate the offender to undergo substance abuse treatment; (2) to give them better chances to obtain “legitimate employment” (p. 1493); and, (3) to restore their voting privileges. The op-ed authors concluded, “[T]hese activities serve as mechanisms for re-connecting ex-felons to society” (p. 1493). The bill has been in various stages for over ten years, and has not yet passed.²

Life course theory is another area of research that contains numerous links to offenders’ work (Sampson and Laub 1993). This theory suggests that the reason for age desistance, the fact that offenders tend to commit fewer crimes as they grow older, is that the offenders accrue additional roles and responsibilities in their lives, such as developing an occupation, getting married, having a child, etc. Life course theory combines several different theories to explain why these roles changes would affect criminality. Life course theorists argue that these changing roles may require a change in friendships in order to be more compatible with a lifestyle which entails more obligations and responsibility (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998). Developing an occupation is seen as likely to increase wages and reduce financial stress (strain), perhaps also providing an avenue to move from a negative impoverished neighborhood (social disorganization). Additionally, Toby (1957) has theorized that these obligations and responsibilities to

significant others create a sense of having a “stake in conformity,” or a belief that the individual has something to “lose by deviant behavior,” or, more specifically, something to lose from sanctions that can follow deviant behavior (Toby 1957:16-17). Life course theory posits that positive aspects of work are a corrective to criminality.

OFFENDER WORK INTERVENTIONS

Offenders experience high rates of unemployment, especially those who have been imprisoned (Wilson 1996; Pager 2003; Freudenberg, et al. 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2007; Brooks, et al. 2008; Useem and Piehl 2008). There are various opportunities to intervene in the offender’s work-life; the different components of the criminal justice system provide different arenas in which interventions can be implemented to affect both the offender’s work and the offender’s criminality. Interventions have been in the form of vocational training, employment guidance, and employment programs; these interventions have been implemented at various stages in the criminal justice system, such as in the community upon early referral to the criminal justice system or through probation, in prison, and in the community after release from prison. These combinations of criminal justice contact points and tools provide many opportunities for offender work interventions.

The literature (Merton 1938; Toby 1957; Erikson 1962; Sutherland et al. 1970; Becker 1973; Wilson 1996; Holzer et al. 2007) suggests that the most problematic areas for offender employment are, in general, developing attachment to legal work, obtaining work sufficient to meet needs, accruing human capital, attachment to criminality, offender self-labeling/identity, and offender stigma. Since the eighteenth century

development of the prison in the U.S., efforts to intervene with work have varied, taken place at different loci within the system, and demonstrated varying outcomes. Of course, the first work interventions, the workhouse and hard labor, were intended to be either rehabilitative or punitive, or both (Garvey 1998). However, since the 1960s, work programs for offenders have become more strategic, complex, and oriented towards improving their employment situations, or, in the case of prison labor, at least partly with the intention of keeping the prisoner occupied while he is incarcerated (Riveland 1999). Some, but not most, of these interventions have been designed so that their effectiveness could be measured. Most of these programs have yielded conflicting results, or have shown weak effects (McGuire 2002).

Community-based offender work programs include vocational training and job placement. Bushway and Reuter (2002) found that these programs have demonstrated positive effects, including higher wages, obtaining a GED, and fewer arrests. Gendreau and Ross (1987) also found that rehabilitation programs, including work programs, reduced recidivism.

However, outcomes of some job placement programs, such as the Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration (TJRD), have been less encouraging. The TJRD program provides temporary jobs and job placement assistance to offenders after their release from prison. One study showed that the participants and the control group, who did not receive temporary jobs or specialized services, had approximately the same rate of recidivism (Redcross et al. 2010). The authors concluded that until the present, “the data on the relationship between crime and employment are mixed, and there is little evidence

about what kinds of program strategies are effective at increasing employment for former prisoners” (Redcross et al. 2010:2).

At this juncture, the TJRD study has not substantially clarified the crime – employment relationship. However, the program design might explain these null findings that have surprised and likely disappointed the TJRD developers. Redcross et al. (2010:7) wrote, “With few exceptions, the transitional jobs were low-skill positions that were not designed to train participants in particular occupations. Rather, the jobs aimed to teach the “soft skills” that many employers value ... In the in-depth interviews, some participants expressed disappointment about the menial nature of the work on transitional job worksites.”³

Another similarly designed program under the same umbrella of study efforts (federal initiative for reentry programming and research) had comparable null findings regarding long-term employment effects (Zweig, Yahner, and Redcross 2010]. However this study of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Program also found that the recidivism rate was lower for the participants. Zweig et al. (2010) concluded that the difference in recidivism was greatest among the high risk subjects (those with the most prior arrests), and that transitional job programs may be most helpful to those who most need the help.

Although the CEO and TJRD studies have similar findings of a null effect upon employment outcomes, they had dissimilar findings regarding program effects upon recidivism. This inconsistency is also characteristic of research on in-prison employment programs (Bushway and Reuter 2002; Wilson et al. 2000). However, it also appears that

the inconsistency appears mostly between eras and may reflect the improved design, implementation, and assessment of more recent programs.

Other research has produced similarly conflicting outcomes. Martinson's (1974) meta-analysis study concluded that perhaps "nothing works," caused alarm, and drew much criticism. Critics (Miller 1989; Bushway and Reuter 2002; MacKenzie 2006) have argued that the reason Martinson did not discover any significant correlations between prison rehabilitation programs (including work programs) and recidivism rates was because the studies that comprised the meta-analysis study pool were methodologically flawed or incompatible, as well as the possibility that the analysis did not adjust for incompatible measures.

Thirty years later, the same methodological problems seem to reoccur, in addition to new ones. While some research (Saylor and Gaes 1992; Uggen 1999; Arizona Correctional Industries [ACI] 2004; Bossler 2004; MacKenzie 2006; La Vigne, Brooks, and Shollenberger 2007; Visser and Kachnowski 2007) on prison work and vocational programs has found that these programs can help with post-release employment and reduce recidivism, these results have been small in magnitude. Other research has yielded null findings (Bushway and Reuter 2002; MacKenzie 2006). Uggen (1999), Wakefield et al. (1987), and Western (2008) attributed much of these disparate findings to misspecification of work. Uggen (1999) has argued that unemployment and employment as the only or primary measures of work and stability are insufficient, and that measures such as occupational type and work satisfaction measures should be used instead.

This shift to more specified measures of job quality has continued. The importance of job quality, as opposed to any menial job, has gained attention among the post-release employment resource programs. Additionally, more detailed variables and measures are being utilized in reentry research projects. Some research (Uggen 1999; Visher and Kachnowski 2007) that has utilized work satisfaction measures and meaning of work measures has yielded promising findings. However, there has been little in-depth, qualitative research to explore these measures in conjunction with prison work programs.

Many reentry studies have addressed in-prison work, vocational programs, and post-release employment (Visher and Kachnowski 2007; Brooks et al. 2008; Zweig et al. 2010). These studies have explored the relationship between in-prison variables and reentry successes. However, the research on in-prison employment has typically looked only at whether the subjects were in programs or not. Similarly, pre-prison work experiences are usually measured in terms of employed or unemployed, length of employment, wages, etc. These studies have typically not explored the subjects' work experiences in a qualitative, in-depth manner so as to understand the subjects' perceptions of their work experiences.

Given that most of the literature on offender work has been quantitative and has yielded conflicting or weak results, the present study is a qualitative one designed to identify the various factors and mechanisms that affect the offenders' work-lives. Between August 2008, and December 2008, initial in-person interviews were conducted with 49 male inmates at Wespen,⁴ a minimum and medium security prison in the western U.S., within a few weeks prior to their release from prison; follow-up interviews were

conducted at three months and six months post-release. These interviews revealed the subjects' perspectives on their pre-prison work, in-prison work and post-prison work, as well as the connections and disconnects between these different work experiences.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The remainder of this dissertation consists of seven additional chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of much of the existing literature, including the history of prison labor, criminological theory and research on work and recidivism, and sociology of work theory and research. Relevant literature regarding themes which emerged during the data analysis – substance abuse prevalence, and identity – is also discussed.

Chapter Three describes the study methods. This chapter outlines the specific research questions, describes the methodological approach, describes the sampling and data collection process, provides subject descriptions/demographics, provides Wespen information compared to other facilities within the same state in which Wespen is located, provides administrator subject descriptions, and describes the analytical framework.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the subjects' pre-Wespen work experiences. The first part of this chapter covers the subjects' employment status at the time of arrest. The second part of the chapter discusses the reasons for job loss and correlates of job commitment. The next portion of the chapter addresses social relationships: social issues, substance abuse, job loss, and family relationships. The last part of the chapter discusses job rewards and pre-Wespen work.

Chapter Five concerns in-Wespen work. This chapter discusses the analysis and findings of both the Wespen administrator interviews, as well as the offender subjects' Wespen work. The first section of the chapter discusses the placement procedures into the inmate work programs. The following section discusses the mobility between pre-Wespen work and Wespen work. The next section of the chapter delineates the different types of job rewards which the subjects received from their Wespen work; these rewards included extrinsic and intrinsic, as well as character-changing rewards. The next section discusses conflict in the Wespen workplaces. The final section addresses substance abuse.

Chapter Six discusses the subjects' post-release work experiences. The first section describes interview responses from two state administrators who are aware of programs for parolees and provided an overview of the available programs for parolees. The subjects' post-release work experiences are then described, including comparisons between plans for post-release employment and realizations of employment. The next section discusses the observed obstacles to obtaining and maintaining post-release employment, as well as strength building experienced post-release. The final section discusses the subjects who were reincarcerated within six months of their release from Wespen.

Chapter Seven compares the subjects' pre-Wespen work experiences, which were discussed in Chapter Four, to their post-release outcomes, including post-release employment, work experiences, and recidivism. The subjects' in-prison work was compared to their post-release outcomes, assessing the effects of in-prison work

programs. In this sense, pre-Wespen work experience also served as a baseline measurement.

The last chapter, Chapter Eight, discusses key findings of the study, and relates these findings to the existing literature. It also includes policy recommendations for prison administrators and policymakers. Finally, this chapter analyzes the theoretical significance of the study and makes suggestions for future research.

Notes: Chapter One

¹ The suburbanization of those persons with the resources to relocate continued until the more recent gentrification of some urban areas. Still, the gentrification does not appear evenly throughout urban areas, thus, only changing the landscape of very limited areas, and leaving other areas with concentrated poverty.

² Note that this law is separate from the Second Chance Act which has been signed into law and provides for reentry projects.

³ The TJRD study (2010) also found, however, that the implementation of the design may have been the problem, rather than the conceptualization of the intervention. Redcross et al. (2010) explained that the second phase of the program – to assist the participant in job placement – was slow to start, and the full potential of the placement plan was not reached. Although that may be so, it appears that the essentially null findings may more likely be related to the menial nature of the jobs, which the participants did not value. The menial nature of the work does not set it apart from the work that the subjects likely had before prison, or would have obtained on their own post-release. It appears that temporary, menial jobs may only delay the inevitable – unskilled work for offenders, which is not preferable to the offenders.

⁴ Wespen is a pseudonym for the prison facility where the initial subject interviews were held. The pseudonym was used in order to ensure the anonymity of the study subjects.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter is an overview of much of the extant literature which is salient to this research study. The examined literature includes the history of prisoner work programs in the United States, as well as criminological perspectives concerning the role of work in the offender's life while in the community, in prison, and upon reentry after incarceration. This chapter also discusses a portion of the sociology of work literature, such as the meaning of work, labor market structure, human capital, and social capital. The review also includes literature related to two themes that emerged during the analysis, i.e., substance abuse and identity construction. The review of this literature demonstrates that although much research has been conducted in these areas, there have been many conflicting findings, weak effects, and significant gaps in knowledge regarding the offender's work-life.

HISTORY OF INMATE WORK

Since American penitentiaries were first constructed in the late eighteenth century, prisoner work activity has been organized within several different ideological paradigms. These paradigms have been broadly based around issues of rehabilitation, punishment, and economics. Additionally, inmate safety and community safety concerns have impacted the structure of inmate work. These paradigms and concerns have shifted several times and have led to oscillating forms of prisoner work activity.

The first American prisons were constructed to remove offender punishment, such as flogging, from the public streets to a more private arena. These facilities were used for

several populations, including criminal offenders, debtors, “runaway apprentices, untried prisoners, etc.” (Sellin 1953:326). These institutions, Sellin (1953) explained, included “workhouses.” Prisoners “and the vagrants, disorderly and the idle poor became the denizens of the ‘workhouse’” (Sellin 1953:326). Legislation, passed in 1786, set out to address failures in controlling crime through imposing hard labor on convicts, including in-prison work and labor on public works (Sellin 1953). Rehabilitation purportedly would be achieved through silence (solitude) and hard labor (Garvey 1998).

Myers (1998) traced the history of convict labor in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and outlined two systems (contract and leasing) that provided labor for private enterprise, and one system (public account) that provided labor for the government or public. The contract system provided inmate labor within the penitentiary walls for private industry. The state provided some machinery and the prisoner labor; the private industry contractors provided other tools and materials. The contractors managed production and collected all the profits. Under the leasing system, private enterprise would house, clothe, and feed the inmate, who provided labor for the private business. The public account system used inmate labor to produce goods within the prison walls for government use and for the general public. The use of these systems varied regionally and according to factors such as economic conditions, private industry needs, labor unions, and public opinion.

These three systems faced criticism for several reasons, one of which was economic competition between workers. In the late 1800s labor unions opposed the contract and leasing systems, citing unequal competition from prison labor which drove wages downward. The opposition allowed the public account system, which had been

operating to a lesser degree but concurrently with the private systems, to gain favor over the private systems (Myers 1998).

The leasing system was also criticized for additional reasons, including misguided awards of lease contracts by public officials (Myers 1998). The leasing contracts were valuable commodities. Mancini (1978) wrote that “convict leasing was not just an expedient by which Southern states with depleted treasuries could avoid costly expenditures; it was also one of the greatest single sources of personal wealth to some of the South’s leading businessmen and politicians” (p. 339). Although the lease system was purported to have been implemented to relieve the growing public financial burden of incarcerating offenders, the benefit to the state could not compete with the criticism of unfair lease awards, and partly led to its demise (Myers 1998).

Concern over the inhumane treatment of prisoners also contributed to the lease system’s decline (Myers 1998). Garvey (1998) pointed out that after the Civil War, the prison population increased with the growth of industry. He asserted that the freed slaves became similar to slaves of the prisoner lease system. Garvey (1998) highlighted historical accounts of “unspeakable brutality” by the lessees, who had even less interest in the long-term well-being of the prisoner laborers than had the slave-owners (p. 357). He explained that the brutality increased the prisoner’s mortality rates. However, though Garvey attributed the decline of private systems to many reasons (including labor concerns of worker competition, business concerns of fair lease awards and unequal competition, reformers’ concern that work had become a greater focus than rehabilitation, and humanitarian concerns for the prisoners), he concluded that the economic issues probably had the greatest impact. Similarly, Mancini (1978) attributed the trajectory of

the leasing system to economic downturns in private industry which left the lease holders with the responsibility of feeding and clothing their wards without being able to profit from their labor.

As private industry involvement in prisoner work decreased, there was more opportunity for the public account system to grow (Myers 1998). However, specifically during economic downturns, private industry also found itself in conflict with the public sector regarding the use of inmate labor in prisons for state profit through the sale of inmate made goods. In 1929, the Hawes-Cooper bill was enacted to limit interstate commerce of state prison manufactured goods. This law was passed through the joint effort of private industry and labor unions, both of which viewed the commerce of these goods “as a threat to their share of the market, and labor assumed that convict production stole jobs from labor” (Conley 1980:263). Garvey summarized the legislation’s purpose as “multiparty agreements between groups anxious to eliminate competition from prison industries, prison wardens anxious to keep inmates occupied, and prison reformers anxious to preserve prison labor as a means of moral regeneration” (1998:369).

Another type of prisoner labor was used during the “chain gang period” between 1908 and 1944 (Myers 1998). Although with the decline of the private systems in the latter part of the nineteenth century prisoners had worked on public infrastructure projects, during the “chain gang period” the use of prisoner labor for public construction increased. This coincided with the need for roads, a public sector responsibility, to accommodate increasing agrarian industry (Zimmerman 1951). Cheaper and readily available prison labor provided the state, counties, and municipalities with affordable labor to develop the public infrastructure.

The above literature shows that the use of inmate labor during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was directly tied to private sector and public sector economic conditions, as well as to progressive moral concerns. Similar to the criticisms of private industry, reports of abuses under state control led to the decline of forced hard labor for public use.

World War II, however, led to a renewed use of inmate labor in the production of goods for government use (Hawkins 1983). Conley (1980) explained that a federal study conducted soon after the war ended found that states could better support in-house industry if all state agencies were required to purchase prison-made goods. However, this monopolistic approach did not work well. Varying quality of goods and underbidding by private industry caused state agencies to develop ways to circumvent such policies. Difficulties in the logistics of prison labor, such as inconsistencies in staffing due to sentence lengths and delays due to security procedures, also proved to inhibit the prosperity of prison industries. In addition to problems in uneven product demand, causing the prisoners to be idle at times or to resort to unproductive menial tasks, there were issues with worker motivation. Conley wrote, “Finally, the state refused to recognize that the original concept of the industrial prison based on the idea of exploiting convict labor for profit was not a viable policy. It assumed that the inmates would work in a forced working environment without incentives to produce products for which they received little or no remuneration, but which made large profits for the state and its partners in the private sector” (1980:270).

During the 1960s and 1970s, more liberal and progressive social programs were implemented in response to public demands and changing social problems. Facilitated by

federal initiatives and funding, Manpower and Job Corps programs were developed to assist less educated and impoverished persons gain vocational skills (U.S. Department of Labor 2010a; U.S. Department of Labor 2010b). The criminal justice system also proceeded in a more progressive approach. Riveland (1999) pointed out that “[A]n influx of federal money beginning in the late 1960s (from the Law Enforcement Administration Act) encouraged a range of new programs, many highlighting the concept of prisoner reintegration” (p. 165). The focus on reintegration included research on the effectiveness of prisoner programs, including work and vocational training, as well as recidivism rates. One of these studies, Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks (1975) (a federal and state sanctioned meta-analysis of research regarding offender programs and recidivism between 1945 and 1967), provided disheartening findings and concluded that “nothing works”; nonetheless, the shift towards rehabilitative interests in prison vocational programs was apparent.

Despite the discouraging findings of Martinson (1974) and Lipton et al. (1975), work has continued to have a role in the prison experience for inmates to varying degrees. Hawkins (1983) explained that Lipton et al. (1975) noted methodological problems with the studies comprising their meta-analysis, perhaps compromising the accuracy of the meta-analysis’ findings. Although the study had a dampening effect upon corrections administrators’ hopefulness for rehabilitation (Riveland 1999), efforts were still ongoing to develop prisoner work programs for both economic and rehabilitative purposes.

In 1979, the federal government authorized states to further utilize private industry work programs within the state prisons, and provided mechanisms for implementation of these programs. The Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) permits private industry to market prison made goods. The objective is

to “address idleness among ever-increasing prison populations and as a cost-efficient method for providing inmates with marketable job skills” (National Corrections Industry Association [NCIA] 1999). By 2010, 41 PIECP projects had been approved across the nation (U.S. Office of Justice Programs 2010).

These PIECP projects were envisioned “to create as realistic a working environment as possible within prison walls, while enabling an inmate to become more sufficient, to the benefit of himself, the prison system, and the taxpayer” (NCIA 1999). The legislation requires that the employers pay the inmates prevailing wages and that no more than 80 percent of the inmates’ wages can be taken for room and board, restitution, etc. Additionally, the inmates who work in these programs must do so voluntarily. By 1999, 145 private sector businesses operated in 38 states, and employed approximately 2800 inmates (NCIA 1999). Participating industries include diverse products and services: customer service, receiving sales orders, making reservations, producing garments, agriculture, window manufacturing, automobile repair, and food service operations, etc.

Also during the 1970s, state legislatures, such as the one in the state in which Wespen is located, passed laws to further develop state-use prison industries. The industries which produce goods and services for the public sector include the following: manufacturing furniture, soft goods and textiles, garments, license plates, agricultural produce, food items, processing cleaning supplies, and providing services such as graphic arts and office support (Department of Corrections [DOC] 2008).

Both the private programs, such as those under PIECP, and the state-use programs have elicited varied opinions. Some (Hawkins 1983; Garvey 1998) have argued that

private employment in the prison offers inmates vocational skills, the means to contribute to the cost of their housing, and restitution; others, such as Parenti (2008), have perceived it as “exploitation of prison labor” (p. 230). Similarly, Parenti also depicted state-use industries as exploitive. However, although Parenti has been critical of the expansion of American prisons, and possible economic reasons behind the expansion, he went on to say that prisoner labor exploitation does not equal profit, stating that “Some observers even imply that the corporate desire to harness prison labor is driving prison expansion. But closer examination complicates this picture” (Parenti 2008:231).

Parenti (2008) found that in 1998, the prisoners who worked in jobs (other than operations, such as kitchen and janitorial) either for private industry or state-use industry comprised “less than 5 percent of the entire [prisoner] population” (p. 231). He pointed out that state-operated prison industries in general are inefficient and require subsidies to operate. Parenti also explained that the private sector experiences additional inconveniences when utilizing inmate labor, such that it reduces the profitability: “There are several concrete reasons why capital avoids the penitentiary. The first is lack of space ... Another hurdle is the morally tainted nature of prison-made products ... Fear of lawsuits also keeps business away from prisons; inmates are seen as aggressive and vexatious litigants ... [Prison is] a world where bureaucracy, hierarchy, delay, snafus, searches and more searches, and the surly centralization of power define every detail of daily life ... Location is also a factor. Many new prisons are in isolated rural areas far from metropolitan markets and transportation hubs” (Parenti 2008:233-235). Parenti summarized the role of prison labor within the “prison industrial complex”: “Decried as slavery by the left, boosted as super-efficient tough love by the right, and exaggerated in

scale by both, prison labor is actually a small, not very profitable, part of the American gulag” (2008:233).

Historically, inmate labor has been influenced by several different factors, such as punishment, private sector and public sector economic needs, economic competition, issues of humane treatment, and rehabilitation (Mancini 1978; Conley 1980; Hawkins 1983; Garvey 1998; Myers 1998). These different influences have caused the nature of prison labor to oscillate between different forms of work, such as hard labor, work that keeps the prisons operating, producing goods or services for the private sector, producing goods and services for the public sector, and vocational training. The current typology of prison labor is a hybrid of historical forms. In 2010, state-level prisoners worked in private industry (similar to the contract system), state industry (similar to the public account/state-use systems), prison operations, public works projects (similar to the “chain gang”), and, in some areas, work-release (similar to the lease system) (DOC 2008). Not only have the various forms of prison labor continued into the twenty-first century, so has the debate surrounding the appropriate purpose of and implementation of prison work (see Parenti 2008).

CRIMINOLOGY THEORY AND RESEARCH ON WORK AND RECIDIVISM

The criminological literature identifies mechanisms which link work and criminality; these theories and research suggest that negative work characteristics can increase or support criminality, whereas positive work characteristics can decrease criminality or have protective affects against criminality (Wilson 1996; Uggen 1999; Wadsworth 2006). This dynamic could also have implications for prison work. Could

the positive or negative characteristics of prison work have positive or negative effects upon post-release success versus post-release criminality? Criminology theory and research may serve to illuminate the possible rehabilitative role of prison work.

Most criminological theories directly or indirectly reference negative work characteristics among criminogenic factors. These theories and research include, but also go beyond, the financial resources associated with the rewards of working (Merton 1938; Agnew 1992; Agnew 2001). The social value of work, including the symbolic, is also addressed regarding individuals' perceptions of their position among life stages, and individuals' perception of their access to socially desirable opportunities and resources (Sampson and Laub 1993). Life course theory has explored the changing trajectory of perceived opportunities, resources, and responsibilities. Hypothetically, as these situations (including work opportunities) improve, criminal behavior decreases. This theory is often used to explain decreases in criminal behavior with age.

Criminological theory also includes the role of work in regulating individuals' behavior through attachments (Toby 1957; Hirschi 1969). Attachment to others and association with others also have implications regarding the impact of the meaning of work versus the meaning of criminal behavior, as mediated through peer relations and identity (Sutherland et al. 1970). On a macro-level, opportunities for work in a geographical area can have a regulating effect on the broader community (Shaw and McKay 1969; Bursik 1988; Wilson 1996). Adequate employment levels in an area contribute to economic and social stability within the community. This stability permits community institutions and members, such as "churches, schools, political organizations, businesses," and adults in the neighborhood to assert social control (Wilson 1996:64).

Conversely, inadequate employment levels have negative effects on individuals and communities; Wilson (1996) found, “Neighborhoods plagued by high levels of joblessness are more likely to experience low levels of social organization: the two go hand in hand. High rates of joblessness trigger other neighborhood problems that undermine social organization, ranging from crime, gang violence, and drug trafficking to family breakups and problems in the organization of family life” (p. 21).

Not only does work affect criminality, but criminality affects work. Labeling theory and research (Erikson 1962; Becker 1973; Holzer et al. 2007) assert that offenders’ employment opportunities are negatively affected by their criminal status. Other literature regarding reentry (Visher and Kachnowski 2007) also suggests that criminal history affects offenders’ employment prospects after their release from prison.

In general, work has been found to impact financial resources, social attachment, responsibility, social learning environment, community resources, community values, and opportunity for identity reconstruction. Therefore, work can conceivably have a positive or negative impact in these areas depending on the nature of the worker and the specific work or work environment. Additionally, the literature suggests that criminal history also affects work prospects.

GENERAL CRIMINOLOGY THEORY AND RESEARCH

Offenders’ work opportunities are limited because of several factors, one of which is stigma (Erikson 1962; Becker 1973). Labeling theory addresses the problem of access to employment after an individual has been categorized as an offender (see also Pager 2003; Holzer et al. 2007). One application of labeling theory asserts that once an

offender is classified as such by others, he will further internalize the offender identity and engage in subsequent deviant behavior (Lemert 1951). This deviant identity could dissuade an offender from pursuing legal work, a conformist behavior. However, another application of the theory asserts that labeling impacts “life chances, particularly in the domain of employment,” and that “contact with authorities will reduce status attainment *independent* of one’s previous deviant behavior and economic resources” (Davies and Tanner 2003:386).

Research on employers’ attitudes regarding hiring offenders affirms the impact of labeling upon obtaining employment. Holzer et al. (2007) found that only 20 percent of employers surveyed in 1991 responded that they “would definitely or probably consider an applicant with a criminal history” (p. 122). They also found that a large amount, 40 percent, indicated that they would not, or probably would not, hire an offender; and 35 percent responded that it would depend on the crime. Moreover, Holzer et al. explained that the employers willing to hire offenders were “disproportionately those with a large fraction of unskilled jobs” (2007:125). The study also found that employers were less likely to hire violent offenders or offenders without work experience. Employers indicated that they were relatively more willing to hire offenders with “property or drug-related crimes” (Holzer et al. 2007:128).

Additionally, research indicates that when post-prison employment is obtained, wages are less than pre-incarceration levels (Pettit and Lyons 2007). Useem and Piehl (2008) stated that there is reason to believe that incarceration has a negative effect on employment after release. They wrote, “Whether it is because prisons are ‘schools for crime,’ because confinement leads to a decay in human capital and the social networks

used to find jobs, because of the negative labeling of ex-prison inmates, or because of legal prohibitions on postconviction occupations, an individual's subsequent employment is predicted to be lower than it would have been without the period of incarceration" (p. 142). However, some research has shown that offenders' employment may be increased in the short-term following their release from prison, and return to pre-incarceration levels thereafter (Pettit and Lyons 2009).

Some of this research (Pettit and Lyons 2007; Useem and Piehl 2008) is congruent with theoretical perspectives which suggest that the labeling of offenders establishes a separate caste. Uggen, Manza, and Thompson (2006) found that individuals with felony convictions experience employment difficulties because of "[b]ackground checks, job restrictions, and other socioeconomic consequences" (p. 298). Furthermore, they explained that "felons and ex-felons are excluded not merely on the basis of some social characteristic but as a result of an indelible felony conviction" and that "they are marked for life" (pp. 299-300). Uggen et al. (2006) explained that the felon stigma establishes a "unique status dishonor" (p. 302).

Conflict theory and research (e.g., Bonger 1969; Reiman 1995) provide another useful perspective for assessing the intersection of work and criminality. Similar to strain theory, conflict theory assumes that there is a disjuncture between needed or desired goals and the means to achieve those goals. This is also depicted in differential opportunity theory (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). Conflict theory posits that crime occurs when there is inequitable distribution of opportunities and "illegal action" provides opportunity; crime becomes a form of class struggle (Bonger 1969).

Other theoretical frameworks which link work and criminality are strain / anomie theory (Merton 1938; Durkheim 1951; Agnew 1992; Agnew 2001), and differential opportunity theory/social disorganization theory (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Wilson 1996), which, similar to conflict theory, posit that obstructions to needs or expectations can elicit non-conformist responses. Merton's (1938) strain theory asserted four general responses to these obstacles, one of which (innovation) seeks to achieve the desired goals through innovative pathways outside of the acceptable norms, thus circumventing the obstacles, resulting in deviance (Merton 1938); another is retreatism withdrawing from both the obstacles and the goals (Merton 1938; Jang and Lyons 2006). As money is necessary to meet basic needs and achieve goals, many studies have explored the role of income (or a proxy of income, such as employment) and crime (Kelly 2000; Wadsworth 2000; Hannon and DeFina 2010).

Studies inspired by strain theory have shown mixed results. Crutchfield (1989) found some links between poverty and murders in his study by census tract. Hannon and Defronzo (1998) detected a positive relationship between "economic distress" and crime. Conversely, Allen (1996) found a negative association between poverty measures and some types of property crime; however, his findings were not consistent across all types of property crime. He stated that these divergent results could indicate that different crimes, even within the same broad categories, such as property crime, are motivated by different factors. However, he also considered that these seemingly contradictory findings may be due to mechanisms which are hidden within the macro-economic and aggregate data which his study used.

Bushway and Reuter (2002) attempted to identify and refine variables that may underlie these conflicting results. In their review of literature on the labor market and crime rates, Bushway and Reuter (2002) pointed out that most studies which have looked at unemployment, employment, and crime have shown little reduction in crime with improved labor market conditions. However, they pointed out that “the focus on unemployment (and, indirectly, on the economic theory of crime) may understate the importance of labor markets” (Bushway and Reuter 2002:192). They also reported that research on crime rates in more narrow geographical areas has been more successful in demonstrating susceptibility to employment rates.

Bushway and Reuter (2002) explored the complexity of the labor market and how programs that target specific populations fared in ameliorating market forces which, without intervention, inadequately met employment needs. Most of the programs evaluated produced mixed results of economic impact. Although dispersion programs, relocating families to better employment opportunity areas, had some marked measures of success, some other measures did not fare so well, such as one study that showed an increase in juvenile delinquency.

Agnew (1997) explained that Durkheim theorized that when society cannot effectively cap the upper-limits of the citizenry’s goals, that individuals will be insatiable, continuously increasing the goals, and that a sense of anomie will result. Conversely, according to Agnew (1997), Merton argued that problems arise when society is able to set goals, but those goals are unattainable for some individuals. He posited also that problems arise when the legitimate norms for obtaining those goals are either not valued on a macro-level, or are not adhered to on an individual level. Agnew (1997)

summarized the concept of norms, writing that, “For Merton, normlessness refers to those norms regulating goal achievement, whereas for Durkheim, it refers to those norms regulating goals” (Agnew 1997:37). Additionally, Agnew pointed out that Merton also addressed the limitless monetary goals inherent in the American Dream. Therefore, strain theories may be applied either to limited goals, or limitless goals.

Another of Agnew’s important points is that both Merton and Durkheim addressed the fact that strain is relative, and that in order for a person to perceive strain, he must compare himself to another person. This invites investigation of whether particular status groups identify different reference groups in assessing their achievements towards, or opportunities for their goals. For Agnew, research suggests that individuals choose “comparative reference groups from the upper strata or from broad strata” (1997:41). He pointed out that much research on delinquency and criminal activity has found that the offenders have “unrealistic or unlimited goals” (Agnew 1997:33).

Agnew also pointed out the possible negative consequences of unrealistic goals. He wrote, “As Durkheim states, ‘to pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness’ (1951:248)” (Agnew 1997:29). Although Agnew also wrote that research suggests that the “macrosocial environment” leads “individuals to place an exaggerated emphasis on the goal of monetary success” (Agnew 1997:41), he also asserted that there has been inadequate empirical research of non-monetary goals or aspirations.

The literature has explored many intersections between crime and work. Difficulties with work are presumed to contribute to criminality through mechanisms

such as stigma (Erikson 1962; Becker 1973; Davies and Tanner 2003; Uggen et al. 2006; Holzer et al. 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2007), blocked employment opportunities (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Bonger 1969; Shaw and McKay 1969; Reiman 1995; Bursik 1988; Wilson 1996), social discouragement from conventional employment (Sutherland et al. 1970) and disjuncture between work needs or aspirations and realizations (Merton 1938; Durkheim 1951; Crutchfield 1989; Agnew 1992; Allen 1996; Hannon and Defronzo 1998; Agnew 2001). These difficulties concern not only obtaining employment but also obtaining sufficient or satisfying employment.

Conversely, positive aspects of work are presumed to discourage criminality and encourage conformist behavior. One of these positive aspects is work which is associated with attachment to work activity, associates, and work values (Toby 1957; Hirschi 1969); another positive aspect is work which is associated with changes in life trajectory toward more responsibility (Sampson and Laub 1993). These aspects of work promote conformist behavior through attachment to conventional persons, institutions, or values.

However, some studies have produced counterintuitive findings (Allen 1996; Bushway and Reuter 2002). These studies revealed that strain may not be manifested similarly across different types of crimes, even between those within the property crime category (Allen 1996). These studies also found that the labor market may have a larger impact than anticipated, but that it has been neglected due to dependence upon the simple employment/unemployment variables (Bushway and Reuter 2002).

INMATE WORK – THEORY AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Research on the impact of prison work and vocational programs, as well as on employment and training programs for felons post-release, also have yielded conflicting findings or findings that reflect little impact. Corrections departments have implemented work programs, and/or employment placement programs with several intentions: keeping offenders busy, providing offenders with economic resources, providing offenders with training and skills, and supplying institutions with operational labor. Bushway and Reuter (2002) looked at previous studies of particular programs aimed at offender populations and employment. They discovered that these programs, for the most part, had little or no effect on reducing recidivism. The programs reviewed included in-prison vocational programs developed from the U.S. Department of Labor's Manpower Administration legislation in the 1960s. Bushway and Reuter noted that Robert Martinson's (1974) "widely read review of 231 rehabilitative (including employment-based) programs" yielded discouraging results. Martinson (1974) himself had concluded that "nothing works." Martinson's findings fueled cynicism towards rehabilitative efforts and augmented a shift towards more punitive efforts. However, MacKenzie (2006) concluded that Martinson's meta-analysis was inconclusive because his "conclusion that nothing works was really a critique of the poorly designed studies of inadequately implemented programs" (p. 56).

Bushway and Reuter (2002) outlined several programs aimed at "at-risk" populations that yielded varying degrees of impact. These programs for youth included education, employment and training programs targeting high risk youth in impoverished neighborhoods. A mentoring program resulted in positive outcomes of greater magnitude

than the other programs reviewed. The Job Corps and California Conservation Corps, both comprehensive programs, also yielded positive outcomes. Compared to control groups, some of these results included higher wages, obtaining a GED, and fewer subsequent arrests.

More recent studies have yielded optimistic findings for offender prison-based programs. These studies (Reynolds 1997; ACI 2004; MacKenzie 2006) have shown that recidivism is lower for released offenders who had participated in work programs while incarcerated. While recidivism rates for state system inmates vary overall between 50 percent and 67 percent after several years post-release (Petersilia 2000; Uggen 2000; Wallerstein 2005), inmates participating in work programs have demonstrated lower recidivism rates. Reynolds stated that in the Post Release Employment Project conducted with federal inmates in 1992 by Saylor and Gaes, “6.65 [percent] of those who worked in prison had their parole revoked or were charged with committing a new crime during their first year of supervised release ... This compares to 10.1 percent of the group who had not worked in prison” and they “were 24 percent more likely to get a full-time or day labor job” (1997:2). Though apparently a small difference, the figures actually show 33 percent less recidivism for those inmates who had worked. Similarly, the Arizona Department of Corrections reported “that inmates who participated in ACI work programs were 33.4 percent less likely to return to prison than were inmates who did not” (ACI 2004:2).

In their 2000 meta-analysis of in-prison vocational and work program studies, Wilson et al. found that vocational programs reduced recidivism rates by 11 percent (cited in MacKenzie 2006). They also found that correctional industries and other non-

vocational work programs showed some reduction in recidivism rates, but less than the vocational program effect. MacKenzie (2006) posited that “vocational training and other work programs increase employment opportunities, and this reduces future criminal activities” (p. 94). MacKenzie pointed out that the studies within the meta-analysis were, in general, not experimentally designed, and that the different programs worked with offenders of different risk levels and criminal histories. MacKenzie highlighted analysis difficulties stemming from the research designs, heterogeneity across programs, and heterogeneity of offender subjects. However, she wrote, “There is sufficient evidence at this point in time to conclude that vocational education programs are effective in reducing recidivism” (MacKenzie 2006:101).

MacKenzie defined correctional industries as work that produces “a wide range of products for and services for government and private sector consumers” and that are also geared more towards keeping offenders busy and reducing the costs of incarceration rather than towards rehabilitation efforts (2006:101-102). Mackenzie concluded, again confounded by weak research designs and issues of subject selection, that because the magnitude of program effect was low, there was “insufficient evidence to say these programs are promising” (2006:103). However, MacKenzie acknowledged that the meta-analysis was confounded by including both in-prison and out-of-prison programs, as well as a wide variety of services.

Reviewing the work by Wilson et al. (2000), Bushway and Reuter (2002) pointed out that the participants were more likely to have been employed upon release. “[T]he programs with the largest employment effect tend to also have the largest reduction in recidivism, validating in some sense the mechanism by which these types of programs are

thought to reduce recidivism” (Bushway and Reuter 2002:217). However, Bushway and Reuter also found important that the researchers acknowledged that the studies within the meta-analysis lacked methodological rigor, such as experimental design. Problems such as self-selection, matching subjects, and confounding variables were inherent in these studies, as the programs were designed, for the most part, without research considerations.

Uggen (1999) asserted that the dichotomous employment variable (employment versus unemployment) confounds the findings of studies which look at employment effects on crime, criminality, or recidivism. Uggen (1999) suggested that the quality of work is a more relevant variable from which to assess the affect of work upon recidivism. A study which compared offenders placed in a non-prison based employment program (minimum wage jobs in the construction and service industries) and offenders in a control group who were not provided jobs, found little difference between the two in recidivism rates, nor in the length of time before some of the subjects sought illegal income (Uggen 2000).

However, Uggen (1999) clarified the important difference between these two disparate approaches: employment status versus the quality of work. For Uggen, the simple analysis of employed or unemployed does not reveal the subject’s “social position” garnered from his work position; therefore, providing released felons with low-skill jobs offered through temporary job programs does not do much to affect criminal behavior. Uggen noted that “motivational theories and control theories suggest [that] a more radical shift in occupational position is necessary to affect criminal offending” (p. 131).

Accordingly, Uggen (1999) also utilized more specific work measures than simply whether the subject is employed or not, given his interest in exploring the relationship between job quality and criminality. Uggen used an aggregated measure of job quality which was composed of several attitudinal factors. He found that “job quality effects on crime are not limited to economic or utilitarian criminal activity and the mechanism linking job quality and crime is not exclusively economic” (p. 144). He wrote, “The results show a strong and robust job quality effect on economic and non-economic criminal behavior. High quality jobs decrease the likelihood of criminal behavior net of prior criminality and substance use, other indicators of social position, and alternative employment measures” (Uggen 1999:144). In sum, Uggen concluded that job quality matters.

Similarly, Wadsworth (2006) studied criminal behavior and employment characteristics of young adults, utilizing data from a nation-wide longitudinal survey which included questions regarding the subjects’ perspectives regarding their job characteristics. Wadsworth clustered several responses, creating two variables to measure job quality: “rewarding attributes and employment benefits” (2006:351). He found significant correlations between quality jobs and less crime; he did not find support for links between income, job stability, and crime. Wadsworth concluded, “Collectively, these findings suggest that the subjective experience of having a good job may deter criminal behavior more effectively than higher wages or job stability” (p. 357).

Clearly, studies of offender work programs and recidivism show varying degrees of effectiveness. Part of the variation may be attributable to the fact that inmates work in diverse capacities. MacKenzie (2006) reported that a 1995 survey (Stephan 1997) “of all

state and federal adult correctional facilities” showed that “[a]lmost two-thirds of all inmates participated in a work program” (p. 91). More specifically, however, a “1994 survey of 46 correctional systems in the United States and seven in Canada found that only 9.4 percent of female and 7.75 percent of male inmates worked at jobs other than housekeeping and maintenance” (Reynolds 1997:1). Reynolds wrote, however, “In 1985 three-fourths of U.S. prison inmates were involved in productive labor, with the majority working under prison contract and leasing arrangements with private employers” (1997:1).

There are not only many social reasons to rehabilitate prisoners through work programs, but financial reasons as well. The National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA) estimated that in 1997 approximately 30 billion dollars were spent incarcerating prisoners nationwide. Reynolds, however, argued that the work and vocational programs inside most institutions are “part-time and produce no income for room and board, restitution and other ends” (1997:1). Similarly, MacKenzie (2006) pointed out that although some work programs do provide an avenue for offenders to earn money for such things, program goals can also conflict with individual goals. Any program that specifies that the earnings go towards the offender’s responsibilities for restitution or family needs potentially “diverts inmate earnings that might otherwise be used by the inmate for other purposes” (MacKenzie 2006:92). MacKenzie also explained that other programs which offer little or no monetary reward, such as vocational or educational programs, limit the offender’s opportunity to engage in other income-generating work programs. At the same time, MacKenzie pointed out that work programs may “help inmates learn good

work habits and job skills that will enable them to find employment upon release” (2006:92).

Much of the literature suggests that more attention be given to a finer breakdown of the larger components typically explored. Crutchfield and Pitchford (1997) found that time out of the labor force was positively related to criminal activity, positive expectations of employment stability were negatively related to crime, and that, at the county level, employment history, in conjunction with time out of the labor market, was related to criminal activity. The authors also found that conditions typically associated with the secondary labor market, marginal and tenuous employment, were positively associated with criminality. Thus, the less work experience that an offender had, the lower quality work experience, and the more time that he spent in prison, the more likely he was to engage in subsequent crime.

Since 2001, Visher and colleagues (Visher and Kachnowski 2007) have conducted several studies which include prisoners’ post-release work experiences. They have explored both finding and maintaining employment. Their studies have addressed offenders’ work experience while in prison and upon release. Visher and her colleagues added variables to this area of research, including details of the type and extent of work and training prior to incarceration, the type and extent of work while in the institution, the post-release employment seeking experience, and the extent of post-release employment (hours worked and wages, logistics of getting to work on a daily basis, and work satisfaction measures). The data are gathered from self-reports obtained through surveys and interviews; Visher and Kachnowski (2007) reported that previous studies have shown

self-reports to be valid when compared to government records. These additional variables and refined methodology have contributed substantially to this field of study.

Visher and Kachnowski's report (2007) on the Illinois portion of their multi-state study stated that almost half of their study subjects worked while in prison, the majority working in institutional support positions such as kitchen and janitorial work. At the second follow-up interview (four to eight months post-release) only 24 percent reported current full-time work. They found that 60 percent of the subjects reported that their employment seeking efforts had been hindered by their criminal record. Most of those who were employed worked in construction, maintenance, and warehouse jobs (Visher and Kachnowski 2007).

The study (Visher and Kachnowski 2007) also showed that those who participated in job training while in prison were more likely to be employed during the second follow-up interview at four to eight months post-release. Work-release experience did not generate findings with statistical significance. However, the Maryland component of the broader study did find support that work release "improved the likelihood of finding full-time employment after release" (Baer et al. 2006:4).

Visher's research associates, La Vigne et al. (2007), conducted the same study in Houston and found that "[p]ersons with stable employment after release from prison and state jail are less likely to be reincarcerated within 12 months" (p. 1). They also found that job training and education program participants were less likely to be reincarcerated within 12 months.

Perhaps Visher and her colleagues' most intriguing contribution is the inclusion of work satisfaction measures. The pre-release self-administered surveys included

Likert-scaled questions regarding the import and expectations of finding work, plans for finding work, need for assistance, degree of expected difficulty regarding employment, and expected earnings. Post-release interviews also included questions about job satisfaction. Similar to Visser, Uggen, Wakefield, and Western (2005) asserted that it is useful to look at the quality of work. They concluded “that former prisoners who obtain jobs ranked high in quality are less likely to reoffend than those who obtain lower-rated jobs, net the process of self-selection into employment” (Uggen et al. 2005:213).

Bossler (2004) also assessed subjective and social factors in his study of offenders and employment. Utilizing Likert-scale measures, Bossler measured offenders’ perspectives on their relationships with their bosses, customers, coworkers, and conflicts at the job-site. The study asked whether the offenders enjoyed their time at work, the reason they took a particular job, their attitude about job opportunities, whether crime was seen as an acceptable way to make money under certain circumstances, and whether they considered themselves to be trustworthy to others. Bossler found that unemployed offenders were more likely to (1) have not gotten along with their bosses, (2) have gotten into a verbal argument at work, (3) have been fired due to a conflict at work, (4) have chosen a job for the money, rather than because of the job itself, (5) have gone to work if their job paid well, even if they did not like the job, and, (6) be more fatalistic about job opportunity and external limitations (Bossler 2004).

Research on the effects of prison work and felon programs has evolved to some extent since the earlier studies, such as Martinson’s (1974) which concluded that “nothing works.” Other researchers (Bushway and Reuter 2002; MacKenzie 2006) have noted that methodological problems have limited the accuracy of inmate and felon work

studies. Still, the research has yielded a few general findings: non-prison mentoring programs showed positive outcomes (Bushway and Reuter 2002); comprehensive non-prison vocational training programs indicated positive results, such as higher wages, obtaining more GEDs, and fewer subsequent arrests (Bushway and Reuter 2002); prison work programs have been linked with less recidivism (Saylor and Gaes 1992; ACI 2004; Mackenzie 2006); and prison work programs have been associated with greater post-release employment (MacKenzie 2006).

Despite the findings from more recent, better designed studies, still, the magnitudes of effects have varied, and there have been varied findings between types of work programs and types of effects: employment status versus recidivism. Some researchers (Reynolds 1997; Stephan 1997; MacKenzie 2006) pointed out that several studies had overlooked the type of prison work program in which subjects were engaged, and therefore, may have overlooked variables which influenced the subjects' outcomes. The most recent research, however, has expanded to include more refined variables, such as "quality" jobs (Uggen et al. 2005; Wadsworth 2006), detailed work information, including worker satisfaction measures (Visher and Kachnowski 2007), attitude, and social interactions (Bossler 2004). This most recent phase in the methodological evolution of this area of study, adding more detailed and varied measures, provides hope for more illuminating research.

THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK

THE TRANSITIONING LABOR MARKET AND THE MEANING OF WORK

In response to the structural changes in work because of the development of industrial capitalism, Marx ([1844] 1988) theorized in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, and in particular the chapter on “Estranged (Alienated) Work,” that the more a worker feels that his labor power is usurped and exploited, the more alienated the worker becomes from the product he is making, the process of production, other people, and his “species being,” or humanity. For Marx, capitalist appropriation of the worker’s labor alienates the worker from himself (“it is the loss of his self” ([1844] 1988:74)), as well as from other people. Further, Marx argues that: “Life itself appears only as a *means* to life” ([1844] 1988:76), and, “man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating.” ([1844] 1988:74). For Marx, then, alienation at work leads to a broader dehumanization of the worker: alienation from and conflict with others, an emphasis on animalistic activities such as eating and drinking, and a general sense of powerlessness to control one’s life (Marx [1844] 1988); Seeman 1959; Smith and Bohm 2008).

Durkheim’s ([1933] 1984) parallel to Marx’s “alienation” is anomie, normlessness. Durkheim asserted that the industrial division of labor created a fractionalized society, which causes normlessness or anomie. Organic solidarity and shared morality, or collective consciousness, is needed to provide norms and cohesiveness – i.e., social integration. He argued that one form of solidarity could be achieved through occupational associations, which would provide a social structure in

which to define norms and morality for the members of the occupation, and define meaning in their work.

In the mid-twentieth century, human relations theory prescribed ways to motivate the employee through accommodating psychological needs as well as tangible rewards (Maslow [1961] 1998); McGregor [1960] 2006). Human relations theory, through humanistic psychology (Maslow [1961] 1998), asserted that managers and organizations could motivate and keep employees through not only wages and benefits, but also through providing psychological rewards, such as involvement in organizational and task planning ([Maslow [1961] 1998). At approximately the same time, fringe benefits were also on the rise (Alpert and Ozawa 1986). These efforts to motivate and retain employees were designed to reduce employee turnover, thus saving costs in training (Alpert and Ozawa 1986). Therefore, the positions for more skilled and better educated workers, who were less easily replaced, were more likely to include fringe benefits (Alpert and Ozawa 1986; Nelson 1994).

Piore (1972) theorized that differences in human capital (Becker 1964), skill level and education level, led to a dual labor market where workers received varying degrees of opportunity and rewards based on their labor market position: either in the primary sector or secondary sector. Piore (1972) asserted that compared to the secondary sector, the primary sector offered better wages and working conditions, as well as job security and more opportunities for advancement. Osterman (1975) added several desirable elements to the paradigm, arguing that the primary sector also offers “affective characteristics,” such as autonomy, and job satisfaction (p. 510).

Since disadvantaged people are disproportionately represented in the secondary sector of the workforce, analyses of the secondary sector are particularly relevant to criminal offenders who are also disproportionately disadvantaged. Crutchfield (1995) wrote, “When consideration is broadened to examine not simply unemployment rates, but also patterns of occupational stratification and the kinds of jobs that potential criminals hold, the picture becomes quite complex,” and “secondary sector occupations are less likely to bond young adults to the workplace” (pp. 194-195). This represents a disjuncture between finding meaning in work through modern “benefits” of the primary sector, and persons in the secondary sector who do not have access to those benefits.

Since the 1970s, the transition to technology and service work from the manufacturing industry has continued to alter the structure of workforce sectors. This has further limited opportunities for movement out of the secondary sector. Burris (1993) described the change in terms of control and organizational mechanisms in the workplace. Technocratic control, she explained, “integrates certain aspects of the previous forms of structural control: technical control, bureaucracy, and professionalism” (Burris 1993:2). Technocratic organization is utilized in various organization types that are automated, high-tech, or provide services to these technological products. Technocracy in the workplace not only reconfigures the control mechanisms over the worker, but also impacts workplace design. Burris stated, “The central features of technocratic organization include a polarization into expert and nonexpert sectors, a flattening of bureaucratic hierarchies, an erosion of internal job ladders and increased emphasis on credentialing and credential barriers, increased salience of technical expertise as the primary source of legitimate authority, and flexible configurations of

centralization/decentralization” (1993:2). Again, similar to the disparate impact of the constraints of secondary sector work, the negative impact of technocracy on peripheral populations is exacerbated, since they are likely to be employed in the nonexpert sector of technocratic workplaces.

Crutchfield (1989) explained, “As the economy of the United States shifts away from an industrial to a service base, we should appreciate that many of the new jobs in the service sector and in ‘high-tech’ industries have the characteristics of secondary sector work. These positions may provide employment for some, but as this analysis indicates, they may leave many without the bonds and linkages that inhibit criminal behavior” (p. 507). The credentialing barrier that Burris (1993) described is particularly salient to offender populations. Offenders are much less likely to have high school diplomas (Irwin and Austin 1997) than the general population, and even less likely to have college degrees. A recent study of prisoner educational levels found that “40% do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent” (Williams 2005); another (Reiman 1995) cited even higher rates (60 percent). For offenders previously located in the primary-secondary sector workforce structure, although the work may not have yielded much reward, job ladders did provide some hope for movement into the primary sector. Under technocracy, more rigid polarization into expert and nonexpert sectors governed by educational credentialing erodes the pathway for those at the bottom to improve their position in the workplace.

Changes to technologically-oriented work in the United States and the emphasis on expertise have also led to a contractual employment orientation. The erosion of job ladders has led to a transient workforce, where moving up is best accomplished by

moving on. Loyalty, and therefore attachment, to an employer is not the norm. Smith (2001) explored the impact of the changing structure on the worker. She concluded, “Researchers in this field have focused on workers located in the interstices between two eras: one, an era of institutional stability, growth, and security; and the other, an era of occupational and industrial transformation, economic volatility, global competition, and job and career insecurity” (2001:10). The tenuous and transient nature of the new workplace can be challenging for any and all workers according to Smith.

The changes in the labor market have significantly affected offenders. The growing divide between the workers at the top and the workers at the bottom has tremendous impact on the disadvantaged, those with the least human capital. Also as more manufacturing jobs are outsourced to other countries, the offender worker also has less opportunity to obtain unionized work. As the labor market has become more ad hoc and temporary (Smith 2001), unstable work includes workers at the either end of the educational spectrum, but disproportionately more of those with less than a high school education, and more of those who are Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005). Additionally, the construction industry is one of five industries which utilize large proportions of contingent workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005).

Offenders are likely to have less than a high school education (Reiman 1995; Western 2008), be non-White, (Reiman 1995; West, Sabol, and Greenman 2010) and work in the secondary sector (Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997). As the labor market has transitioned, the offender has consistently been located at the bottom of all employment hierarchies. He has been both the “secondary sector” worker, and the “nonexpert.” If the offender can find work at all, he is more likely to obtain less desirable work, have little

hope for upward mobility, and, experience contingent work. In terms of Marx's paradigm, the offender is likely to be as alienated from his work, himself, and other people as is fathomable.

HUMAN CAPITAL

The economic theory of human capital (Smith [1789] 1976; Becker 1964) posits that individuals make their labor more valuable and gain economic rewards from their investment in resources such as education and skills. The original form of this theory from within an economic framework asserts that the individual has significant control over his accumulation of these resources. However, the offender's ability to develop human capital does not appear to fit within this framework.

Critical theorists (Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997) argue that for those with human capital deficits initially, these deficits can be prohibitive to further accumulation of these resources. Hagan and McCarthy (1997) pointed out that in addition to the individual's investment in human capital, the family also transmits human capital to children. They alluded to the difficulty of initial human capital deficits, stating that "in less advantaged community and family settings, without such abundant social and cultural capital, parents are less able to bestow or transmit opportunities to their children" (Hagan and McCarthy 1997:230). In this paradigm, human capital is most accessible when both social capital and cultural capital are present.

Others (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Darity and Mason 1998; Holzer et al. 2007; Pager 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2009) point to additional systemic discriminatory structures, including race and imprisonment, which impede the pathways to accrue

human capital. Darity and Mason (1998) explained that the degree of human capital is not equally acknowledged across racial groups. They wrote that “when males are examined using the same Census data a standard result emerges. A significant portion of the wage gap between black and white males in the United States cannot be explained by the variables included to control for productivity differences across members of the two racial groups” (p. 71).

Pettit and Lyons (2009) also found that human capital does not explain wage variation between individuals who have been incarcerated and individuals who have not been incarcerated. This led them to conclude that offender stigma can have more impact than human capital upon employment. Others have found that this stigma applies to obtaining employment, as well as to wage variation (Pager 2007; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991). Neckerman and Kirschenman (1991) found that discrimination in assessment of human capital may be even more prominent in hiring than in promoting after hire. They attributed this to “selective recruitment.”

The literature points to significant obstacles to the offenders’ accrual of human capital; social disorganization and various conditions of differential opportunity also impede the social transmission and cultural transmission of human capital (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Research shows that discrimination based on race, and the stigma associated with the felon status can each obscure the recognition of human capital.

REWARDS: AVENUES TO COMMITMENT

One method to explore the meaning of work and the commitment to work is through perceived work rewards. Guzzo (1979) described the developing conceptualization of work rewards. Historically these have been framed as either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature, although for Guzzo this dichotomous typology is problematic for several reasons. Guzzo (1979) explained that the interaction of these reward variables has made operationalization difficult, and that there has been debate and inconsistency both in defining the elements of each type of reward and in “specifying the role of cognitions in mediating the reward-motivation relationship” (p. 75). He finally concluded, “Instead of viewing work rewards as bipolar, and un-dimensional (viz., intrinsic-extrinsic), it is more realistic to view them as entities which vary simultaneously on several attributes” (p. 82). Among these are “symbolic or tangible” attributes (p. 82).

In their research on full-time and part-time hospital employees, Wakefield et al. (1987) operationalized extrinsic rewards as “pay and fringe benefits,” and intrinsic rewards as “being informed about the job, participating in decision making, and doing the job well” (p. 25). Wakefield and his colleagues found that the full-time and part-time workers differed in the degree of importance which they assigned to different rewards. These differences, however, were not aligned with the intrinsic-extrinsic demarcation. They suggested that further research into these differences could explore a variety of conditions, including differing expectations, time dedicated in the workplace, work schedules, tasks, and self-selection.

Shapiro’s (1977) study of race and job rewards utilized a similar structure of rewards. Deriving the typology from Maslow’s (1964) hierarchy of needs, Shapiro

defined extrinsic rewards to include high income, job security, and short hours. He defined intrinsic rewards to include an “important job with feeling of accomplishment” (Shapiro 1977:24). He acknowledged that distinguishing between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards is complex as several rewards may apply to both types, but have different meanings to the subjects. Shapiro also found differences between race and the value assigned to high income, job security, and accomplishment. He concluded that “black workers are more likely to value extrinsic job rewards of high income and job security and less likely to value the intrinsic job reward of an important job which gives feelings of accomplishment than white workers” (Shapiro 1977:27).

In her multi-organizational study, Morin (2008) utilized a detailed taxonomy of the meaning of work and organizational commitment. She assessed whether the subjects perceived their jobs to be meaningful. The following are some of the many aspects of work that Morin identified which the subjects sought or appreciated: “work that allows them to feel useful, fulfill themselves as human beings and participate in a common effort”; “to do something that serves a purpose or other people, that makes a contribution to others or to society”; “performed responsibly, not only in its execution, but in the products and consequences it generates”; performed in a context that respects human values, in an environment that respects justice, equity and human dignity”; “must support employee efforts and initiatives and encourage them to help each other when they encounter difficulties”; “provide pleasure ... correspond to his fields of interest”; and “exercise skills and judgment, show creativity” (2008:42-43). Morin classified these points more generally as “social purpose, moral correctness, autonomy, learning opportunities, positive relationships and recognition” (2008:13).

Morin (2008) also identified several aspects of commitment to work. She utilized Meyer and Allen's (1997) classification of commitment which is comprised of "three forms": "An employee displaying a strong affective commitment keeps his job because he wants to"; "An employee expressing a strong normative commitment keeps his job because he believes he has a moral obligation to the organization"; and "An employee displaying strong continuance commitment keeps his job because he needs to" (Morin 2008:18). Morin (2008) found that the meaning of work was positively linked to psychological well-being and commitment to work.

Work rewards, the meaning of work, and commitment were framed in multiple ways within the literature. The variations between the conceptualizations included Guzzo's "symbolic or tangible" classification (1979:82), Wakefield and colleagues' (1987) and Shapiro's (1977) extrinsic-intrinsic dichotomy, and Morin's (2008) more descriptive typology, which focused on intrinsic/symbolic rewards. Morin (2008) also demonstrated that the meaning of work was linked to commitment to work.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVALENCE

Given the prevalence of substance abuse among offenders (Petersilia 1999), a review of the substance abuse literature seems appropriate in order to further understand how substance abuse contributes to work trajectories for offenders. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] gathers data annually from individuals 12 years old and older regarding their substance use in the past year and in the past month. The "State Estimates of Substance Use from the 2004-2005 National Surveys on Drug

Use and Health” (SAMHSA 2006) reported that the annual national averages of “Illicit Drug Use in Past Month” were 19.76 percent for those age 18-25, and 5.65 percent for those age 26 and older. The 2002 NSDUH Report (SAMHSA 2003) also provided comparisons between persons who were high school educated, or currently enrolled, and high school dropouts. Their findings showed that for the population of 18-24 year olds, the rates of use for high school dropouts were between 8 percent and 10.5 percent greater, depending on race/ethnicity. The maximum rate of use for high school dropouts was 28.1 percent.

The 2005 NSDUH Report examined the 2002-2004 rates for “[a]dults who were arrested in the past year for any serious offense” (SAMHSA 2005:1). The survey asked the arrestees if they had “used an illicit drug within the past year” (SAMHSA 2005:1). The rate of use for arrestees was 60.1 percent compared to 13.6 percent for those who were not arrested. Given the general population data on high school dropouts and race/ethnicity, this large difference is not likely to be attributable only to education or race/ethnicity. These data confirm the general consensus among corrections experts who have asserted that the rate of use among offenders is very high, compared to non-offenders. In her discussion of offender characteristics, Petersilia (1999) wrote that the “California Parole and Community Services Division reported that 85 percent of parolees were chronic substance abusers” (p. 499).

Terza (2002) found correlations between alcohol abuse and type of employment. Terza’s study revealed that “problem drinking is found to have a positive effect on the probability of unemployment and negative effect on the likelihood of being employed” (2002:393). The 2007 NSDUH Report (SAMHSA 2007) illuminated Terza’s findings.

The 2007 report compared 2002-2004 worker substance use by industry. The report stated that the highest rates of “heavy alcohol use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 were found in construction (15.9 percent); arts, entertainment, and recreation (13.6 percent); and mining (13.3 percent)” (SAMHSA 2007:1). The report also revealed that “[t]he highest rates of past month illicit drug use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 were found in the accommodations and food services (16.9 percent) and construction (13.7 percent) industries” (SAMHSA 2007:1).

The substance abuse prevalence literature has shown that offenders are much more likely to have chronic alcohol problems and/or use illicit drugs, compared to non-offenders. The literature also revealed some characteristics that increase the likelihood of substance abuse, including less than a high school education, being African American or Hispanic, and being employed in one of several particular industries.

IDENTITY

Criminology is informed by various sociological and psychological sub-areas, and is inherently interdisciplinary. Issues of identity formation are especially important to explore in an interdisciplinary way. The following review addresses the intersection of criminology, the sociology of work, traditional explanations of identity, such as symbolic interactionism, and more recent applications of identity theory.

Uggen et al. (2005) addressed the import of social interactions, social capital, social control, and differential association. Uggen and associates found that “work integration,” in addition to family dynamics, alters the composition of social networks, therefore having the potential to increase social capital, and add elements of social

control (Uggen et al. 2005:211- 215). Uggen et al. wrote, “Work involvement may also help former prisoners develop identities as law-abiding citizens” (2005:215). Similarly, established negative social ties, in keeping with the traditional differential association framework, can impede the identity reformation and have a negative impact on the offender’s post-release success.

Moore’s analysis of Chicano gang studies, *Homeboys* (1978), illustrated the challenging dynamics of differential association theory on a grand scale. It also alluded to differential association as a form of class struggle. Moore explained that the Chicano gang activity “can be seen as a symbolic challenge to the world ... and develops within its own logic” (1978:36). She placed the gang’s activities within Merton’s framework of strain theory as representing the Innovative response to unattainable goals. Moore posited that the survivability of the Chicano depended on responsibility towards - and identity with - the community. Chicanos who were “viewed by others as having a predominantly conventional personal lifestyle” were deemed “square” (Moore 1978:150). By romanticizing the “deviant” role as more loyal to the community and the culture, the gangs reinforced the power of the survivor culture. In this sense, the deviant actor preserved the identity of the culture. This dichotomy between the “square” who was controlled by conventionality and the “deviant” could be understood as a class struggle through identity.

Similarly, Sánchez-Jankowski (1991) also wrote of identity expressed through gang loyalty to the community. He wrote, “Many of the Chicano gangs in Los Angeles arose, not primarily as economic organizations, but as part of an effort to resist Anglo-American cultural prejudices and to defy Anglo ethnocentrism” (Sánchez-Jankowski

1991:135). Sánchez-Jankowski argued that there is a misconception that gang members choose criminal lifestyles because they have no initiative. Instead, Sánchez-Jankowski explained that gang members engage in alternative means to “accumulate capital” and “compete ... to improve their socioeconomic condition” (1991:313). Sánchez-Jankowski further placed this behavior within Weber’s “spirit of capitalism,” suggesting that these gang members engaging in illegal economic activities were comparable to entrepreneurs.

In his research on Puerto Rican drug dealers, Bourgois (1996) defined his study subjects as searching for respect and dignity. He wrote, “Like most other people in the United States, drug dealers and street criminals are scrambling to obtain their piece of the pie as fast as possible ... The hyper-urban reconstruction of a hip-hop version of the rural jibaro represents the triumph of a newly constituted Puerto Rican cultural assertion among the most marginalized members of the Puerto Rican diaspora. The tragedy is that the material base for this determined search for cultural respect is confined to the street economy” (1996:326). He also explained that his subjects took “refuge in a street culture of resistance that roots its material base in its ideological appeal in the growing drug economy, which offers a concrete alternative to exclusion from the legal economy and its anglo-centric culture” (1996:414).

Given the commitment to resisting the Anglo-American culture, non-Anglo offenders understandably would find it difficult to become accustomed to a different social paradigm. Krienert and Fleisher (2004) wrote, “[c]rossing the boundary between a crime-oriented street culture and the culture of legitimate work life was foreign to street offenders ... The cultural shift necessary for a street criminal to become successful in the

culture of work may be analogous to a bank executive learning to be comfortable in the culture of street-corner drug purveyors” (p. 41).

Hagan and McCarthy (1997) addressed this issue of crime culture in terms of embeddedness. In their study of homeless youth and street crime, Hagan and McCarthy integrated the theoretical concepts of Sutherland’s “tutelage,” Granovetter’s “embeddedness,” and Coleman’s “social capital” into “criminal embeddedness” and “criminal capital.” The authors asserted that Sutherland’s concept of tutelage provides the mechanism by which an individual who is embedded in criminal associations obtains criminal capital. Hagan and McCarthy posited that “criminal capital includes knowledge and technical skills that promote criminal activity, as well as beliefs or definitions that legitimize offending” (1997:138).

This theory of criminal embeddedness and criminal capital offers plausible explanations for at least some types of criminal activity. These authors also recognized the impact of certain elements from social control, strain, and labeling theories upon criminal activity. They asserted that parts of these theoretical paradigms are linked to social capital and opportunity, and, therefore, to criminal capital, also a derivation of social capital.

Hagan and McCarthy (1997) also proposed a mechanism for exiting criminal activity. They discovered that youth who had been engaged in criminal activity, but who obtained employment, expressed a change in their life trajectories: from commitment to criminal activity towards commitment to legitimate work. They explained that this process is a result of “dissonance contexts.” Hagan and McCarthy wrote, “The notion of ‘dissonance contexts’ suggests that youth may experience increasing discomfort about

their involvement in street activities and networks as they find and keep jobs, establish off-street networks, and build human capital. Our research is consistent with this hypothesis and suggests that there is a causal sequence that leads from finding legal employment to movement away from the street and to a declining embeddedness in street activities and networks” (1997:234). Although the authors indicated that they were convinced of the positive impact of legitimate employment upon their subjects, the authors also acknowledged that a great deal of the employment which their subjects had obtained was in the secondary labor market and therefore less likely to generate positive effects. Most usefully, the authors asserted that the presence or absence of social capital and criminal capital is not static but can vary throughout the life course.

Hagan and McCarthy’s (1997) assertion that social capital and criminal capital are not static leads us to consider the fluidity of identity. What is the prognosis for offenders who are embedded in criminal identities or substance abuse identities? In their study on identity and the homeless, Snow and Anderson (1987) implied that identity is a continual process, and therefore amenable to change. They wrote, “[T]he attempt to carve out and maintain a sense of meaning and self-worth seems especially critical for survival, perhaps it is the thread that enables those situated on the margins or at the bottom to retain a sense of self and thus their humanity. To the extent that this is generally true, it follows that it is not a lack of interest in identity issues, self-realization, and the like that characterizes those for whom physiological survival cannot be taken for granted but the scant material and social resources at their disposal” (Snow and Anderson 1987:1366). They concluded, the “findings caution against the tendency within sociology to adopt an overly structuralized conception of self and identity, treating the latter as an entity that is

routinely assigned or bestowed upon the actor rather than constructed or negotiated on occasion” (pp. 1368-1369).

Cast and Burke (2002) addressed self-esteem, a particular aspect of identity that seems particularly salient to the identities of offenders, who are often conferred the lowest rank on the social hierarchy. Cast and Burke delineated the processes of self-esteem generation, asserting that “self-esteem is an outcome of, and necessary ingredient in, the self-verification process that occurs within groups ... Verification of the role identities increases an individual’s worth-based and efficacy-based self-esteem” (2002:1041).

Padavic (2005) wrote about group processes in identity construction within the workplace. In her research on contingent workers and identity, she found, among several other factors, that the contingent workers “engaged in identity-management strategies” to construct for themselves a positive workplace identity (2005:111). One of these strategies was assigning personal value through “defining a willingness to work hard” (2005:111). She also discussed the role of an occupation as “identity-confirming.”

Finally, Burnett and Maruna (2006) wove together criminology, work, and identity in their article “The kindness of prisoners: Strengths-based resettlement in theory and in action.” Burnett and Maruna placed identity reconstruction on top in the reentry toolbox. They framed their vision within the “restorative justice movement ... characterized by themes of repair, reconciliation and community partnership” (Burnett and Maruna 2006:84). Burnett and Maruna (2006) stated, “The idea behind this model is that real integration requires more than physical re-entry into the community, but also should involve ‘earning’ one’s place back in the moral community” (p. 84). They wrote,

“The goal of strengths work is to provide opportunities for such individuals to develop pro-social self-concepts and identity, generally in the form of rewarding work that is helpful to others (the so-called ‘helper principle’)” (2006:84). Crediting Toch (2000), Burnett and Maruna articulated the potential outcomes under this paradigm: “The alleged benefits of assuming the role of helper, for offenders, include a sense of accomplishment, grounded increments in self-esteem, meaningful purposiveness and a cognitive restructuring towards responsibility” (2006:84-85).

Although work can be an integrative force that develops identity (Uggen et al. 2005), research has shown that many offenders are strongly attached to their unconventional identities (Moore 1978; Sánchez-Jankowski 1991; Bourgois 1996). The literature suggests that these attachments can be rooted in class struggle (Moore 1978; Sánchez-Jankowski 1991; Bourgois 1996) and/or strain (Sánchez-Jankowski 1991; Bourgois 1996). Krienert and Fleisher (2004), as well as Hagan and McCarthy (1997) asserted that offenders can be “embedded” (Hagan and McCarthy 1997) in a criminal lifestyle and culture. Kriernert and Fleisher (2004) wrote that choosing a legitimate lifestyle “was foreign to street offenders” (p. 41).

Hagan and McCarthy (1997), however, found that their subjects exited their criminal lifestyles through legal employment that changed their life trajectories. At the same time, they acknowledged that their opportunities were often within only the less desirable secondary labor market, and, therefore, the change was tenuous. Still, they identified legal work as the mechanism which allowed their subjects to exit criminal embeddedness.

Several of the authors implied that identity is fluid and amenable to change (Snow and Anderson 1987; Hagan and McCarthy 1997; Cast and Burke 2002; Padavic 2005; Burnett and Maruna 2006). Burnett and Maruna (2006) asserted that not only is identity amenable to change, but that identity reconstruction can be achieved through “rewarding work” that allows the offenders to “develop pro-social self-concepts and identity” (p. 84).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of prison labor has varied across time according to the oscillating ideologies of rehabilitation, punishment, and exploitation of a labor pool (Sellin 1953; Garvey 1998; Myers 1998). Throughout the United States’s penal history, another purpose of prison work has been to keep the prisoner occupied during incarceration (Garvey 1998). The forms of prison labor have been influenced by the needs of the private sector and the public sector, as well as concerns regarding economic competition and the humane treatment of prisoners (Zimmerman 1951; Mancini 1978; Garvey 1998; Myers 1998). The forms of prison labor have included the contract and lease systems for private enterprise, public use and corrections industries for the public sector, and prison operations work (Myers 1998). At times, prison work has also been used as a tool to increase the inmate’s skill set (Riveland 1999).

The forms of prison labor have persistently spurred controversy, at least ever since the Civil War era. Private enterprise has at various times eagerly taken advantage of prison labor for profit; however, under the rubric of unfair business monopolies, private enterprise complained of the public sector’s use of prison labor, regardless of whether the use was to exploit labor for profit, or to minimize the costs of the penal

system, asserting that it had taken away the private sector's share of the marketplace; this resulted in legislation limiting interstate commerce of prison made goods (Conley 1980). The labor unions have also complained that some uses of prison labor, whether by private enterprise or by the public sector, lessen the available work opportunities and lower the wages for the non-prisoner worker (Conley 1980; Myers 1998). Additionally, citizen groups opposed the inhumane treatment of prisoners who were required to perform hard labor, resulting in health problems and even death (Garvey 1998; Myers 1998). These controversies have guided the transformation of prison labor.

Currently, prison work exists in multiple forms, including that for private sector use, public sector use, operations, and vocational purposes (DOC 2008). Although the private sector, labor unions, government, and citizens' ethics groups have reached agreements over the use of prison labor, new controversies have developed over the last few decades. Contention has arisen following the tremendous prison growth during this period. A prominent argument is that the growth in constructing prisons and in the mass imprisonment of offenders has occurred in efforts to serve economic development or to exploit the prisoners' labor (see Parenti 2008).

Parenti (2008) addressed these perspectives, showing that the use of prison development for stimulating local economies has not been successful, and that prison labor has not been profitable. He argued, however, that the criminalization of many offenses and the class of persons who are incarcerated is a manifestation of class inequality, imbalance in the economy, and misguided efforts at formal social control. He concluded that the answer to the problem of the growing prison industrial complex is "decarceration." Still, given the ever-present fear of crime in American communities, it

is unlikely that Parenti's proposal will be acted upon; therefore, the problem of crime, incarceration, reentry and recidivism remains.

Most criminology theories assert that employment and work can operate as either criminogenic factors or protective factors to criminality, depending upon how work and opportunities for work interact with economic opportunity (strain theory; differential opportunity theory, social disorganization theory), class membership (conflict theory), stigma (labeling theory), cultural norms (anomie theory, strain theory), conventionality (social control theory), cultural environments (social disorganization theory, criminal embeddedness), social relationships (social learning theory, differential association theory) and life course trajectories (life course theory). These interactions can conceivably occur during several stages of criminal development, such as leading to initial criminal behavior, after the onset of criminal behavior, in prison, or during reentry following incarceration. Changing the conditions of these social and structural areas theoretically affects work, and work theoretically affects these social and structural areas.

Research has corroborated many of these theories linking work, social and structural issues, and crime: Research has suggested that limited work opportunities within communities are criminogenic (Wilson 1996); that stigma limits work opportunities and wages (Davies and Tanner 2003; Uggen et al. 2006; Holzer et al. 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2007; Useem and Piehl 2008); that the addition of responsibilities, and attachment to work as one ages decreases criminal activity (Sampson and Laub 1993); that negative social environments discourage attachment to conventionality and work (Wilson 1996); that criminal culture encourages illegal work (Hagan and McCarthy 1997); and that offenders are typically located in the lower class stratum, and if

employed, are generally employed in the secondary sector of the labor force, or in non-expert work (Crutchfield 1989, 1995).

Empirical research on the effect of strain (represented as unemployment or low income) on crime and recidivism, however, has yielded conflicting findings and often findings of a low magnitude. Some of these studies found positive correlations between strain and crime (Crutchfield 1989; Hannon and Defronzo 1998); others found negative or no significant correlations between strain and crime (Allen 1996; Bushway and Reuter 2002). Some of these studies have found positive correlations between participation in work programs, either in prison or post-release and less recidivism (Saylor and Gaes 1992; Reynolds 1997; Bushway and Reuter 2002; ACI 2004; MacKenzie 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007); others have found negative or no significant correlations between participation in work programs, either in prison or post-release and less recidivism (Martinson 1974; Uggen 2000; MacKenzie 2006).

This research approach, strain and crime, has largely been the focus of evaluation for prison work program and post-release work programs. Because the findings have been conflicting and of low magnitudes, this has led to difficulty in confirming the causality of strain and criminality, and has hampered the development of adequate work-related interventions, as well as weakened the justification for these interventions. Additionally, these studies have not been able to identify the mechanisms behind the findings. However, fortunately these conflicting findings have recently led researchers to consider job quality and conditions beyond the employment-unemployment dichotomy and wages variables (Uggen 1999; Uggen et al. 2005). Ironically, job quality and other work conditions may also have implications for the other criminology theories which

recognize interactions between work and crime, such as social control theory and life course theory. The application of job quality and work conditions variables to research in these other theoretical areas has the potential to provide new methods of intervention in work in order to reduce crime and recidivism.

The literature regarding the sociology of work provides theoretical perspectives that may enhance the exploration of job quality, work conditions, and crime. Variables borrowed from the sociology of work may illuminate intricate dynamics tied to technocratic organization models, changing labor markets, the transient nature of work, human capital and credentialing, and work rewards. The transitioning labor market has had tremendous negative impact upon the disadvantaged segment of the population, including offenders (Crutchfield 1995). The lack of opportunity for mobility for non-expert workers, inherent in the bifurcated labor market (Burriss 1993), seems that it would contribute to the worker's sense of alienation (Marx [1844] 1988), as well as normlessness and anomie (Durkheim, 1951). The expectation from human capital theory (Smith [1789] 1976; Becker 1964), that individuals who invest more in their skills and education reap greater rewards from their labor, is difficult to apply to disadvantaged persons. Some counter that those persons who begin with large deficits in social capital, cultural capital, and human capital, encounter significant obstacles to accruing human capital (Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). This suggests that offenders are likely to experience greater challenges in the pursuit of quality jobs.

The literature on job rewards provides additional conceptualizations of job quality measures. These theoretical and empirical pieces asserted that rewards can be viewed as extrinsic or intrinsic (Shapiro 1977; Wakefield et al. 1987; Morin 2008), and symbolic or

tangible (Guzzo 1979; Morin 2008). More recent research on work and crime (Uggen 1999; Bossler 2004; Visher and Kachnowski 2007) has considered job satisfaction and intrinsic social rewards within the analyses. However, this research has not utilized in-depth qualitative techniques to flesh out the meanings which subjects attribute to these factors.

Literature regarding offenders' identity reconstruction was also explored. This perspective illuminates the potential impact of job rewards and the meaning of work upon perceptions of self. Uggen et al. (2005) found that work can be an avenue through which offenders "develop identities as law-abiding citizens" (p. 215). Hagan and McCarthy (1997) suggested that work provided challenges, "dissonance contexts" (p. 234) to their subjects' identities (which had been framed within criminal embeddedness). Burnett and Maruna (2006) explored the role of intrinsic elements of work, rewarding work, work that is "helpful to others" and which aids in the development of "pro-social self concepts and identity" (p. 84).

Literature regarding the prevalence of substance abuse among offenders is also relevant to this study. Research has shown that some areas of work have a disproportionate amount of workers who report substance use and abuse; these areas of work include many industries that provide secondary sector work, work which is more likely to be available to offenders, such as construction, mining, and food services (SAMHSA 2007). Offenders also fall within other demographic categories linked with substance abuse, such as low educational level and non-White (SAMHSA 2003). However, there is not much research that has explored the intersection of substance abuse, work, and crime.

The literature has explored many connections between work and criminality, and yet most areas merit additional research. Unfortunately, the majority of the research on work and crime, framed within strain theory, has looked at few measures of work, and has produced conflicting findings; additionally most of the research has been quantitative. More recent research and theoretical developments have suggested that quality of work is key to understanding the intersection of work and crime (Uggen 1999; Bossler 2004; Uggen et al. 2005; Burnett and Maruna 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007). This new approach to the study of work and criminality provides a way to possibly assess previously obscured causal paths between work and crime. However, the empirical studies, for the most part, have not sufficiently utilized concepts and perspectives from other areas which may be useful, such as alienation, anomie, the meaning of work, and identity. Additionally, the qualitative portions of this research have only scratched the surface, and therefore have barely begun to uncover the subjects' personal experiences of and insights about their work.

In-depth, qualitative research seems to be the next appropriate step in the attempt to understand these emerging questions. It may also add context to the variables that have typically been used, shedding light on why many of the empirical findings to this point have been conflicting, or, at best, have shown weak relationships. Hopefully, more qualitative studies will provide guidance in developing work interventions that can redirect offenders toward better lives, as well as reduce recidivism.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapters One and Two explored how negative work conditions have been associated with criminality, as well as how positive work conditions have been associated with desistance from criminal behavior. Many of the inmates in the U.S. have been incarcerated more than once,¹ thus, contributing significantly to the number of incarcerated inmates. The present study aimed to discover employment issues that influence the offenders' success upon their release from prison. One key question is whether, and if so how, in-prison work programs affect the inmates' reentry work experiences, as well as their recidivism.

In order to explore these work conditions and how they related to criminality or desistance, it was first necessary to understand the nature of offenders' work-lives pre-prison, in-prison, and post-release, as well as their subjective experiences of work. One method to gain this understanding, of course, was to ask. Creswell (1998) describes qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15).

VARIABLES/CATEGORIES

This study utilized qualitative methods to understand how the subjects' (inmates who will be more fully described in a following section) work experiences were related to the more objective outcomes: job stability, job quality, and commitment to work, as well

as reincarceration. The research also aimed to understand what constituted a quality job from the offenders' perspectives. The qualitative data that were gathered illuminated the understanding of job quality, such as (1) the meaning of work, (2) intrinsic rewards, (3) extrinsic rewards and basic financial needs, (4) obstacles to obtaining and maintaining work, (5) attachment to the workplace, (6) workplace environment, (7) social relationships, and, (8) forms of embeddedness. The study also addressed the relationship between some structural variables (such as labor market trends, skill level, socio-economic environment and work structure) and these other issues, i.e., stability, quality, commitment, reincarceration, and subjective experiences.

Although an inductive approach (which will be more fully explained in a subsequent section) was utilized to look at most of these variables via the offender's subjective experiences, a more deductive approach was also used to define some objective variables. Two of these variables, skill level and transient work histories (related to stability), emerged during the analysis, but the other two variables, socio-economic environment and commitment to work, were pre-defined, as explained below. These objective variables were then compared with subjective data to gain better understanding.

One of these objective variables is skill level, which was classified as skilled or unskilled. Unskilled work was defined as that which an individual could perform with no outside training and very little on-the-job training. Some examples of unskilled jobs are entry-level oil rig roughneck, hauler, janitor, simple maintenance, vehicle detailer, entry-level construction/flooring/roofing/masonry, carpet cleaner, cashier, and fast food cook. Work that an individual could perform only with outside training or extensive on the job

training was defined as skilled work. Examples of skilled positions are heavy equipment operator, carpenter, framer, vehicle body worker, welder, residential caregiver, security supervisor, computer tutor, and potter/artist.

Transient work history is another objective variable which was assigned a dichotomous measure. Some of the subjects reported to have only held jobs for short periods of time. Those subjects who held both of their last two jobs prior to their incarceration for less than one year were classified as transient workers. This variable, which emerged from the analysis, provided us with a way to identify subjects who had particularly unstable work patterns.

Another of the objective variables is socio-economic environment. In the analysis this variable was referred to as negative neighborhoods, or, within a broader variable, as negative associations. Neighborhoods which the subjects described as impoverished, “poor,” with high crime rates, or “ghetto” were classified as “negative neighborhoods.” As with the skill level variable, the negative neighborhood variable was then compared to more subjective data, and vice versa, to identify emerging connections between structural conditions and subjective experiences.

Worker commitment was defined as the subject’s intention to remain at a job for an indefinite period of time. For those situations where a person did not have an option to remain longer, such as prison work, commitment was assessed according to whether the subject’s descriptive perspectives of his work/job were more positive than negative, or vice versa. Given that the literature suggests that commitment to work is one of several key ingredients to combat criminality (e.g., social control theory [Toby 1957;

Hirschi 1969; Uggen 2000]), a dichotomous measure of commitment is useful despite its restrictive application.

DATA COLLECTION

STUDY SITE

In identifying possible study sites, several western states' correctional prison systems were considered. Two states that had a variety of work programs were identified. Unfortunately, one of these two states denied the researcher access to conduct the study, citing limited resources to accommodate the interviewer's research needs and presence at a correctional facility. The state in which Wespen² is located granted the request.

This state had approximately 6,000 inmates in 2008, at the time that the study was conducted (DOC 2008). A high ranking state corrections administrator suggested the study site, Wespen³ so as to accommodate the study design, which sought varied work programs. According to this administrator, Wespen housed approximately 1,200 of the state's inmates, 600 of whom were classified within the two lowest risk levels and were housed in two different facilities within the Wespen system. Inmates within these two lowest risk levels had access to the most varied types of work, therefore providing the best variety of subjects for the purpose of this study. Although these inmates were currently in the lowest two risk levels, most had spent part of their sentences at other facilities when they were classified at a higher risk level.

INTERVIEWS

Prior to each interview, either with administrators or inmates, the interviewer explained the consent to participate, confidentiality issues, and the risks of participating. The subjects read and signed the consent forms. A few of the inmate subjects asked the interviewer to read the consent form to them, and then they signed the form. Each subject was assigned a study identification number and, later, a pseudonym. Only the study number was written on the interview notes. The data were stored separately from the study identification number - subject name list. The study identification number - subject name list was destroyed at the conclusion of the data collection portion of the study.

None of the in-prison interviews were audio-taped to prevent the possibility that prison officials would confiscate the tapes should they have felt it necessary. Interviews that took place outside of the prison were also not audio-taped. These interviews took place over the telephone. The interviewer did not tape these interviews because she did not want to make the interviewees any more uncomfortable than they might already be, given that they could not see the person with whom they were discussing their private information.

Administrator Subjects

The first portion of the study entailed interviews with three of the administrators who had direct involvement with the Wespen work programs. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. During these interviews, consisting of both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, the interviewer gathered information about the work

programs' goals, technical components, delivery mechanisms, logistical issues, participant selection criteria, requirements, and the interviewees' perspectives regarding the efficacy of the programs (see Appendix A). The administrators also provided the researcher with written literature about the programs.

Two other administrators, from the state's Department of Corrections and Department of Labor, were also interviewed regarding post-release work programs and issues. The researcher identified these two potential subjects by anonymously phoning their respective departments and requesting to speak with someone who would know about parolee work programs. These interviews addressed the types of employment assistance programs available to offenders released from prison, the logistical aspects of delivery, and the interviewee's perspectives regarding these programs and offender employment (see Appendix B).

Inmate Subjects

The information obtained from the Wespen administrator interviews was used to identify the different types of work programs in which inmates were employed. These programs included work performed within the Wespen facilities' grounds and outside of the facilities' grounds. The work within the facilities consisted of operations jobs (such as kitchen, janitorial, and maintenance) and production jobs (such as, furniture manufacturing and irrigation/feedlot). The work outside the facilities consisted of service related and specialty jobs (furniture delivery, forestry/wild-land firefighting), as well as public infrastructure jobs (highway litter crew, and maintenance).

The study design utilized purposeful sampling to include these different types of prison workers. Patton (2002) wrote “Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study...Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (p. 230). Initially enrollment was to include 12 to 15 subjects from each of four different types of work programs: forestry, furniture manufacturing, other off-site work, and other on-site prison operations. This selection of subjects was designed to provide variation of work types and work locations. The design specified 12 to 15 subjects per work group to provide enough data from which to possibly identify recurring themes. The design was set up to use random sampling within these work groups if more than 15 potential subjects were available. This occurred, however, with only one work group (operations); for the other work groups, every inmate who agreed to participate was selected. All potential subjects from the other three work groups were solicited for the study.

Subject enrollment and initial interviews began towards the end of August 2008, and continued through December 2008. One administrator from each of the two facilities that comprised Wespen, provided the researcher with lists of offenders who were to be released between September 15, 2008 and December 31, 2008. These lists provided corrections identification numbers, work assignments, and scheduled release dates. The lists showed that fewer than 12 to 15 inmates would be released prior to December 31, 2008, in three of the four work program areas: forestry (9); furniture manufacturing (10); and other off-site work (10).⁴ From these lists, the researcher identified the potential subject pool: forestry (9), furniture manufacturing (10), irrigation/feedlot (2), offsite (10)

(furniture delivery, highway litter crew, and maintenance), onsite operations (31) (kitchen, janitorial/porter/land maintenance, building maintenance), and other onsite operations (9) (barbers and clerks). To keep the onsite operations category comparable in size to the other work programs, every other potential subject was added to the potential subject pool, identifying 15 potential onsite operations subjects.

After all of the potential subjects were determined, the researcher divided them into interview weeks, allotting five potential subjects per week, for 11 of the weeks between the end of August 2008 and the beginning of December 2008. At the beginning of each week, the researcher provided the administrator with the corrections identification numbers for the first five subjects to be interviewed at the end of the week. The administrator then arranged for the inmates to be available on the interview day (i.e., not working off site). Each interview day, the researcher asked for the first inmate to be brought to the interview location. The researcher engaged in the recruitment process with the inmate. If the inmate accepted, the interview was conducted at that time. After one interview was concluded, the researcher then provided the administrator with the second inmate's corrections identification number, and so on.⁵ At the end of enrollment, the study subjects (49) represented the following Wespen work groups: forestry (9), furniture manufacturing (10), irrigation/feedlot (2), offsite (7) (furniture delivery, highway litter crew, and maintenance), onsite operations (12) (kitchen, janitorial/porter/land maintenance, building maintenance), and other onsite operations (9) (barbers and clerks).⁶

Each of the initial inmate subject interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. These interviews consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The

interviews were semi-structured in that a detailed interview guide was used, but if the subject's responses led to other areas and the responses were informative or insightful, the interviewer deviated from the guide to take advantage of the subjects' story-telling. After the tangent had been concluded, the interviewer either asked questions inspired by the unexpected information, or, if more fruitful, returned to the interview guide. In most cases, the interviewer was able to ask most of the interview questions. Some of the subjects were more verbose than others. The least talkative subjects provided the least amount of data. However, within each of the subjects' stories, some amount of valuable qualitative data was gathered.

During these initial interviews a considerable amount of information was obtained, including the following: demographics, Wespen work programs in which they were employed, their last two jobs prior to the incarceration for which they were at Wespen, their opinions about work in general, their aspirations, their peers, their family, the type of neighborhoods in which they last resided, the type of neighborhoods in which they were raised, their plans for employment after their release from prison, and post-release contact information for purposes of the follow-up interview (see Appendix C).

Initially, two in-person follow-up interviews were planned: the first at three months post-release and the second at six months post-release. These interviews were to be conducted in private spaces at community centers or libraries convenient to the subjects. During the first follow-up interview phase, however, the researcher immediately experienced difficulty in contacting the subjects and managing to have telephone conversations; it became clear that in-person interviews were unrealistic. It quickly became evident that even the most cooperative subject was too busy with his

work search, work, parole requirements, and other miscellaneous personal obligations to meet in person for an interview. It was apparent that requests to meet in person were burdensome for most of the subjects, as well as logistically cumbersome. After conducting several follow-up interviews on the telephone successfully, the researcher adopted the phone interview method for the remainder of the follow-up interviews.

Each of the follow-up interviews lasted between one-half hour and one and one-half hours. Structured similarly to the initial interviews, the interview questions were both closed-ended and open-ended. The follow-up interviews included questions regarding the subjects' current employment, job seeking experiences, income, family status, peer associations, resources, difficulties in seeking and maintaining employment, successes in seeking and maintaining employment, application of the work program skills, parole success, and perspectives regarding the work experience (social relationships, conflicts, workplace structure, positions and tasks, the meaning of the work, obstacles, etc.) (see Appendix D).

The researcher found it difficult to keep some of the subjects interested in the interview for long periods of time. She adapted the interview guide to ask the most important part of the follow-up interview questions first, including if they were working, in what type of work, for how long, their terms and conditions, whether they liked the job, what types of obstacles they had encountered, and what types of positive things they had experienced since their release. After these questions were answered she would return to the interview guide to include the other interview questions. Some subjects were more cooperative and pleased to tell their stories than others.

One or both follow-up interviews were conducted with 28 (57 percent) of the 49 subjects. Family members provided information for some (5) of the other subjects, and additional other follow-up information was obtained from public records for several (4) other subjects. At the conclusion of the data collection, public records revealed that 10 subjects had been reincarcerated within six months of their release. In total, some follow-up information was obtained for 37 (76 percent) of the subjects.

ANALYSIS

Several qualitative analysis techniques were utilized. These included both deductive and inductive methods. First, Nvivo qualitative software was used to record demographic information and criminal history. Subjects' responses were then coded, corresponding to each interview question. This revealed variation and unexpected responses in some of these categories.

Next, these responses and codes were comparatively analyzed. Themes began to emerge, for example "accomplishment," "pride" and "helping people" emerged in the intrinsic rewards from work category. The most prevalent responses were noted. The most prevalent emerging themes were then compared with other variables, such as commitment, etc.

After using the Nvivo tools to explore all of the data and look at diverse combinations of emerging themes and variables, many combinations of themes and outcomes were identified. For example, the subjects' reasons for choosing particular in-prison work programs varied, including such themes as the location of the work ("outside" or "inside"), wages, and "wanted to learn a new trade." Some of these

different reasons corresponded to different work programs. From this analytic process, associations between themes and outcome variables emerged. This process was repeated multiple times, resulting in a continual recoding as more emerging themes were identified.

Next, hard copies of the data were used to search for the context and meaning of these emerging themes. During each iteration of the analysis, sets of documents were examined for possible related issues or events. This analytical process revealed themes, contexts, meaning, and patterns. Eventually models were generated to show the interactions among the original variables derived from theory and the emerging themes derived from more inductive qualitative analysis.

Another qualitative methodology that was utilized during analysis is the unique case study method (Patton 2002). Two groups of subjects with seemingly polar opposite outcomes were identified – those subjects who were employed and had not been reincarcerated versus those subjects who had been reincarcerated. These two groups (“Best Outcomes Group” and “Worst Outcomes Group”) were then compared so as to reveal patterns between these outcomes and other variables

SUBJECTS

The study subjects’ demographic characteristics were compared to the Wespen inmates, all State inmates, and state and federal inmates nationwide. Were the study subjects representative of these other populations? In many ways they are similar to one or more of these inmate groups; however, there are also significant differences. The most salient differences concern race and ethnicity (compared to the national inmate

population), and crime for which they were sentenced (compared to both the State inmate population and the national inmate population).

The 49 offender subjects' demographic characteristics were similar to the State's averages. However, there were significant differences compared to the national averages on two points. The offender subjects' average age is 39 years old and the average age of all Wespen inmates is 40 years old (Wespen 2008). This average is several years older than the 2004 national average of all state and federal inmates, 34 years old (Western 2008).

Similarly, the study subjects' race/ethnicity distributions are similar to the State's inmates in all facilities, but quite different than the national average; and surprisingly different from Wespen's overall distribution. The study subjects are 61 percent Hispanic, 16 percent White-non-Hispanic, 14 percent American Indian, and 8 percent African American (Wespen 2008). These figures are close to the State's prison averages, 60 percent, 23 percent, 8 percent, and 9 percent, respectively (DOC 2008); however, in this study's sample, the White-non-Hispanics are underrepresented and American Indians are overrepresented. Surprisingly, Wespen's population is only 48 percent Hispanic, which is much less than the proportion of Hispanic subjects in this study (61 percent), as well as less than the proportion of Hispanics in the overall state prison population (60 percent) (Wespen 2008). Worth noting however, because of the small study sample, the difference is only three persons from between these two groups. The state in which Wespen is located has a much different race/ethnicity distribution compared to the national portrait. The 2009 national averages of state and federal prison demographic

distributions are 21 percent Hispanic, 33.2 percent White-non-Hispanic, 6.82 percent American Indian, and 39 percent African American (West et al. 2010).

The study subjects' educational levels were similar to the State's correctional averages. Almost half of the study subjects had a high school diploma or a GED (47 percent). Slightly more than a third (37 percent) had less than a high school education. Similarly, almost half (49 percent) of the state's prison inmates have obtained a high school diploma or a GED. The educational level of state and federal inmates nationally is 10.4 years (Western 2008). The study subjects' educational levels appear comparable to both the State's and to the national state and federal inmates'.

The study subjects' average length of incarceration (23.3 months) is close to the 2008 national average (23.5 months) (Western 2008). However, the State's prisoners' 2007 average time served was only 18.5 months (DOC 2007).

The convictions related to the current incarceration vary significantly between the study subjects and the national distribution. The study subjects were incarcerated almost equally for violent crime (31 percent), other crime (including DUI, 29 percent), drug crime (27 percent), and property crime (14 percent). The 2008 national statistics show that of the state and federal prisoners nationally, 52.4 percent are incarcerated for violent crime, 18.4 percent for property crime, 18.4 percent for drug crime, 9.2 percent for public order crime (including DUI), and 1.3 percent for other crime (Western 2008). The State corrections figures do not match the national figures, but they descend in the same order: violent, property, drugs, and other (DOC 2007). The Wespen study subjects are overrepresented in drug crime and DUI, and underrepresented in violent crime. This

difference in crime distribution may be partly because sex offenders, excluded from the study, are classified in the violent crime category.

Due to these demographic differences between the study subjects and the State's inmates in general, as well as differences between the study subjects and inmates across the U.S., the study findings are not generalizable to inmates overall. The use of non-probability sampling also limits generalizability. However, the findings do allow for generating testable hypotheses, as well as more qualitative analysis of variables. The aim of this study was to comparatively analyze both the subjective and the objective data so as to reach meaningful conclusions and provide models through which to understand the operative mechanisms between work and criminality.

Notes: Chapter Three

¹ The reincarceration rate of inmates is, on average, between 50 percent and 67 percent within three years of release from prison (Petersilia 2000; Uggen 2000; Wallerstein 2005).

² Wespen is a pseudonym used to better protect the anonymity of the study subjects, as well as the anonymity of the prison.

³ This administrator referred the researcher to the site's warden, who arranged for two other administrators to assist the researcher, arranging locations to interview the prisoners and a method for her to have the potential subjects called to the interview location. Although the interview room sometimes changed, the researcher was provided a private interview area to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews. The administrators took care to ensure the researcher's safety, providing instructions on what to do in the case of a threatening situation. During the in-prison interviews with the inmates, the researcher did not ever feel threatened.

⁴ The lists also showed, however, that the operations work group also included two other types of workers, barbers and clerks; there were two inmates who were barbers and seven inmates who were clerks, who were scheduled for release prior to the completion of the initial interviews. Because these two types of jobs seemed unique, relative to the other categories – forestry, furniture manufacturing, furniture delivery, irrigation/feedlot, highway litter crew, kitchen, janitorial, and maintenance – and, therefore, may have had unique work experiences they were included in the potential subjects pool.

⁵ Personal information was only collected after an inmate consented to participate. If an inmate declined, he was returned to his prior activity. Only five potential study subjects declined to participate.

⁶ It was not possible to use purposeful sampling for variation across race, ethnicity, age, education, crime history, etc, due to the logistical issues within the enrollment period, and the scheduled follow-up interview periods. However, the subject demographics and the extent to which this sample is representative of the overall Wespen population are described in a following section.

Chapter Four: Pre-prison Work Experiences

Much classical criminological theory, such as social learning/differential association, social control, conflict, differential opportunity, and strain theories, (Marx [1844] 1988; Toby 1957; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Bonger 1969; Hirschi 1969; Shaw and McKay 1969, Sutherland, et al. 1970), as well as more recent criminology research (Agnew 1992; Sampson and Laub 1993; Wilson 1996; Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997; Uggen 2000; Agnew 2001; Bossler 2004; Uggen et al. 2005; Visser and Kachnowski 2007), has asserted or implied that work, as well as social interactions with conformist others in the workplace, encourages conformity or demonstrates conformity, and, thus, is negatively correlated with criminal activity. Pager wrote, "Finding steady, quality employment is one of the strongest predictors of desistance from crime ..." (2007:160). Uggen added, "it is not 'employment *per se*,' or 'employment by itself' (Laub and Sampson 1993:304) that reduces crime, but rather the stability and commitment associated with work" (2000:531) that is most salient. These works suggest that at least some kinds of employment are associated with conventional activity that diverts an individual from criminal activity, or that employment provides resources such that an individual does not resort to criminal behavior.

Additionally, human capital theory adds another dimension to the offender's work experiences. Human capital theory asserts that employment outcomes, wages, benefits, etc., are products of an individual's investment in obtaining education, skills, etc., which culminate in marketable assets (Smith [1789] 1976; Becker 1964). However, further analysis has revealed that factors outside of the worker's control affect his accumulation

of human capital and the usefulness of his human capital. Analyses of late twentieth-century changes in the marketplace suggest that industrial forces have reshaped the labor market, shortening career ladders and imposing more rigid divisions in worker stratification. More specifically, greater amounts of human capital (or credentials) are required to gain access to the primary sector (or expert sector) (Burriss 1993); mobility between the secondary sector and primary sector has been reduced (Burriss 1993); and the nature of the employee – employer relationship has become more transient (Smith 2001).

Criminologists have found that these labor market changes have had the most negative impact on the most disadvantaged populations, especially offenders (Crutchfield 1995; Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). An individual's resources for accruing human capital are mediated through the family and other forms of social capital. For the offender, these resources are significantly less than those afforded the middle class, and thus offenders are less likely to accrue sufficient levels of human capital (Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Due to their low human capital, offenders have been primarily relegated to the secondary labor market (Crutchfield 1995). Given the division into nonexpert and expert sectors (Burriss 1993), the offender's obstacles in accessing the expert sector, and limited mobility between the secondary and primary labor sectors, the offender is typically limited to "secondary sector occupations, [which] are less likely to bond young adults to the workplace" (Crutchfield 1995:194-195).

Moreover, research has indicated that the human capital which the offender is able to accrue is undervalued compared to the valuation of middle class persons' human capital (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Darity and Mason 1998; Pager 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2009). The underlying mechanisms to this devaluation are stigma based on

felon status, and discrimination based on race/ethnicity. Thus, the offender is disadvantaged within the labor market in several ways: limited resources to accrue human capital; limited entrance points into the labor market; reduced opportunity for mobility across the labor sectors; and, reduced recognition of his human capital due to stigma and discrimination.

In light of the literature, it would follow that stable and sufficient employment would have deterred the past criminal behavior of the subjects within this study. However, structural limitations to offenders' employment opportunities must also be considered. This chapter investigates the nature of these subjects' work histories. In what type of work were the subjects engaged? Did their work histories include stable, sufficient, and quality employment, or otherwise? What factors undermined work experiences for them? Were the subjects committed to their work? What factors affected the subjects' commitment to their work?

In this study *commitment to work* was operationalized as a multi-dimensional variable.¹ Commitment was measured according to the form of job loss (voluntary or involuntary) from the position, and if involuntary, whether the subject would have preferred to have stayed in the position for a significantly longer period of time. From this information the subject was classified as having been committed or not-committed to that position. Whether the subjects were committed to their jobs, and to what types of jobs, is important because it would be expected that the subjects would have been committed to quality work, including sufficient work, and stable work, which have been found to reduce crime (Laub and Sampson 1993; Uggen 2000; Pager 2007).²

The initial subject interview contained questions regarding the two previous jobs before Wespen, including time in the positions, wages, benefits, social interactions, and the subjects' opinions of the work, etc. (see Appendix C). These data were used to accomplish two general tasks: first, to understand the nature of the subjects' prior work experiences, including the type of work, the subjects' perspectives of the work, interference with work, and the subjects' commitment to work; second, to discern any potential differences in their work experiences after their release from Wespen (see Chapter Seven).

POSITIONS HELD AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT ARREST

In this study, all of the subjects reported some type of work prior to this incarceration. Twenty-eight (57 percent) of the subjects reported that they were employed at the time of the arrest which led to this incarceration. The subjects' rate of employment at arrest fell between those rates found by other researchers (Freudenberg, et al. 2007; Useem and Piehl 2008).

Both the subjects who were employed and those who were unemployed at the time of arrest reported work information regarding their past two jobs held prior to this incarceration. The subjects provided job information regarding a total of 94 positions in a variety of industries, including, but not limited to, construction, civil service, fast-food, home healthcare, manufacturing, restaurant, and retail. Most of these positions (70 percent) were labor oriented,³ consisting of those jobs that require a great deal of physical exertion, strength, or endurance. Examples of labor oriented work include oil rig worker, janitor, maintenance, etc.

Differences in the skill levels of different jobs became apparent during the analyses. Approximately half of the jobs were unskilled positions.⁴ Unskilled work was defined as that which an individual could perform with no outside training and very little on-the-job training. Some examples of unskilled jobs are entry-level oil rig roughneck, hauler, janitor, simple maintenance, vehicle detailer, entry-level construction/flooring/roofing/masonry, carpet cleaner, cashier, and fast food cook.

About half of the jobs were skilled positions. For purposes of this study, work which an individual could perform only with outside training or extensive on the job training was considered skilled work. Examples of skilled positions are heavy equipment operator, carpenter, framer, vehicle body worker, welder, residential caregiver, security supervisor, computer tutor, and potter/artist.⁵

The data show that similar to most criminological depictions of offenders, about half of all the jobs that the subjects had held were unskilled, and the majority of all the jobs held were labor oriented (70 percent). Also supporting recent research which has found that that employment alone is not an adequate deterrent to crime (Uggen 2000), in this study the subjects were almost equally unemployed and employed at the time of arrest. The subjects' equal employed and unemployed status supports Pager's (2007), Laub and Sampson's (1993), and Uggen's (2000) conclusions that employment alone does not predict desistance from crime.

PREVIOUS WORK, JOB LOSS, AND COMMITMENT

The following analyses explore the 49 subjects' types of pre-Wespen jobs,⁶ reasons for their separations from employment, and commitment to their jobs. Eighteen

subjects reported only unskilled work; eighteen other subjects reported only skilled work. The other subjects (13) reported that they had worked in both unskilled and skilled jobs.

The subjects were more likely to be committed to the skilled positions (62 percent) than they were to the unskilled positions (38 percent). Not surprisingly, the skilled subjects were also more likely to have been employed in their positions for longer than one year (57 percent), compared to the unskilled subjects (38 percent). This relationship between commitment and time employed corresponds to Uggen's (2000) finding that commitment and stability are linked. The analyses below will demonstrate differences between unskilled and skilled work so as to show the mechanisms underlying the commitment and stability of employment, or lack thereof. The analyses will also show factors that undermine the protective effect of commitment and stability.

REASONS FOR JOB LOSS

The unskilled subjects who had been involuntarily separated from their positions due to terminations, arrests, and layoffs reported that they had been committed to most of those positions (79 percent). Other than resignation, the unskilled subjects cited three general reasons for losing their jobs: being fired for a substance abuse related problems (including arrest), arrest for non-substance related crimes, and layoff. Similar to the unskilled subjects, the skilled subjects were also committed to most (89 percent) of the positions from which they had been involuntarily separated. Their most frequent reasons for involuntary separation were the same as those of the unskilled workers.

The unskilled subjects had resigned from about half (51 percent) of their positions, thereby, indicating that they were not committed to those positions. The

reasons for resignation were frequently due to substance abuse, such as not being able to work because they were impaired, dissatisfaction with wages and conditions of work, and resignation due to family logistics and relationships. The unskilled positions were not quality positions; thus, in most cases, it appears that the positions did not generate commitment or deter the subjects from becoming intoxicated/impaired to the point that it interfered with their ability to report to work.

An example of this dynamic between poor work quality and substance abuse is the case of Chris; Chris, a Hispanic, 38-year-old, stated that his construction laborer job “[did] not interest me,” and that he lost his job because he did drugs and absconded from his probation. Another subject, Jeff, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, also indicated a connection between aspects of his job and substance related issues. Jeff said that he did not like the work schedule of his fast food cook job which paid \$9.00 per hour. He stated that he earned more money selling drugs than he did as a cook. He also said that he found it difficult to stay motivated when working in poor paying jobs, stating that he would ask himself, “why even get out bed?” Jeff was incarcerated for selling methamphetamine and cocaine. These subjects demonstrated links between poor quality work and substance abuse, as well as poor quality work and selling drugs.

The skilled workers voluntarily resigned from fewer, 17 (38 percent), of their positions. The skilled workers cited similar reasons and circumstances for their resignations. However, the frequencies of these reasons were different for the skilled workers. Compared to the unskilled workers, the skilled workers were much less likely to have resigned due to substance abuse, and slightly more likely to have resigned to take another job. The largest of these differences was resignation due to substance abuse; 40

percent (10) of the unskilled workers, but only 18 percent (3) of the skilled workers who had resigned did so due to substance abuse related issues. It appeared that the skilled subjects had jobs which they valued; therefore, they were less likely to allow substance abuse to interfere with their ability to report to work or take priority over their work. Additionally, the subjects' higher skill levels appeared to have enabled them to seek alternative employment more often than the unskilled workers.

Substance Abuse

It is widely understood that offenders typically have substance abuse problems. Much research has explored the role of substance abuse as it pertains to the commission of crime (see Parker and Auerhahn 1998; Uggen and Thompson 2003), and its effect on reentry to the community after imprisonment. In her discussion of parolee characteristics, Petersilia (1999) noted that the "California Parole and Community Services Division reported that 85 percent of parolees were chronic substance abusers" (p. 499). Less research has directly examined the effect of substance abuse upon offenders' work experiences. However, labor studies, as well as the behavioral health field, have specifically addressed the role of substance abuse and employment. For instance, DeSimone (2002) evaluated the impact of marijuana and cocaine upon employment, and found that "the use of each drug substantially reduces the likelihood of employment" (p. 952). Accordingly, it would be expected that the subjects' substance abuse would have affected their employment, and vice versa.

We found that subjects lost their jobs, either through resigning or being fired, from approximately one-third (11) of all the unskilled positions due to substance abuse.

Only one skilled subject, however, had quit working because substance abuse interfered with his work duties. These job losses occurred when the subjects were unable to go to work because they were intoxicated, were intoxicated at the workplace, or tested positive for drug use. As mentioned earlier, it appeared that, particularly for the unskilled workers, substance abuse was more likely to take priority over work.

Other subjects lost their jobs due to substance abuse when they were arrested for a substance- abuse- related crime, i.e., drug sales or DUI. One-third (10) of the unskilled workers, had lost jobs for these reasons. One-half (16) of the skilled workers had lost 18 jobs for these reasons, mostly due to DUI. Most of the subjects arrested for DUI, but not all, were skilled workers. However, most of both the unskilled workers and the skilled workers who were arrested for DUI, 10 (83 percent), also worked in physically demanding jobs, and these subjects' work experiences differed significantly from other workers. A later section of this chapter explores how their work environment may have contributed to these subjects' alcohol abuse and related arrests.

Approximately half of the subjects who lost their job due to any substance abuse⁷ related issues (voluntary or involuntary, including arrests, and associated non-substance abuse crime) indicated that they were not committed to those positions. These subjects cited negative aspects of the work, such as the job did not pay well, the work was "hard," and the work "did not interest me." Unfortunately, many of the subjects who were committed to their positions also lost those jobs due to substance abuse. The following analyses illuminate the interactions of substance abuse, skill level, employment instability, commitment, and crime

Too High to Work

About one-third (10) of the subjects who worked in unskilled positions (31) reported that they had resigned from a job, had been fired from a job, or had experienced significant problems at work due to substance abuse. These subjects reported that their substance abuse prohibited them from working, caused stress at work, or was a violation of the workplace policies in 11 different jobs.

Four of the subjects resigned, indicating that they were not committed to these positions, when they failed to report to work because they were intoxicated from alcohol or drugs, or had a hangover. All of these subjects attributed the origin of their legal problems to substance abuse, such as “[I began] drinking when I was 18,” “alcohol,” and “alcohol and anger.” They cited similar patterns to explain their resignations: “I got strung out on crack [and] didn’t show up one day” (plasterer, Hispanic, 42-year-old); “I was hung over one day and decided to quit” (switchboard operator, Hispanic, 54-year-old); and, “[I] went on a drinking binge” and never returned to work (vehicle detailer, White-non-Hispanic 34-year-old).

One of these subjects illustrated the interaction of addiction, the favorable and unfavorable aspects of the job, and the resignation result. Brad, a White-non-Hispanic, 28-year-old, “felt uncomfortable” as a teenager and wanted to associate with others who would accept him. He stated, “I started smoking weed and cigarettes.” His last job was as a roughneck on an oil rig. He liked the pay, \$21.50 per hour, but did not like that it was a dirty, greasy, hard job and that the weather also made the job unpleasant. After working there seven months, one day “I had been high and was too tired to go to work. I spent five months running scams and getting high before [I was] busted.”

Substance abuse had also interfered with another of Brad's jobs. He described his carpet cleaning job as "nasty." He reported that after eight months, he quit because he started "getting high" more often. Brad stated that the things that most interfered with work in general were "if it is boring, too hard, [or] hard to keep focused." Although he did not say so explicitly, it seems likely that his substance abuse may have impeded his focus, and that the boredom, difficulty and "nastiness" of the job may have caused him to want to get high more often.

Four of the subjects working in unskilled positions were fired by their employers due to substance abuse. One of these subjects was not committed to his position. Manuel, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, had difficulty reporting to work due to his substance abuse. He reported that he began using marijuana as a teenager, and that his drug use escalated. Manuel attributed his criminal difficulties to "drugs, addiction, cocaine." Although he had not planned on staying in his flooring installer position for a long period of time, he stated that there was "nothing really" that he did not like, that the coworkers were "all right," and that his boss was "all right." He did like that he did not work on the weekends. Manuel had worked there for seven months when he was fired. He explained, "I didn't show up a few times because I didn't sleep all night on drugs. They let me go. I was really pissed off at myself."

Three of the subjects, however, had been committed to their jobs when they were fired for substance abuse. These subjects explained that they had been fired from their positions for a variety of specific reasons: "[I was] fired for drinking" (aluminum recycler, American Indian, 41-year-old, who was cognitively impaired); "stealing ... I got into meth[amphetamine]. I started stealing [from work] to support my habit" (retail

sales-clerk, White-non-Hispanic, 30-year-old); and, “[I] failed a drug test from meth” (oil rig roughneck, Hispanic, 43-year-old). In these cases, substance abuse undermined work that otherwise was favorable to the subjects, and had the potential to offer stability.

Only one skilled subject reported that substance abuse directly kept him from working. Bill, a White-non-Hispanic, 49-year-old, had only completed the 10th grade. He had become addicted to methamphetamine as a young adult. He attributed his criminal behavior to his drug abuse, explaining that he first had legal trouble when he was 32 years old, and had committed aggravated assault while under the influence of drugs. He had quit using drugs after his first conviction, and became a successful self-employed welder. He liked working for himself, “setting [my] own hours,” the “gratification of the work I do,” the “nice lifestyle,” and the “variety.” However, Bill also acknowledged stressors associated with self-employment and the trade, such as “no insurance [and] getting hurt.”

One year prior to his last arrest, Bill began using methamphetamine again. He stopped working, and began selling his personal property to pay the bills. He was disappointed with himself: “I couldn’t look at myself, separated from my wife, [and] within a year I was in here.” Bill was incarcerated for assault on a girlfriend. While he was incarcerated, his estranged wife passed away from an illness. Bill was devastated, stating “I have nobody at this point.” In Bill’s case, his drug abuse destroyed his career and his personal life.

Bill was an anomaly, in that he was skilled and had stable, well paying, autonomous, self-employment before he began his substance abuse again. The majority of the unskilled workers reported less desirable conditions. Several stated that their only

opportunities for advancement were through modest pay raises. And, one of the subjects, a plasterer, said he would never have been able to advance further because he was “already at the top,” earning \$15.00 per hour. The majority of these subjects who experienced employment complications from substance abuse seem to have lacked the opportunity to move up, and/or expressed unpleasant aspects of their jobs. The data show that all but one of the subjects who reported that their substance abuse directly interfered with their work attendance had worked in unskilled jobs. For these subjects, their unskilled, poor quality jobs would not have provided much incentive to avoid substance abuse, and, in fact, in some cases may have led to substance abuse to compensate for dissatisfaction with work.

Substance Abuse Crimes

Unskilled Workers

The unskilled subjects who had been incarcerated at Wespen for drug related crimes (7) shared several circumstances. All but one had lost a job because of the arrest. All worked in service sector jobs; and all but one subject were not committed to those jobs. Also, all of the subjects earned fairly low wages, less than \$10.00 per hour. Only two of these subjects stated that their wages covered their living expenses. Additionally, although most (6) of the subjects had worked in positions where there was opportunity for advancement, they indicated that either advancement was limited or that they were not interested in advancing in that field of work. Similar to the subjects who separated from their jobs because they were too high to work, these subjects did not hold jobs that

would provide much incentive to avoid criminal activity which could jeopardize their employment.

Five of these subjects indicated that they sold drugs to “supplement” their insufficient earnings. One of these subjects, Bryan, a 25-year-old, Hispanic man, last worked as a fast food cook. He stated that his coworkers and boss “accepted me right away; everyone [was] equal; the boss even had get-togethers, picnics, for employees.” He also said proudly, “I was close to becoming management.” However, Bryan was not committed to the job, stating that he would have left if “something else came up.” Earning only \$7.00 per hour, the job did not cover his living expenses but “was a cover for [income from] dealing [drugs].” Bryan lost his job after one year when he was arrested for trafficking drugs.

Another of these subjects, Manuel, a 28-year-old Hispanic man, had been employed as an automotive detailer for two months when he was arrested for selling crack cocaine and for burglary. Manuel had taken the detailer job after he had lost his previous job due to substance abuse. He reported that he liked the detailing job because he “got to drive some new cars.” However, he stated that the job “only paid \$200.00 per week,” and that he “got extra money selling drugs.” Sounding unconvinced, Manuel said that there was “maybe” some opportunity for job advancement. If he had not been arrested while employed there, he said, “I’d probably be doing something else by now. I wasn’t making enough money there. Or, I’d be selling drugs.”

In contrast to the subjects who “supplemented” their insufficient wages, two of the subjects indicated that they may have perceived the illegal earnings as less necessary, extra money. One of these subjects is Jeff, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, who had been

employed as a fast food cook for one year. He reported that his \$9.00 per hour wage covered his living expenses. He liked his coworkers and boss, but that his work schedule was unpleasant. Jeff stated that he began selling methamphetamine and cocaine because “I had a car that was giving me problems and thought I could fix up the car; then it was a wardrobe; then it was getting a grill.” Jeff indicated that in hindsight he realized that the initial plan to purchase things which seemed moderate and finite changed to include unnecessary and unending purchases. He explained that he grew his drug business and “[a]t the end I started to miss work because I was making more selling drugs.”

The three unskilled subjects who were arrested for DUI⁸ were similar in some ways, and in other ways dissimilar to those who had been arrested for drug crimes. Similar to the drug sales subjects, two of the three DUI subjects also worked in low paying jobs, making less than \$10.00 per hour. Only two of these jobs had the potential for advancement, i.e., supervisor positions. As was typical of the drug sales subjects, one of the DUI subjects who had the opportunity to advance did not want the supervisor position. Dissimilarly, none of these subjects worked in traditional service sector jobs⁹ and all of the DUI subjects had been committed to their jobs when they were arrested. Two of the subjects especially liked at least one aspect of their jobs, i.e., the wages (oil field laborer), or the task (a stucco mason). The other of these three subjects appeared to be committed simply because he knew his job well, having been in the industry for many years (tire technician).

Although the DUI subjects’ unskilled jobs were not ideal, quality work, the job losses were significantly unfortunate, relative to the subjects’ work histories. The only one of these subjects who earned more than \$10.00 per hour was Aaron, a 46-year-old,

American Indian. Prior to his most recent job, Aaron had worked laying track for the railroad earning only \$9.50 per hour. When Aaron was hired as a laborer at an oil field, it was a step forward at \$18.50 per hour. Aaron stated that he had good relationships with his boss and coworkers at the oil field, and that he liked the money that he was earning. He lost the highest paying job he had ever held when he was arrested for his fourth DUI.

Another subject had lost both of his last two unskilled positions due to DUI arrests. Herman, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, had worked as a tire technician in both of the positions for two different companies. He had worked at the first position for 18 years when he lost his job. Herman stated that he had liked “everything” about the job and that the boss treated him very well, stating “[I was] practically part of the family. Additionally, his pay, \$9.50 per hour, was adequate to cover his living expenses in the small town where he lived. He stated that he had once been offered a supervisor position, “but I didn’t want the responsibility yet.” Herman had been arrested two different times for DUI while working for the company. The first time he was arrested, his boss kept Herman’s position open for him to return. Herman explained, with disappointment in his voice, that following the second arrest his boss did not allow him to return to his job.

Herman subsequently worked at a second tire technician job for two years. He had worked side jobs because he could not live on his technician pay, \$7.00 per hour. He stated that, similar to the other position, he liked working for his employer. The business was smaller, however, and therefore, there was not much opportunity for advancement. Due to his DUI while employed in his previous tire technician job, he had experienced downward mobility to this position where he had a lesser wage, and less opportunity for advancement. However, with few opportunities, Herman had no intention to seek other

employment. Herman lost this job as well when he was arrested again for DUI resulting in this incarceration

Skilled Workers

There were distinct differences between the unskilled and skilled workers who were arrested for drug crimes. Equal numbers (7) of the unskilled workers and the skilled workers lost their jobs due to drug related arrests. However, the rate of job commitment was greater for these skilled subjects (57 percent), than for the unskilled subjects (14 percent). There were two other apparent differences between these two groups of subjects. First, none of these skilled subjects had worked in service sector jobs when they were arrested for drug crimes, whereas all of the unskilled subjects had. The service sector workers were the least committed of all subjects. Second, the committed skilled subjects all earned at least \$12.50 per hour, more than the unskilled service sector subjects did at less than \$10.00 per hour. The service sector jobs were the lowest paying positions.

There were also differences and similarities between the unskilled and skilled subjects who were arrested for DUI. Compared to the unskilled subjects (3), many more skilled subjects (9) lost their jobs due to DUI arrests. Similar to the unskilled DUI subjects, most (7) of the skilled DUI subjects worked in labor intensive jobs. These labor intensive jobs, particularly the building trades, appear associated with alcohol abuse. Therefore, because a larger proportion of the skilled subjects worked in the building trades, it makes sense that these skilled subjects were more often arrested for DUI, compared to the unskilled subjects. Of two possible reasons for this link - either subjects

who choose to work in labor jobs are more likely to have alcohol abuse problems, or that labor jobs foster alcohol abuse - both may be related to the DUI prevalence within this industry. These two conditions are explored in the next section concerning unstable work.

In some ways, the dynamics of the unskilled subjects' and skilled subjects' substance abuse related crimes were similar. Like the unskilled subjects, five of the skilled subjects indicated that low wages or no wages were the reasons for their drug sales. One of these subjects, William, an African American, 34-year-old, first had legal trouble when he was arrested for robbery at age 17, but was incarcerated as an adult. He attributed his legal problems to "who I hung out with." Years later, William had worked as a residential caregiver for over one year when a health department background check revealed his robbery conviction, and he was terminated. The loss of his employment was disappointing because he had been committed to the job, stating that he liked "helping people." After he lost his job, William was "broke," and found it "hard to get a job." He explained, "I thought I was doing right by selling drugs ... supporting my family ... it backfired."

Another subject who worked in a similar job to William's also found himself in a precarious financial situation. Randall, an African American, 28-year-old, first had legal trouble when he was 16 years old and arrested for auto theft. Randall worked at a residential behavioral health facility as a caregiver. He liked some aspects of his job, stating "I got to learn about different clients' disorders." However, he was not committed to the position, which although provided opportunity for advancement, was "nothing that I prefer."

He explained his lack of enthusiasm for the job, stating that management “showed favoritism, [and] they weren’t straight up with you.” Randall described the day that he resigned. He said, “I got into an argument with the boss one day. We exchanged words. I told him, ‘I don’t know why we talking. I’ll just kick your ass.’” Randall reported that although a physical altercation never transpired, he promptly quit. Unemployed and in need of money, he began selling drugs. He was arrested, bailed out of jail, and then fled to another state where he was arrested, lost another job, was extradited, and eventually was incarcerated at Wespen.

Also, comparable to the unskilled subjects who committed drug related crimes, two of the skilled subjects had sold drugs for extra money, rather than based on need. One of these subjects is Clarence, a 50-year-old, American Indian. Clarence first had legal problems when he was 13 years old and arrested for public intoxication. As an adult he had been incarcerated for DUI and vehicular homicide. Prior to his incarceration, Clarence had been self employed as a successful potter/artist. He enjoyed his work, stating that he liked “being able to express myself,” and “being able to accomplish something that you’ve set out to do.” Clarence also was pleased that he earned a good living with his pottery, recently making \$110,000 per year. However, it appeared that his entrepreneurial nature and greed led him to sell cocaine.

Most of the skilled DUI subjects, like the unskilled subjects, were committed to the jobs which they held when they were arrested. Six of these subjects worked in construction or building trades. Their stories were very similar. One of these subjects, Julian, a Hispanic, 41-year-old, high school drop out, first had legal trouble when he was arrested for DUI at age 21. He stated that his DUI problem was associated with

“partying,” and “holidays.” Julian had been in carpentry since he was 16 years old. He was earning \$13.80 per hour at his last carpenter position remodeling homes, which covered his living expenses. He also liked the work itself. Julian stated, “I like seeing things come down and then go up again.” After three years of employment, Julian lost the job when he was arrested and incarcerated for his fourth DUI.

One of the skilled DUI subjects who had not worked in the building trades is Fred, a 61-year-old, African American. The neighborhood in which he was raised was “rough.” He stated, “If you weren’t strong, you wouldn’t survive.” Fred left home when he was 13 years old to “play guitar in bars.” Although over the years he played guitar with some well-known blues musicians, he went to culinary school when he was in his 30’s to provide a better living for his family. However, several years later he became addicted to crack cocaine, and remained “hooked” for 10 years. Alcoholism then became his central problem, causing his first trouble with the law when he was 55 years old and was arrested for aggravated assault. Fred managed to change his lifestyle, however, and found a job as head cook and kitchen manager at a restaurant. He was earning \$12.50 per hour, which was adequate including his wife’s income, stating “we were good.” Fred was committed to the job, which he said gave him “responsibility” and allowed him to be “creative.” After working in his job for five years, he was arrested for DUI three times within four months, and incarcerated. Fred, who had overcome many obstacles, had finally found stability and job satisfaction in his kitchen manager position. However, alcoholism cost him his favored job and his freedom.

The data suggest that most of the subjects (71 percent) who were arrested for selling drugs did so in response to perceived monetary needs. Almost all of the unskilled

subjects were not committed to their positions, positions which did not have many positive qualities. More of the skilled subjects who were arrested for selling drugs, however, were committed to their jobs, although this commitment was not sufficient to protect them from job loss due to substance abuse.

One would expect that the committed subjects would have been less likely to have risked their jobs by selling drugs. However, most of these skilled subjects were under financial strain. One of those skilled subjects had become involuntarily unemployed prior to his drug sales, another had been in a well paying job for only three months, and another was a co-owner of an auto body shop where income was not consistent. The data suggest that two factors created the conditions for drug sales. For unskilled subjects, one factor was economic need, and the other was the subjects' lack of incentive to protect their employment. For most of these skilled subjects, although they had incentive to protect their employment and favorable jobs to which they were committed, economic need took priority, resulting in efforts to obtain money quickly: drug sales. These findings are congruent with Uggen and Thompson's (2003) results highlighting the many combinations of financial needs and social attachments with illegal drug sales. For a few other skilled subjects, their drug sales appeared to be out of greed, despite their commitment to their jobs. Noteworthy as well, DUIs also led to arrest and job loss, even for those committed to their work.

Except for the subjects who were in financial crises, why were these skilled workers, who were generally more committed, engaged in substance abuse crimes, and as we will explore later, other crimes? The DUI subjects' unique job experiences may help to understand why skilled, committed subjects would engage in substance abuse to the

extent that it resulted in arrest and job loss. The DUI subjects' employment differed from that of the drug sales subjects. All, except one, of the subjects were committed to their positions. The data also show that the DUI subjects were employed in more physically demanding positions. One-half of the subjects who had lost their jobs due to being too intoxicated to go to work had also worked in physically demanding or "nasty" jobs. This leads to the question of whether physically demanding work may be particularly linked to substance abuse.

Substance Abuse Work Environment

Unskilled Workers

It is clear that many of the subjects' jobs were characterized by substance abuse. About one-fourth (8) of the subjects who had worked in unskilled positions spoke of substance abuse in the workplace or among coworkers. Six of these subjects were also among those who had lost their job either due to their substance abuse directly or due to arrest related to drug sales or DUI. The other two subjects had been under the influence of substances when they committed the crime for which they were arrested. It seems that substance abuse in the workplace co-occurred with other substance abuse related employment problems as well as other crime.

Five of these subjects who reported substance abuse in the workplace had worked in physically demanding jobs. Solomon, a Hispanic, 43-year-old, who began drinking as a teenager, had worked on an oil rig. He explained that his boss was "lazy [and a] drunk" and, although his coworkers were "pretty decent," they did "a lot of drugs, [were] junkies, [and] alcoholics." Solomon, who had been fired following a drug test, had begun

using methamphetamines during the time he was employed on the oil rig. Committed to the job, he had stated that he would have stayed with the company had he not been fired.

Another of the subjects, Brad, a White-non-Hispanic, 28-year-old, was separated from his oil rig job when he failed to report to work because he was tired from being “high.” Brad reported that he did not like the job because the work was dirty and greasy. He stated, “It took a month to get used to [the] hard labor.” However, he did like his coworkers, stating that they were “hard workers,” and “partiers.” But he also indicated that it was a transient workforce. He said that his coworkers “would twist off for a few months and then come back.” This use of the phrase *to twist off* to represent resignation is unique to the oil industry where problems with drilling mechanisms occur due to a part twisting off and breaking. The fact that the resignations of workers from these jobs had achieved the frequency to warrant a unique phrase demonstrates the transient nature of the workers within this industry.

Three other subjects had also worked in other types of physically demanding jobs where their coworkers drank alcohol. Major, a Hispanic, 42-year-old, had worked as a plasterer for 12 years when he lost his job because he missed work due to his crack cocaine use. He was “close” to his coworkers who were his “drinking buddies.” Another of these subjects, Aaron, a 46-year-old, American Indian, had worked for the railroad laying track. He reported that “labor is hard work.” He stated that he had “good” relationships with his coworkers, and that when they were traveling for work his coworkers would “come to [his] bunk, [and] drink together.” He was committed to working for the railroad, where he had been employed 10 years when he was laid off.

In addition to the building trades, another substance abuse work environment that emerged is the bar and restaurant industry. Three unskilled subjects worked in this industry, and two of these subjects had been incarcerated for drug sales. One of these subjects is Charles, a Hispanic, 36-year-old, who was committed to his bouncer and maintenance position at a “strip club” where alcohol was served. As described previously, Charles had stated that he felt “comfortable” around his coworkers and customers. He had worked there five years before he was arrested for selling drugs. Working in an adult entertainment establishment would most likely have exposed Charles to not only alcohol, but also to significant opportunity to obtain and sell drugs.¹⁰

Another subject, Manuel, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, had also worked where alcohol was served, as a cook at a restaurant, where he “had a lot of buddies.” He said, “Work got rough at times, but it was a good place to be.” Despite the fact that the pace of the work was stressful at times, and that sometimes the waitresses “go off on you,” Manuel remembered the position as the best job that he ever had. He explained that he dealt with the stress through substance abuse. Manuel stated that he used “weed” to “make work tolerable.” Manuel eventually resigned to take another job that offered a better work schedule. Years later Manuel was incarcerated for drug sales and burglary.

Another subject who worked in the restaurant industry is Javier, a Hispanic, 31-year-old. He was committed to his fast paced job, a waiter, where it was “very easy to make money [and] easy for me to talk to people.” He stated that he and his boss were “drinking buddies.” Javier lost his job when he was arrested and incarcerated for domestic violence and aggravated battery. Javier stated that the anger associated with his crime was related to “emotional problems and alcoholism.” Javier, Manuel, and Charles

perceived these substance abuse work environments favorably, although these jobs ultimately undermined their lives by leading them to substance abuse.

Skilled Workers

Five skilled subjects had also worked in substance abuse work environments, four of whom worked in the building trades. Several (3) of these subjects, a welder, heavy equipment operator, and framer, had been incarcerated at Wespen for substance abuse crimes. These subjects described the nature of their substance abuse work environments: “I shoot pool with [my construction friends] and drink”; “Drinking is common at work”; and, “A lot of [my coworkers] were my friends. We did a lot of drugs.”

Another skilled subject who worked in the building trades, and in a substance abuse work environment, is Albert, a Hispanic, 35-year-old. Albert had been incarcerated three times prior to his incarceration at Wespen. While on parole for one of these incarcerations, he worked as a house painter earning \$13.50 per hour, which was adequate to cover his living expenses. However, his boss “did drugs,” and Albert “started doing drugs with him.” Concerned about his parole, Albert resigned to avoid the temptation.

The other of these subjects is Randall. As described earlier, Randall had been incarcerated for selling crack cocaine. After fleeing from drug charges, Randall had worked in maintenance at a retail chain’s distribution center. Although he had a warrant for selling drugs, he believed that his workplace, where his “coworkers were cool” and “partiers,” was “a good environment” where he could “be himself.”

Despite the negative impact of substance abuse upon work, most of these subjects, unskilled and skilled, seemed to have expressed a sense of camaraderie and comfort in doing drugs and drinking with their coworkers. This sense of comfort was conveyed by the subject who stated that he used “weed” to “make work tolerable,” by the bouncer who felt “comfortable” around his coworkers and customers, and the maintenance worker who felt that he could “be himself” in the “partier” environment.

It seems difficult to understand how substance abuse work environments could have been similarly favorable to very different types of workers under otherwise different working conditions – both unskilled and skilled workers, and non-committed and committed. Newcomb’s (1988) research on drugs in the workplace found that work conditions did not weigh substantially upon substance abuse within the workplace or outside of the workplace. Instead, he suggested that the few, but weak, correlations which he found between substance abuse and work conditions were likely more related to the impact of substance abuse and education level upon employment choices. He noted that choosing employment where substance abuse is common may be related to the subject’s preferences for that type of environment, or related to employment options for people without much human capital. For Newcomb, a “lifestyle of drug involvement” caused difficulties with employment, such as losing one’s job by “coming to work loaded or getting high on the job” (1988:94). The present study’s data on the substance abuse work environment largely supports Newcomb’s findings, in that most of these subjects who reported substance abuse work environments came to the workplace with substance abuse issues, lost their jobs due to substance abuse, and were incarcerated either directly or indirectly due to their substance abuse. However, it should be noted

than in some cases negative working conditions and the nature of the job itself appeared to encourage substance abuse in order to make “stressful” or “nasty” jobs “tolerable.” The following section reveals that work instability can also lead to substance abuse for some subjects.

Effects of Work Instability

Unskilled Workers

Given the subjects’ lack of human capital, most with a high school education or less and limited skills,¹¹ their employment opportunities are limited. Many of the subjects had held jobs in the building trades, which are susceptible to work-load fluctuations. These physically demanding jobs were also associated with risk of injury. Work-load fluctuations and injuries affected subjects working in five of the 31 unskilled positions.

Of four unskilled workers who were laid off, three had been committed to their jobs. One of these subjects had a job outside of the building trades. Adam, the only of these four subjects with more than a high school education, had worked as a clerk at a hardware store. He was committed to the job, reporting many favorable aspects, such as his boss was “more than fair,” and that he liked the customers and coworkers. Although he only earned \$6.00 per hour, he was proud of his work, stating “I worked every department they had except accounting.” After six years of employment, the business closed, and Adam was laid off. He said, in a nostalgic tone, “I worked until the very last day.” Adam next took a switchboard operator job which he characterized as “stressful” at times. He lost his switchboard job after five months of employment, as discussed

previously, when he was “hungover one day and decide to quit.” Within a year after that, he was incarcerated for his seventh DUI. Adam’s case demonstrated that layoff led to downward mobility, and was followed by more substance abuse which preceded crime.

One of the two subjects who had been laid off from building trades positions is Aaron, who had only completed the ninth grade. He had been committed to his work laying track for the railroad for 10 years when he was laid off. After the layoff, a downward spiral began, consisting of several jobs which he held for only one to three months each, the last of which he lost when he was arrested for DUI. He had only worked 50 percent of his adult life during which he was available to work; this was not including the time in which he was incarcerated. Aaron believed that his problems were related to his alcoholism. He indicated that he could not resist drinking when around friends who drank, stating that his DUI problems occurred when “friends visit, or I visit friends” who drink. His friends who drank included coworkers, as discussed in a previous section. Aaron had been arrested many times and incarcerated twice for DUI. In Aaron’s case, it appears that his employment instability was partly related to fluctuating work-load and partly due to his alcoholism.

Morris, a Hispanic, 48-year-old, demonstrated a reciprocal pattern between his substance abuse, work instability, and crime. Morris claimed that he had an alcohol abuse problem since he was 18 years old. He stated that the thing that interfered most with his work was his alcohol binges. He had worked for six months in landscaping when he resigned to work for a roofer where he could earn a higher wage. He worked for one year as a laborer for the roofing company when he was laid off. Following his layoff, Morris went on a drinking binge during which he committed a burglary, for which

he was incarcerated. For these three unskilled subjects, Adam, Aaron, and Morris, substance abuse had been a problem since they were young adults, 18 years old to 23 years old. However, it seems that their substance abuse, layoffs, and crimes, may have had a reciprocal relationship, with job instability promoting substance abuse and a downward spiral.

Another byproduct of unexpected job loss was the subject turning to illegal drug sales for income. Four of the unskilled subjects had sought illegal income following an unexpected job loss. One of these subjects, Abe, a 28-year-old, Hispanic, high school graduate, had been working for two months as a block layer when he hurt his hand at work. Losing his job due to injury, he resorted to selling drugs, for which he was eventually arrested. Although that arrest did not result in an incarceration, it did cost him a subsequent job.

After his drug arrest, Abe attempted to begin a new crime-free lifestyle in another state, obtaining an entry level position with a high-tech company. After three months, a background check revealed his drug arrest, and he was terminated. Abe then returned to his hometown, where he returned to his illegal activities. Soon thereafter he was arrested for homicide and incarcerated. In Abe's case, the unexpected job loss led to drug sales, violent crime, and eventual incarceration.

Skilled Workers

There were some similarities between the skilled subjects and the unskilled subjects who were laid off. All of the skilled workers (5) who were laid off were committed to their positions (6), most of which were in the building trades, an industry

which is unstable due to work-flow fluctuations. The common work-flow fluctuations in the industry likely evoke a sense of instability in the absence of layoffs. Workers demonstrated sensitivity to the fluctuations by articulating plans for layoffs, such as Major, who systematically worked two different jobs for several years, switching between the two when laid off from one or the other. Both sets of workers had histories of chronic substance abuse, likely exacerbated by work instability. The skilled subjects also experienced negative outcomes after layoff, such as increased substance abuse, and arrests related to substance abuse, illegal income, and other crime.

Two of the skilled subjects' jobs, however, were not in the building trades. One of these subjects is Darrell, an American Indian, 41-year-old, with a 10th grade education, who began having alcohol problems when he was 22 years old. Darrell experienced work instability although he was self-employed. Darrell had been as a carver/artist for 10 years. He had been earning an average of \$19.00 an hour until business declined. When he could only earn \$5.00 per hour, he closed his business, a self layoff, and decided to take a more stable job at an aluminum recycling plant. After three years of employment, Darrell had lost his recycling job for reporting to work drunk. He was later incarcerated for DUI. As did others who were laid off, Darrell appeared to have experienced a downward spiral in employment following his layoff that exacerbated his substance abuse and ended in incarceration.

The skilled subjects who were laid off did have one strikingly similar characteristic. They had accrued, and experienced the benefits from, more human capital than the unskilled workers. Although two of these subjects had only completed the 10th grade, the other three subjects had completed high school, and had vocational training.

These subjects had also held their jobs for longer periods of time, accruing more skills. The skilled subjects had held their jobs, on average, for much longer periods of time prior to their layoffs, between two and 26 years. Their pay reflected their investment in their skills, ranging between \$13.50 per hour and \$22.50 per hour. Still, their relatively higher levels of human capital did not make them immune to workplace instability and layoffs.

One of the skilled subjects, who had greatly invested in his training, is Isaac, a Hispanic, 34-year-old. Isaac had obtained his electrician's journeyman license when he was 20 years old. He had worked as an electrician for several years, earning as much as \$22.50 per hour. In his 20s, Isaac started methamphetamine. Over a period of ten years he had been laid off several times, and was quickly reassigned by the union. However, after his last layoff he was out of work for eight months. He then took another assignment which lasted two years, when he was again laid off. Unemployed, and needing to feed his addiction, he committed burglary with a deadly weapon and was incarcerated.

In summary, workplace instability affected both the unskilled subjects and the skilled subjects. Most of the subjects who lost their jobs due to layoff had worked in the building trades, in labor intensive jobs. Although several of the skilled subjects had accrued relatively more human capital, they too were susceptible to layoffs. However, compared to the unskilled subjects, the skilled subjects were employed for longer periods of time, and earned more money, thereby, exhibiting overall better employment histories. The skilled subjects also reported that their substance abuse problems began at a later age. It may be that the later onset of substance abuse allowed them to begin a career trajectory such that they were able to accrue more training and skills.

Approximately half of the subjects, both unskilled and skilled, who had been “too high” to report to work or had lost their jobs due to DUI had also worked in labor intensive fields. Additionally, half of the subjects who worked in substance abuse work environments worked in these fields, which are also unstable work environments. Following their loss of employment, several subjects had engaged in illegal drug sales to earn money. For both the unskilled workers and the skilled workers, unstable work is added to the variables which appear prevalent within the subjects’ lives, e.g., substance abuse, substance abuse work environment, and substance abuse related crime, as well as other types of crime.

These co-occurring conditions imply that for the unskilled individuals, their lack of human capital and their substance abuse have limited their work options; one of the few remaining options was unskilled labor within the building trades. The skilled subjects who had accrued more human capital had done so within the building trades. The workers who had chosen trades within these fields of work were employed in unstable working environments with other substance abusers, providing the breeding ground for substance abuse work environments. A national substance abuse prevalence study (SAMHSA 2007) found that workers in certain industries, including construction, mining, and food services, are more likely to engage in substance abuse. These environments also appear to promote substance abuse as a mechanism for camaraderie, comfort, and as a coping mechanism for adverse working conditions, and anxiety about layoffs and injury. These work environments thus appear to further additional substance abuse, substance abuse related crime, and other crime.

Crime Under the Influence

Substance abuse, substance abuse work environments, and unstable work environments also are associated with crimes which are not substance abuse related. Similar to the mechanism behind DUI, that a person's judgment is impaired when he or she is intoxicated, it seems that many of the subjects commit crimes when they are intoxicated from alcohol or drugs. Although this is a familiar concept in law enforcement and corrections, where 85 percent of offenders report chronic substance abuse (Petersilia 1999), and in research on substance abuse and crime (Goldstein et al. 1989; Inciardi and Pottieger 1991; Fagan 1993), this study's data demonstrate the impact upon these subjects' employment, from which they are terminated upon arrest.

Of the many subjects who attributed their criminal activity to alcohol or drug abuse, seven of the unskilled subjects and one skilled subject lost their unskilled jobs due to arrest for property and/or violent crimes in close proximity to substance abuse related matters. Of their crimes, two were property, three were violent, and two others were both.

One of the property offenders, Hank, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old, with a 10th grade education, had been committed to his \$8.00 per hour maintenance job at a chain restaurant. He had good relationships with his coworkers and supervisor. He also liked his work schedule. However, Hank lost his job of four months when he was arrested and incarcerated for stealing a vehicle and DUI.

Two subjects were arrested for both property and violent crimes. One of these subjects is Louis, a Hispanic, 54-year-old, with a GED. Louis also had attributed his criminal behavior to alcohol. Louis had been committed to his part-time firewood cutting

job of several years for his friend's business. He stated that he enjoyed the drives to the mountains. He explained that he had to supplement his wages with extra money from his drug sales. Louis lost his firewood cutting job when he was arrested and incarcerated for armed robbery, false imprisonment, and conspiracy. At the time of the initial interview, Louis had served 18 years of his 36 year sentence. This was his second incarceration.

Each of these subjects had engaged in substance abuse during their crime, or had engaged in substance abuse in close proximity to their crime. Although Louis' part-time legal employment, which he had to supplement with drug sales, appeared relatively insufficient, the other subjects had indicated that their crime resulted in a substantial employment loss. Several of these subjects lost their jobs when they committed acts of violence while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. For others, substance abuse appears to have interacted with financial crises resulting in property crimes, causing further employment problems. This cycle of substance abuse, financial crisis, and crime seems to result in continuous employment disruption.

Learning Substance Abuse and Criminality

This study has explored several mechanisms by which substance abuse, work, and crime interact. These include (1) the impact of substance abuse on employment via the subjects' inability to report to work, and on the subjects' criminal activity, both of which lead to job loss; (2) that limited human capital has reduced the subjects' employment opportunities leading to jobs which pay poorly, offer little mobility, are unstable, or are particularly unpleasant or difficult, and employ others in the same circumstances who are also substance abusers; (3) in some cases, unpleasant and difficult working conditions

and/or job instability can lead to substance abuse; and, (4) substance abuse in the workplace then has a reciprocal relationship with further substance abuse, substance abuse related crimes, criminal activity, and through these avenues interferes with employment stability.

How did these subjects arrive in this substance abuse, employment, and criminal activity predicament? It appears that for many of the subjects, the catalyst for this trajectory occurs at an early age. Of 37 subjects (76 percent) who attributed their legal problems to substance abuse, 21 (57 percent) began using alcohol or drugs as a teen-ager. Of those, most (76 percent) had worked in unskilled jobs. Two of these subjects' histories particularly well demonstrate these trajectories.

One of the subjects who began his substance abuse at an early age is Saul, a Hispanic, 27-year-old. Saul was raised in a "pretty bad" neighborhood where many neighbors were in gangs, or unemployed. Saul began "partying" and associating with gang-members as a teenager, and dropped out of high school. He had been arrested several times as an adult. His jobs included working at a beef plant, for a commercial painter, in air duct installation, and for a construction company as a stucco mason. The longest he stayed at a job was 18 months. Saul was incarcerated at Wespen for DUI.

Another of these subjects, Jeff, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, reported that the neighborhood in which he was raised was a "ghetto." "Wanting to fit in," he became involved with gangs at an early age. He was arrested the first time when he was 11 years old for shoplifting. Despite his gang activity, he completed high school. His substance abuse and criminal activity continued, and he eventually developed "a meth problem." Soon he was incarcerated for domestic violence. In between selling drugs, Jeff worked as

a dishwasher, fast food cook, and in construction. He said that one of the things that interfered with employment was “waking up early” to go to work. Difficulty with awaking early was a recurring theme among the substance abusers. Jeff lost his last job, fast food cook, when he was arrested for selling methamphetamine and cocaine.

Both Saul and Jeff reported that they had become involved with negative peers or gangs at a young age. In fact, 24 (77 percent) of the subjects who had held unskilled jobs reported that they had negative associates as adults, or both negative associates and resided in problem neighborhoods (e.g., impoverished, gang-ridden, etc.) at some point in their histories. Less than half (10) of these subjects were committed to an unskilled job. Conversely, most of those subjects working in unskilled positions who did not report either negative associates or problem neighborhoods were committed to at least one of their unskilled jobs.

One particular case, Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, illustrated one pathway of the negative association–non-commitment link. Indicating he was not committed to his job, Bryan stated that had he not been arrested for selling drugs, he would have quit his fast food cook position if “something else had come up.” He noted that although he had “a good work ethic,” his friends, who were in a gang, sometimes interfered with his jobs because “they want you to take a day off.” Bryan’s case demonstrates that negative associations often begin at an early age, continue into adulthood, and challenge commitment to work

Twenty-four (77 percent), of the skilled subjects also reported that they had negative associates in proximity to their incarceration, or had both negative associates and resided in problem neighborhoods. Slightly more than half (14) of these subjects

were committed to a skilled job. Of those subjects working in skilled positions who neither reported negative associates, nor that they resided in problem neighborhoods most indicated that they were committed to at least one of their skilled jobs. The presence of negative associates or negative neighborhoods appears to have a negative influence upon job commitment for both the unskilled and skilled subjects.¹²

Family Impact

Family logistics and difficulties directly led the subjects to resign from seven jobs, almost equally unskilled and skilled. Most of these subjects (6) left their jobs either to be with significant others or to get away from significant others. One other subject had left his job out of anger towards his girlfriend. None of the subjects who had left the unskilled positions indicated that they had been committed to the jobs. However, two of the subjects who had left skilled jobs indicated that they had been committed to those jobs.

Four of these job losses occurred when the subjects had arguments with or had separated from significant others. All of the subjects who left their jobs due to family discord had moved from the town in which they had been living and had been employed. Geraldo, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, was one of two subjects who had been committed to their jobs which they resigned from due to family issues. He had been employed by his cousins as a framer and foreman. Geraldo, who had only completed the eighth grade, first had a legal problem at age 23 when he was arrested for DUI. Sixteen years later, Geraldo and his wife had a hostile divorce and Geraldo believed it was best to move to another city, leaving his framer/foreman job behind. Geraldo attributed his subsequent

DUI convictions to emotional and alcohol problems, which were worse following his divorce.

Another subject who left his job due to family conflict is Albert, a Hispanic, 35-year-old, with an 11th grade education, and ties to a gang. Albert attributed his legal problems, which began at age 11, to “not having my parents.” He never knew his father, and his mother did not supervise him well. His last job prior to his incarceration at Wespen was as a fast food cook, where although he only earned \$6.50 an hour, he liked some aspects of the job. Albert stated that, after working at the fast food restaurant for over a year, he resigned from the job out of “spite” for his girlfriend who was using drugs and not appreciative of his efforts towards stability. Within a year Albert was arrested on a firearms charge and incarcerated for the third time.

Two of the subjects had their left jobs to be closer to family members. One of the subjects had resigned from his position which required much out of town work, so that he could be with his family more often. Danny, an American Indian, 22-year-old, had worked pouring concrete, enjoying the “good money” and “keeping healthy.” However, he missed his family when he frequently worked out of town; after two and one-half years of employment he resigned to spend more time at home.

Family issues interfered with both skilled and unskilled jobs. The relationship problems, such as status changes and conflict, are of course individual in nature and, perhaps, difficult to manage. One type of problem, however, is structural and specific to building trades. These businesses often operate outside of the town in which the company is located, and, therefore, out-of-town for the workers. The data show that this

type of work, where travel is frequent, can pose logistical and emotional problems for the workers and their families.

Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards

Noticeable differences emerged between the measures that the unskilled subjects' and the skilled subjects' used to evaluate their jobs. Comparable to others' job rewards classifications (Shapiro 1977; Wakefield et al. 1987), the subjects cited two general types of job rewards – extrinsic and intrinsic. The unskilled subjects seemed to measure the value of their jobs according to mostly extrinsic rewards, such as the following: “good money,” “didn’t pay enough”; a good or bad work schedule, such as a Monday through Friday schedule, working overtime, or the graveyard shift; and unpleasant conditions, e.g., “the job was stressful,” and “the smell of tar.” These subjects did often note one type of intrinsic reward, work relationships, in statements such as the boss “treated me good,” and the boss was an “idiot, who treated people like they were below him.” Only one unskilled subject, acknowledged an intrinsic reward, other than coworker/boss relationships; he stated that he enjoyed “helping” people.

In contrast, in addition to extrinsic factors, the skilled subjects reported intrinsic rewards from the work itself, such as the following: “helping people,” learning, “being able to express myself,” and “seeing things come down and then go up again.” They also cited perspectives indicating that they felt a sense of self-efficacy, or personal agency, such as having “responsibility,” having an “important job,” and “being able to accomplish something that you’ve set out to do.” The skilled workers, who also cited

negative aspects of the work, mostly extrinsic, appeared to assign much value to the intrinsic rewards, citing them enthusiastically.

The skilled workers were less likely to resign from their positions (38 percent) than were the unskilled workers (51 percent), which although it does not seem to be a large difference, it is a significant difference within criminology research. Because quite a few of the skilled workers had lost jobs due to illegal drug sales conducted during a financial crisis, the import of extrinsic rewards for this group of subjects cannot be altogether minimized. However, it does appear that the intrinsic rewards were associated with commitment. It appears that the skilled subjects, who were as a group more committed to their jobs, found both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to be important. However, even in the case of jobs which offered both quality extrinsic and quality intrinsic rewards, other factors, such as substance abuse, workplace instability, negative associates, and family issues, appeared to derail the protective factors of work.

DISCUSSION

This chapter aimed to gain a general understanding of the nature of the subjects' pre-prison work experiences, including the types of work in which they were employed, their perspectives about their work, factors that interfered with work, and factors that supported or eroded their commitment. The analysis has yielded several emerging themes. The reasons for discharge, and methods of discharge, from their employment revealed many interconnected factors affecting the subjects' attribution of meaning to their work, stability of work, commitment to work, and criminal activity.

The analyses revealed distinct experiences of unskilled and skilled workers. The data demonstrated some variation in human capital (see Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997), as measured by the job skill level, and some variation within the secondary labor sector (see Crutchfield 1995). The typical unskilled worker was low-paid, \$11.09 per hour; did not have much opportunity for substantial advancement; rarely had a nine-to-five, Monday through Friday, work schedule; and, found the job uninteresting or difficult. Additionally, the typical most disadvantaged unskilled worker, the service sector worker, had a high school education or GED; earned less than \$10.00 per hour; could not pay his living expenses with his earnings; did not feel that he was compensated fairly; did not want an inconsequential promotion; never worked a nine-to-five shift; worked at a fast food restaurant, restaurant, convenience store, or as a janitor; and, was waiting for a better job to present itself. This is particularly concerning because labor projections anticipate that the service sector is one of the few growing job areas (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003).

Not surprising, the unskilled worker was more focused on the extrinsic rewards he was receiving or not receiving, such as adequate pay, and a good work schedule, rather than whether he was receiving intrinsic rewards, such as feeling good about the work product, having responsibility, expressing creativity, and learning, etc. Given the worker's concern for extrinsic rewards that would merely sustain him, and the fact that those extrinsic rewards were mostly inadequate, he was less likely to be committed to his job (39 percent), less likely to stay at his job for longer than one year (39 percent), and most likely to resign (51 percent).

The skilled workers had very different work experiences, compared to the unskilled workers. The typical skilled worker earned \$18.47 per hour; could pay his bills; was a caregiver, a carpenter, a framer, a self-employed welder, a house painter, a remodeler, or an electrician; worked seven a.m. to four p.m., Monday through Friday; received and was pleased with intrinsic rewards, such as making a customer happy, completing a project, having pride in workmanship, being creative, or learning a new technique; was more likely to be committed to his job (62 percent); more likely to stay at his job for longer than one year (58 percent); and, was less likely to resign (38 percent). The skilled workers also acknowledged negative aspects of their jobs; however, they were more likely to assign more weight to the positive intrinsic rewards, including personal agency. These indicators of personal agency included references to “responsibility,” having an “important” job or task to accomplish, and having the “ability” to accomplish these important tasks.

There were a few generalities which applied to both unskilled workers and skilled workers. The majority of the subjects did not have the education level, or skills that the average non-offender possesses, i.e., human capital (Becker 1964; Smith [1789] 1976). In the state where Wespen is located, only 12 percent of the population has not obtained a high school diploma or GED, 23 percent have taken some college courses, and 14 percent have a bachelor’s degree. Although the skilled workers had greater human capital than the unskilled workers, this was still less than the average non-offender; of the 31 skilled subjects, 12 had less than a high school education, four had attended trade school, and two had taken some college courses. For the most part, these subjects, disadvantaged in various ways, found themselves in jobs that were displeasing in some way. Independent

of substance abuse issues, or criminal activity, both unskilled workers (4) and skilled workers (6) also sought other work in search of better employment. The reasons they cited included seeking higher skilled work, higher wages, a better schedule, or something more interesting. Another common condition was that 37 (76 percent) subjects attributed their legal problems to substance abuse. Twenty-one (43 percent) of the subjects began their substance abuse while they were juveniles.

Substance abuse was central to understanding the subjects' work experiences. Substance abuse negatively affected employment and encouraged criminal activity through job loss, being too high to work, undermining the attainment of human capital, driving under the influence, drug possession, and criminal embeddedness via negative associations (see Figure 1). Other factors contributed to substance abuse, including job loss, criminal embeddedness, unpleasant working conditions, and substance abuse work environments.

The factors affected by substance abuse also contributed to job loss and crime. DUI and possession led to arrests. Criminal embeddedness (Hagan and McCarthy 1997) led directly to crime, as well as to job loss via low human capital. Low human capital (Crutchfield 1995) led to job dissatisfaction (unrealized extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, low opportunity for advancement, job location problems/family problems) resulting in resigning to seek better work. Job dissatisfaction also removed a barrier (Toby 1957; Hirschi 1969; Uggen et al. 2005) which otherwise would have dissuaded subjects from becoming too high to work. In some cases, negative working conditions led to substance abuse to make work "tolerable." Being too high to work led to job loss. Low human

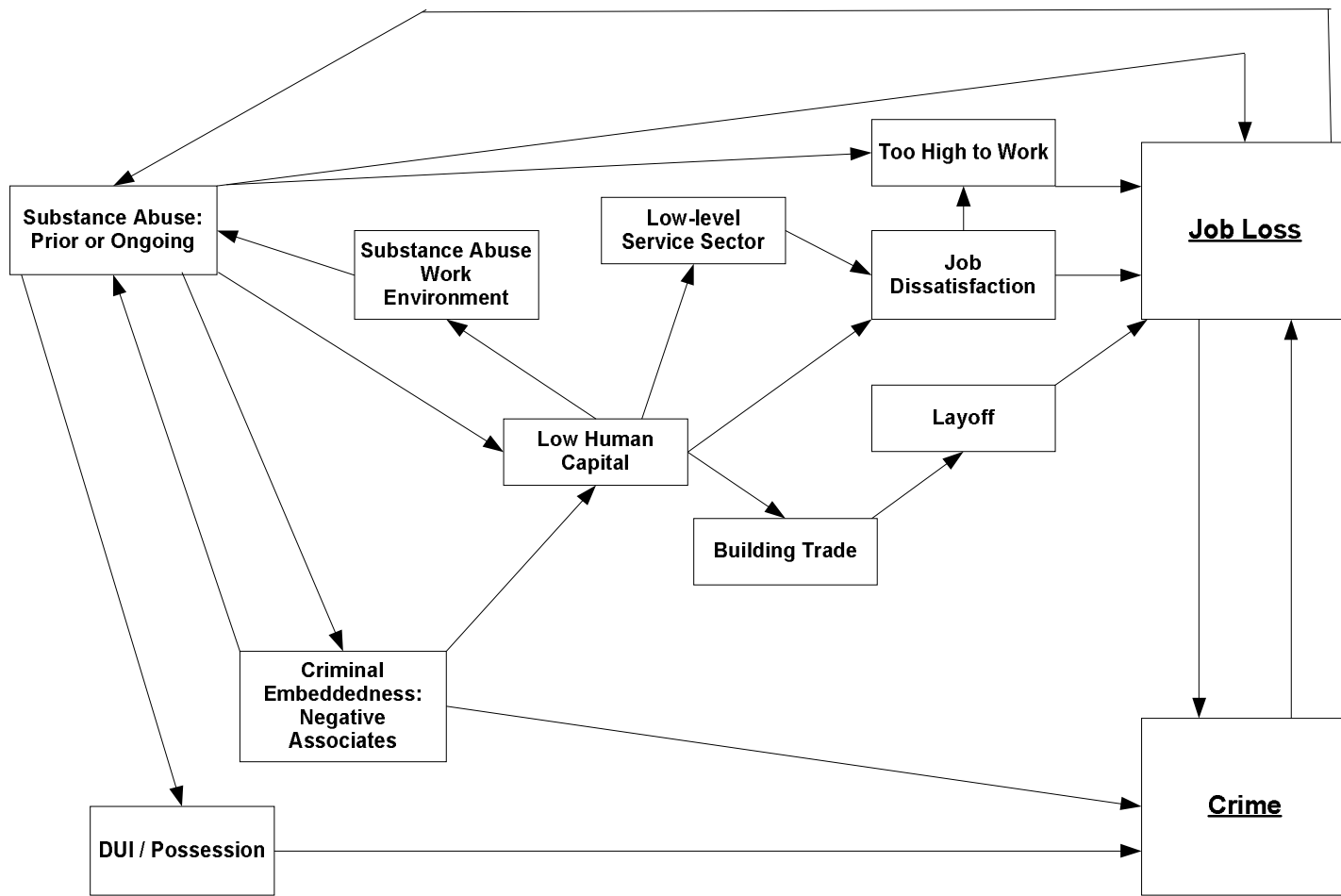


Figure 1: Pre-Wespen Themes Model

capital also led to limited employment opportunities (Crutchfield 1995), such as in the building trades, which are commonly associated with layoffs. Building trades also frequently operate out-of-town, and can lead to job dissatisfaction via family logistical problems.

Finally, job loss itself tended to lead to crime (Uggen and Thompson 2003), via seeking illegal income and engaging in substance abuse which led to crime in myriad ways. Crime led to job losses when the subjects were arrested. The above findings show numerous factors that are interwoven and affect the subjects' work experience (see Figure 1), eroding the quality, stability, and commitment to work that are critical to desistance from crime (Laub and Sampson 1993; Uggen 2000; Pager 2007).

Notes: Chapter Four

¹ The commitment variable is differently constructed dependent on whether the subject's work occurred during his incarceration at Wexpen or occurred outside of prison. Commitment to work is differently constructed to assess the subjects' in-prison work. Because these subjects were required to work while they were in prison (if they were not in an educational or therapeutic program), and their time in the in-prison positions were determined by several factors outside their control, commitment could not be measured by the reason for discharge. Therefore, commitment to in-prison work was determined only through the subjects' perspectives regarding the work. The measure of commitment to in-prison work will be applied in Chapter Five. In both non-prison work and in-prison work, the determination of commitment and non-commitment is a dichotomous value.

² To some extent, the dichotomous form of "commitment" is limiting; it does not measure situational factors such as unavoidable resignations, or different types of commitment, such as "affective commitment," "normative commitment," or especially "continuance commitment" (Meyer and Allen 1997; Morin 2008). However, due to the qualitative nature of this study and the limited number of study subjects, the simplicity of the variable allowed us to ascertain some measure of commitment while focusing on themes surrounding the meaning of work. This technique produced several testable themes which emerged. Still, further research might yield more contextual value from deconstructing these simplified categories.

³ Labor oriented positions included entry-level oil rig worker, hauler, janitor, day laborer, recycling center worker, tire technician, simple maintenance, vehicle detailer, firewood cutter, club bouncer, air duct installer, construction/flooring/roofing/masonry positions, heavy equipment operator, carpenter, framer, home repairer, vehicle body repairman, welder, foreman, house painter, complex maintenance worker, electrician, and engineer technician.

⁴ Unskilled positions included entry-level oil rig worker, hauler, janitor, day laborer, recycling center worker, tire technician, simple maintenance, vehicle detailer, firewood cutter, club bouncer, entry-level air duct installer, various entry-level construction/flooring/roofing/masonry positions, service clerk, deliverer, salesperson, carpet cleaner, cashier, fast food cook, waiter, home furnishings sales, casino clerk, receptionist, helper, and meat plant worker. The researcher also distinguished between subjects' entry-level status versus trained status in classifying unskilled or skilled positions.

⁵ Skilled positions included heavy equipment operator, carpenter, framer, home repairer, vehicle body repairman, welder, foreman, house painter, complex maintenance worker, electrician, engineer technician, residential instructor, caregiver, assistant manager, head cook, security supervisor, computer tutor, artist, jewelry fabricator, and factory foreman. The researcher also distinguished between subjects' entry-level status versus trained status in classifying unskilled or skilled positions.

⁶ The subjects' pre-Wespen work is comprised of the last two jobs that they held prior to the current incarceration. Although the current incarceration may have included residence at other facilities before relocating to Wespen, pre-Wespen work refers to non-prison work held prior to this incarceration. Some of the subjects had been employed in a non-prison job, went to prison where they also worked, were released from prison, and held another job before they were incarcerated at Wespen. In these cases only the two non-prison jobs were considered in the analyses.

⁷ Although in the behavioral health field there are distinctions between substance use and substance abuse, because this study's data suggest that the offenders are most likely chronic substance abusers, throughout the analysis any substance use is referred to as substance abuse.

⁸ In the state in which Wespen is located, offenders can be incarcerated in a state facility for felony DUI, which is defined primarily as the fourth or subsequent DUI.

⁹ Only one of these subjects worked in a position that could be considered service sector, i.e., tire technician.

¹⁰ Research suggests that drug use is prevalent among female exotic dancers. See Friedman and Alicea 1995, and Bott 2006.

¹¹ Of the 49 subjects, 18 (37 percent) had less than a high school education, or GED. Only 8 (16 percent) of the subjects had been to trade school or had some college education.

¹² Although criminal embeddedness may be transferred through imprisonment, there were no observable patterns between pre-Wespen committed and non-committed workers, and either the number of prior incarcerations or the prior total time incarcerated. Yet it appears that negative associations and neighborhoods had an influence upon these subjects' commitment to pre-Wespen work. This may be due to the fact that an individual's rate of criminal activity, and thus criminal embeddedness, may not be reflected as accurately in the individual's number of incarcerations or length of sentence. In other words, conviction and incarceration may not be as accurate a reflection of embeddedness in substance abuse or criminality (as far as they are related to job commitment) as are negative associations. However, a pattern did emerge between the total number of incarcerations and post-release outcomes (see Chapter Seven). Additionally, perhaps criminal embeddedness via distinct locales – in prison versus street life – may have domain over different outcome areas or there may be an interaction between these different sources of criminal embeddedness that either augment or erode the other.

Chapter Five: In-prison Work Experiences

The previous chapter analyzed the subjects' work experiences prior to this incarceration. This portion of the study addresses the subjects' in-prison work experiences. The existing literature (Reynolds 1997; NCIA 1999; Bushway and Reuter 2002; MacKenzie 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007) has posited varying purposes for prison work activity: to keep offenders from idleness; to orient them to disciplined activity; to assist with institutional operations; to generate offender income for room and board, as well as for other legal financial obligations; and to train the offenders for post-release employment. Since the late eighteenth century, there has been ongoing debate over the purpose of prison work and its ability to meet these various objectives (Mancini 1978; Conley 1980; Garvey 1998; Myers 1998).

In the last decade, there has been a significant shift towards preparing inmates for their reentry into the community. Much of the reentry focus has been on post-release employment programs (Redcross et al. 2010; Zweig et al. 2010); these studies have identified some, but limited, benefit from post-release employment assistance. However, other recent research has, to varying degrees, evaluated prison work programs and the effect of prison work programs upon post-release outcomes. These studies (Reynolds 1997; Bushway and Reuter 2002; ACI 2004; MacKenzie 2006, Visher and Kachnowski 2007) have found some links between prison work programs and post-release outcomes; however, these studies have not offered much information about how the work programs affect the outcomes. Additionally, the magnitude of the findings has not been overwhelmingly convincing; in general, there seems to be a lack of detail about prison

work programs and the mechanisms linking prison work programs and outcomes. The following analyses of Wespen work programs explore the first part of these issues - the nature of prison work, and the inmates' experiences and perspectives of this work.

First, this chapter provides an overview of Wespen, the institution's work programs, and the rationale behind the programs' designs. The analysis utilizes data from interviews with program administrators, including their perspectives of offenders' work and employment, to answer the following: What do Wespen's work programs look like? What is Wespen's rationale for prisoner employment?

Second, using interview data from the offender subjects, this chapter explores the subjects' prison work experiences and addresses the following questions: In what types of work are the subjects engaged? How does the Wespen work status compare to the pre-Wespen work status? How do the offenders perceive their in-prison work? Do these different types of work elicit varying social experiences? Do these different types of work provide varying extrinsic and intrinsic rewards? Do the social experiences and types of rewards found in prison work affect the subjects' commitment to the in-prison work? Do the Wespen work programs address the subjects' pre-Wespen employment problems?

WESPEN

The southwestern state's Department of Corrections (DOC)¹ operates Wespen, other state correctional facilities, and probation/parole services; in addition, it oversees privately operated facilities contracting to the state. Wespen is a state correctional facility that houses approximately 1200 inmates. The inmates represent a variety of

classification levels. An inmate's classification level is based on type of offense, discipline history in the institutions, gang involvement, and whether the inmate has a history of escape or absconding. Although some inmates are placed in Wespen from the onset of their sentence, many come to Wespen after serving part of their sentence at other institutions, where they had been assigned higher risk levels. The average time of the current incarceration for all subjects in this study is 1.94 years. This does not include time served in jail prior to incarceration in the state facility, whether or not the jail time was credited towards the inmate's time served.

Wespen includes several separate facilities and classification units. The separate facilities and classification units offered the inmates different work opportunities. The study subjects were chosen from two different classification units in two different facilities. The selection method (see Chapter Three) provided subjects that worked in a variety of positions, chosen from the two lowest risk classification units. Wespen houses approximately 600 inmates in these two levels. However, prior to the time of the study, many of the subjects had resided at other facilities when their risk levels were higher.²

WESPEN WORK PROGRAMS

The DOC offers work, vocational, and educational programs at all of the state facilities.³ The DOC literature (DOC 2008) states that the objectives of the inmate work programs are to improve the inmates' educational skills, vocational skills, marketable job skills, economic self sufficiency, rehabilitation, and to reduce inmate idleness. The DOC also states that the programs are intended to lower operations costs. The DOC further asserts that its programs are intended to "provide meaningful employment opportunities that correlate with skills, attitudes and experience necessary to place released offenders in

the job market” (DOC 2008). The DOC reports that many of their vocational programs are “related to jobs in the current job market” (DOC 2010). All inmates at Wespen are required to participate in an employment, vocational, educational, or therapeutic program. Depending on behavior and escape history, inmates housed at Wespen’s lowest risk level facility may be eligible to work off-site.

Three Wespen administrators were interviewed for this study. The administrators worked in departments that manage the inmates’ job placements. The administrators’ average period of employment in the corrections field was 11 years. The interviews were designed to obtain their perspectives regarding the purpose, logistics, and effectiveness of the work programs.

The three Wespen administrators stated similar purposes for the work programs as does the DOC literature (DOC 2008). One of these administrators, Mark, stated that to be in a work, educational, or therapeutic program “is the only thing that changes guys.” He said that the purposes of the programs are to prepare the inmates for their release to the community and to keep them busy while they are incarcerated. Another administrator, Ben, similarly said that programs are designed to “give them the tools to not come back to prison – tools to function as a normal person.” Ben also reported that the programs “keep them from having idle time.” A third administrator, Jan, stated that programs “try to teach a different way” of life, and “give them an opportunity.” Like the other administrators, Jan also reported that by working in prison the inmates “get a little money,” it “cuts into the monotony,” and “keeps them from having too much time on their hands that causes trouble.”

Jan spoke directly of prison operations. She stated that when inmates work in operations, such as janitorial, laundry, and the kitchen, “we don’t have to hire somebody; it saves money, and money paid to the inmates is infused back into the system” (when the inmates buy items from the canteen or send money to their families). When inmate numbers are down there are shortages in workers to keep the facility operating.” Ben also stated that “the facility would not run without them.”

All of the administrators addressed a disjuncture between the intended purposes and the achieved results. Shedding light upon previous research (Reynolds 1997) which implied that offenders were not very likely to have engaged in skilled prison work, two of the administrators cited a lack of funding for meaningful programs. Jan stated, “There’s not enough money for trade programs. The public doesn’t realize the benefits of good programming for the inmates ... I wish there were more programs that teach inmates marketable skills.”

Mark explained that some of the work programs achieve the intended outcomes better than others. He reported that the inmates who work on irrigation systems and for forestry (wild-land firefighting) are often placed “right away after release.” He stated that vocational programs, rather than higher education, are more likely to benefit the inmate after release. Mark stated, “Programs do work, but [there are] not enough of them. We need to focus on vocational and certification rather than education ... They can’t compete ... Who is going to hire an offender Computer Tech versus an ITT grad? Higher education is great, but is it practical for placement? We need more plumbers, and mechanic programs.” Ben also shared Jan’s and Mark’s concerns regarding the types of available programs, “The forestry job gives them a new trade ... Kitchen work – does it

really give any additional skills - they can get a culinary certificate, but what does that really mean? Maybe if all of them were taught a new trade, [then] that would make a difference.” These assertions that vocational programs were most beneficial support previous research (MacKenzie 2006) which found that vocational education provided the most promising outcomes.

Ben addressed the difficulty of balancing facility operations and inmate training. He said, “There are not enough inmates to staff all programs. Inmates will be put in essential operations positions before other trade positions. Currently fire [forestry] is half-staffed, and still the kitchen is understaffed.” Ben stated, there “needs to be more balance between inmate needs versus facility needs ... Making programs for inmates come first over facility operations can be difficult – getting inmates placed given risk levels, availability, time to serve, and what they volunteer for.”

Ben explained that some programs require minimum stays, e.g., an auto mechanics program just underway requires a six month stay and has one entry time every six months. Jan had also mentioned that placement in the furniture manufacturing program requires a six month stay. Jan also explained that an inmate must be classified as low risk to work in furniture manufacturing because the workers are transferred daily from an enclosed facility to another building where the work takes place. Ben stated, “Inmates can come from one institution to another and not be able to continue in the program they were in.”

The administrators spoke of public perceptions and their impact on programming or employment after release. Mark believed that the public’s perception of inmates limits programming options. He stated, “We need to not be afraid to let these guys get out there

and work in work-release programs.” Jan explained that a group of inmates had recently pooled a portion of their earnings from their in-prison employment and made a donation to a charitable organization. “These guys do things for the community,” she stated. Jan explained that she wants the public to “be aware of this side of felons” so that they will be more willing to hire them and pay taxes for more programs. She stated that, additionally, “we need more business – corrections coordination.”

Jan explained that there need to be more job opportunities for felons after release. She stated that post-release felons often can only qualify for jobs where they are likely to encounter coworkers with criminal histories or substance abuse problems, such as in the construction industry. Mark also mentioned that post-release programming follow-up is limited by the probation/parole office’s orientation. Due to its role and resources, probation/parole efforts are oriented towards enforcement of the conditions of supervision rather than towards continued programming. Ben stated that there are “not enough programs” post-release. He did explain that the DOC is working on continuity of care in re-entry efforts. These obstacles and limitations appear to affect the administrators’ sense of efficacy. One of the three administrators stated, “Whether or not an inmate succeeds on the outside really just depends on the inmate.”

WORK PLACEMENT

Wespen inmates are required to participate in a work, vocational, educational, or therapeutic program, or in combinations of programs, 20 to 40 hours per week. If an inmate fails to participate in a program he loses good-time awards and may be transferred to another unit or facility. The different work programs pay the inmates between 20¢ and

\$2.50 per hour. For their participation in some of the programs, or for earning certifications, inmates can receive additional deductions from the time that they must serve in prison.

One of the administrators, Mark, explained that upon arrival to Wespen, the security unit “screens the incoming inmates for exclusions to programs,” then the inmates meet with the program’s administration to decide on placement. Mark stated that the placements depend on position “vacancies and criteria.” Ben explained that the inmates are assigned to work programs according to multiple criteria, including whether the work-site is off the facility premises, escape risk, offense history, employment history, ability, and skills. During the incarceration, the inmate may change programs; a transfer to another program can be initiated by the inmate, who may have to “apply” for the position, or by administrators. Ben explained that inmates must be housed in the lowest risk unit for 90 days prior to placement in a position that involves work outside of the facility grounds.

The 49 subjects in this study participated in thirteen different work positions just prior to their release. Most of the subjects had worked in two or more positions during their current incarceration. For the purposes of this study, analyses focused on the current positions held just prior to their release (see Table 1). Work programs were classified into unskilled work (24 subjects) and skilled work (25 subjects) (see Table 1). Approximately one-third of the subjects worked outside the facility grounds in forestry, furniture delivery, highway, and public buildings grounds maintenance.

Table 1: Wespen Work Programs

Work Program	Number of Subjects
Barber*	2
Clerk	6
Feedlot/Irrigation*	2
Forestry*	9
Furniture Delivery/Assembly	2
Furniture Manufacturing*	10
Highway Litter Crew	4
Janitorial/Porter	3
Kitchen	6
Grounds Maintenance	2
In-facility Building Maintenance*	1
Out-of-facility Grounds Maintenance	1
Special Clerk*	1
Total	49

* Denotes skilled positions

INMATE SUBJECT PERSPECTIVES: IN-PRISON WORK

The data analyzed in the remainder of this chapter were obtained from interviews with the offender subjects while they were incarcerated at Wespen. All of the subjects had less than three months left to serve prior to their release. These inmate subject interviews included questions regarding the subjects' placement in their Wespen jobs, as well as their perspectives regarding the work, social relationships in the workplaces, and the perceived rewards of their work.

WORK CHOICE

The information on placement helped us to assess two issues. First, what is the nature of the inmates' placement choices? Second, how do the inmates' perceptions of

the process compare to the administrators’? The data on the subjects’ perspectives of work, social dynamics, and rewards were used to explore the subjects’ experiences with and commitment to their in-prison work.

The subjects reported several different reasons for their choices of work placement, and also reported other factors outside of their control which affected their placement. Most of the subjects who held skilled jobs had chosen those jobs for the following reasons, in descending order of frequency: the tasks; working conditions; benefits; and, to learn a new skill. Most of the subjects who held unskilled jobs had chosen or had been placed in those positions in almost equal numbers for the following reasons: automatic placement without choice; any open job following a conflict in another job; working conditions; and, tasks. Those subjects who were placed in unskilled jobs were more likely to have had no choice in their placements.

Of the subjects who did have some input regarding their placement, some of their choices were based on factors that had little to do with whether the job offered the subjects additional skills. Approximately one-third (17) of the subjects made their selection based on the pay, deductions from time to serve, whether the job was indoors or outdoors, whether it was within the facility or outside of the facility, and whether friends worked in the program. The different types of programs seemed to attract the subjects for different reasons. The furniture manufacturing program attracted subjects because the work-site was in a separate building from the housing units. Subjects chose to work in the kitchen because it was “an inside job.” However, the irrigation workers chose the job to get away from the facility buildings, stating that it “makes it easier to stay out of trouble.” Subjects who chose to work on the highway crew or in furniture delivery stated

that they chose the work because they wanted to get off the facility grounds. All but one of the forestry subjects chose to work in forestry because it paid well, relative to other Wespens jobs, because it offered a deduction to time served, or because a friend was already in the program. However, one of the themes which arose during the analysis was that the forestry workers discovered that the job was worthwhile for reasons other than they had anticipated. After beginning the forestry program, all but one of these subjects indicated that they appreciated other aspects of their work, such as the meaningfulness of the tasks.

Slightly more than one-third (19) of the subjects chose their positions because of the type of work. These reasons included that the subject expected it to be enjoyable or interesting, the subject had previous experience in the type of work, or that the subject wanted to learn a new skill. Based on these reasons the subjects chose to work in a variety of jobs including furniture manufacturing, maintenance, kitchen, tutor, clerk, and forestry.

Slightly more than one-fourth (13) of the subjects had been placed in a position by default, because either they had been automatically assigned to fill an operations vacancy (6), or they had been moved from other jobs in which they had experienced conflict (7) with coworkers or supervisors. Most (5) of the subjects who had been automatically placed in unskilled jobs without a choice were dissatisfied with their work program. One of these subjects, Daren, an American Indian, 51-year-old, who had worked on the highway crew for seven months, stated "I had three applications in, but I got stuck with this." Another subject, James, a Hispanic, 45-year-old, who had been in his job for a

year, explained that he did not have any input when “they put me in the kitchen.” These subjects conveyed a sense of futility concerning their Wespen employment.⁴

In addition to the subjects’ choices and placement in operations positions as necessary, other issues also significantly influenced placement. There were several logistical factors that reduced the subjects’ opportunities to participate in programs, or to participate in the programs for substantial periods of time. One of these factors, inter-facility residence transfers, caused work disruption for five of the subjects. Although these transfers from higher-level secured facilities to lower-level facilities are well-intended for safety reasons, as well as providing incentive for the inmates to behave, these transfers reduced the subjects’ time to participate and their stability in work, treatment, and educational programs.

One of these subjects, Calvin, a White-non-Hispanic, 34-year-old, was incarcerated four and one-half years between three facilities. Although, he was able to complete a vocational program in computer network cable systems, he had transferred back and forth between four different work programs, including grounds maintenance, irrigation, kitchen, and janitorial. His transient employment in Wespen resembled his transient employment before his incarceration where he had last held two vehicle detailer positions over a period of one and one-half years.

Other subjects had even more limited experiences because of the inter-facility transfers. Four subjects were unable to participate in programs in which they were interested, including a therapeutic program, computer class, GED class, and forestry work. These four subjects had resided at an average of three facilities during their sentences, which averaged approximately 18 months. The subjects explained why they

were unable to enroll in some of the programs at Wespen: “I needed more time left”; “they were too full or my time was too short”; “not enough time to finish”; and, “started the GED at [another facility], but when I got to Wespen [I] couldn’t enroll because my time was too short.”

Similar to inter-facility transfers, intra-facility work transfers, movement between jobs within Wespen, reduced the amount of time to spend within any particular job and also reduced opportunities to work in programs that required minimum periods of time remaining to be served at Wespen. Some subjects (8) had experienced significant employment transience within Wespen, having worked three or more different positions while in the facility. Many positions were only held for a few months.⁵ As Ben, an administrator, had explained, inmates are oftentimes first placed in operations jobs that need to be filled. The inmates are permitted to transfer when other positions are available, and only when newer inmates are available to fill their vacated positions.

This system is especially problematic when an inmate who wishes to transfer out of operations to a vocational or skilled position has less time remaining than that which is minimally required for the positions. Available time for program participation is also reduced by other external logistics. One of these problems resulted when inmates arrived after having received credit for jail time, and thereby had such little time remaining on their sentence that they could not participate in skilled work or vocational training. Available time for programming is also shortened through the evaluation and classification process. When an inmate first arrives to the DOC, he is sent for a three to eight week evaluation to determine needs and risk. He is then transferred to a prison facility where he undergoes orientation and placement within the facility. The impact on

offenders who are serving short sentences, perhaps already reduced by credit for jail time, is even greater. In these cases, regardless of whether the inmate has only been assigned to one facility for the remainder of his sentence, he still has too little time to enroll in some programs.

The findings suggest that inter-facility transfers and intra-facility employment transfers, as well as short sentences, limit the subjects' participation in skilled work programs and educational programs. The data showed that several logistical issues reduced the subjects' available time to enroll in these programs: the time to complete the initial evaluation, transfer from other facilities to Wespen with little time left on the sentence, credit for time-served in jail reduced the time to serve, and, time spent employed in unskilled operations positions.

The subjects' depictions of their placement into Wespen programs corroborated many of the administrators' perspectives. The placement process appeared to keep the offenders busy and keep the facility operating, as administrators Mark and Jan asserted. To ensure that the facility is operational, many of the offenders are placed in operations positions before they are allowed to work in other programs. Although there were exceptions, several of the subjects conveyed their general understanding that new inmates must first work in operations positions. This is congruent with one administrator's perspective; Ben stated, "Inmates will be put in essential operations positions before trade positions." However, many subjects were unable to transfer to more skilled positions. Additionally, the subjects reported a lack of continuity within work and educational programs across facilities. This also confirmed administrator Ben's statement that

“Inmates can come from one institution to another and not be able to continue in the program they were in.”

Wespen’s intention of providing opportunity and tools to assist the inmate’s success after their release is clearly communicated in DOC literature (2008, 2010), as well as by the administrators. The administrators cited systemic problems in reaching these goals. Ben pointed out that the inmates would benefit from learning new trades, but both Mark and Jan reported that there were not enough vocational programs available to the inmates. It appears that the good intentions of Wespen and the DOC are hindered by too few resources. These data suggest that operations needs, facility transfers, short sentences, too few programs, programs with restrictive time requirements, and logistical difficulties with continuity between programs prohibited many of the subjects from adequately engaging in skilled work, vocational work, and educational programs. Additionally, the inmate employment process appears to reproduce the subjects’ transient pre-Wespen employment within the facility.

MOBILITY

Throughout the remainder of this chapter the subjects’ Wespen work experiences are compared to their commitment to these jobs. In this chapter, the components which comprise the multi-dimensional variable *commitment* are limited. Because the inmates at Wespen are required to work if they are not engaged in some other type of therapeutic or educational program, commitment could not be measured by their employment status. Instead, the subjects’ attachment to their prison work was assessed according to whether

they provided mostly negative, *unfavorable*, or mostly positive, *favorable*, responses about their work.⁶

The data revealed that many (20) of the 49 subjects had experienced downward mobility in skill level from their last pre-Wespen positions to their last Wespen positions, whereas 16 of the subjects experienced upward mobility, and 13 experienced no mobility either direction. The subjects who experienced downward mobility were less likely to perceive their Wespen positions favorably (45 percent) than were those who experienced no change (77 percent), or those who experienced upward mobility in their skill level (94 percent). This difference in mobility and favorability was also associated with whether the Wespen jobs were unskilled or skilled. More of the 24 unskilled workers had experienced downward mobility (71 percent) than of the 25 skilled workers (12 percent). How did the subjects perceive their mobility?

All but one of the 13 skilled workers who experienced upward mobility and were favorable towards their jobs worked in forestry (8) or furniture manufacturing (4). Most (11) of these subjects had not sought to gain skills through their Wespen work. One of these subjects, Herman, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, stated that he had not applied for the furniture manufacturing work, but that “they just put me there.” Prior to Wespen, Herman had worked as a tire technician. Herman reported that he had “never before worked with wood, [and] never worked with a measuring tape.” Herman was optimistic that his experience could provide employment opportunities. He stated, “I can go to a wood shop and get a job.” All of these subjects believed that their Wespen work experience would benefit them after they were released.

Several (3) of these 13 subjects, including one of the furniture workers, had requested their job placements because the work was located outside of the housing building (furniture manufacturing) or outside of the facility (forestry). The furniture manufacturing worker, Morris, a Hispanic, 48-year-old, had applied for the job because he “wanted to get out of the pod.” However, after working in the position for five months, he realized that his experience would be helpful after his release because he had been “learning something different.” His pre-Wespen positions were roofing laborer and landscaping. These subjects had not expected to benefit from their work other than from enjoying the work-site.

Most (7 out of 9) of the forestry subjects had applied for the work program to work off-site, as well as for benefits, such as time-served deductions, higher pay, or to work with a friend. An example of these subjects is Abe, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, who applied for forestry “to get out of the compound.” Abe had previously worked as a helper at a high-tech company, and as a laborer at a construction site. He believed that the experience would be worthwhile, stating “I will be able to get on with state [forestry] or come back and be a crew boss” as a state employee. Most of these subjects, both forestry workers and furniture manufacturing workers, did not intend to add to their skill-set, but inadvertently did so, thereby expanding their post-release work opportunities.

Those (10) subjects who were unskilled, experienced downward mobility, and were unfavorable towards their position worked in highway (4), kitchen (2), and miscellaneous other positions (4). Only two of these subjects reported that they had no choice in their placement. One of the subjects, Daren, an American Indian, 51-year-old, worked as a carpenter for ten years prior to his incarceration at Wespen. He had applied

to three other work programs, including forestry, but “got stuck with this,” a position on the highway crew. He explained that the primary duties – “picking up trash” and “weeding around signs and guardrails” – would not be helpful after his release. The other subject, a carpenter by trade, similarly concluded that his kitchen job would not benefit him in the future. Both of these subjects indicated that they were displeased with their job placement.

Other subjects who had experienced downward mobility (7) in their unskilled Wespen jobs requested the positions for various reasons, such as to keep busy, to work off-site, for the work schedule, or to leave another undesirable position. Only one subject, Chris, a Hispanic, 38-year-old, requested the placement because he liked something about the job. He had worked in construction, as well as in a retail clerk job prior to Wespen. He worked as a porter and also in the kitchen at Wespen before he requested a supply clerk position, so that he could “use a computer.” However, he stated that the job was “nowhere near as complex as something you would need on the street.” Chris and the other subjects stated that their Wespen work would not be helpful after their release.

However, seven of the (17) unskilled subjects who experienced downward mobility were favorable towards their positions. The subjects’ favorable opinions of their work included aspects such as the work was “pleasant” and “easy” (furniture delivery), the subject could leave the work site between tasks (supply clerk), the worker received “compliments” on his work (wax crew), and the subject enjoyed “using people skills” (clerk). Still, five of these subjects concluded that the work experience would not be helpful in the future.

Only two of these (17) subjects believed that their unskilled work could be helpful post-release. One of these subjects, Ted, an African American, 54-year-old, had taken a culinary course and had worked in the kitchen at Wespen. He stated that he had pursued culinary training because his previous work history, which included security supervisor, had not included any restaurant work. Ted stated that the kitchen work at Wespen would be helpful to him in the future if he were to work in the restaurant industry; however, he said that he had planned on pursuing a counseling degree after he was released from prison. For this subject, although he perceived potential value of the work, it would likely prove to be useless to him.

The other subject who experienced downward mobility, yet cited potential value of his unskilled Wespen work is Edgar, a Hispanic, 41-year-old. Edgar, who had worked as a welder before his incarceration, requested a Wespen library clerk position because he “like[d] to read.” He believed that in the future he would find it helpful that he had read a book on jobs and a book on memory during his employment at the library. Edgar was the only subject who had experienced downward mobility with his unskilled job and had believed that he would benefit from his Wespen work.

These findings revealed several emerging patterns. The subjects who experienced downward mobility were most likely to have been employed in unskilled work at Wespen, more likely to have perceived their jobs unfavorably, and more likely to have believed that their work would not benefit them after their release from Wespen. The subjects who experienced upward mobility were most likely to have been employed in skilled work at Wespen, likely to have perceived their jobs favorably, and likely to have believed that their work would benefit them after they were released from Wespen.

WORK PROGRAMS REWARDS/PERSPECTIVES

The study analyzed the subjects' interview responses to discover whether their Wespen work was meaningful to them, and if so, in what ways? It looked for emerging themes of perceived rewards. These rewards appeared to fit within other research models which delineated reward areas, including extrinsic rewards, tangible rewards, intrinsic rewards, and symbolic rewards (Shapiro 1977; Guzzo 1979; Wakefield et al. 1987; Morin 2008). Those subjects who cited more rewards compared to criticisms were considered favorable towards their jobs; and, those who cited more criticisms than rewards were considered unfavorable towards their jobs. The occurrences of these rewards were compared by skill level and type of work to detect effects from different Wespen work programs.

In-prison Work Rewards

Both the unskilled subjects and the skilled subjects reported three aspects of their Wespen work that were beneficial during their incarceration. One of these aspects was that the work kept them busy. They also cited tangible extrinsic rewards, including earning wages, earning deductions to the time they must serve, and working at a preferable location. Another, more intrinsic, reward was that some subjects enjoyed their Wespen job. The benefits of keeping busy and receiving tangible rewards were almost equally experienced across skill levels; however, enjoyment of the job was more likely to be cited by the subjects who were working in skilled positions.

Almost one-third (15) of the 49 subjects stated that their work helped to keep them busy. This is congruent with both the DOC literature (2008) and the Wespen

administrators' stated purpose of keeping the inmates from being idle or free to engage in negative behaviors. Almost equal numbers of skilled workers and unskilled workers reported that they appreciated this aspect of their jobs. All but one of these skilled workers were favorable towards their jobs. However several (3) of the unskilled workers were unfavorable towards their jobs.

An example of the skilled workers who reported that they appreciated keeping busy is Solomon, a Hispanic, 43-year-old, who worked in building maintenance. He said that while working the "time flies by." Solomon also said, "I enjoy it a lot." Another subject, Abe, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, forestry worker, stated that when he is at work "the day goes faster." Both of these subjects, as well as four other subjects in forestry and furniture manufacturing, who reported that their jobs help to "keep busy" were favorable towards their jobs.

Similarly, the unskilled subjects cited comparable perspectives. However, unlike the skilled subjects, most of the unskilled subjects who mentioned that they appreciated their jobs because it kept them busy were generally unfavorable towards their jobs. One of the highway workers, Marshall, a White-non-Hispanic, 33-year-old, said that the "clock went by fast" while he worked. Another highway worker, Daren, an American Indian, 51-year-old, said the job "makes the time go by." For these two subjects, and three others, this aspect, and in a few cases one additional aspect, was the only part of their jobs which they could classify favorably.

Quite a few (9 out of 49) subjects reported that they appreciated their jobs because of a tangible benefit.⁷ Three of these subjects, all of them forestry workers, appreciated the money that they earned or the deduction from time served. Six of these subjects,

mostly unskilled workers, liked their work location outside of the facility. The majority (7) of these subjects were favorable towards their jobs.

An example of one of these skilled workers is Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, forestry worker. He stated that one of several aspects of his job which he liked was his pay. He explained that depending on the worker's certification level, a forestry worker could earn up to \$2.50 per hour when fighting a wild-land fire. Although this amount may seem insignificant, it is ten times the amount of the lowest paid worker at Wespen. For the subjects, this is significant. Bryan pointed out that sometimes the forestry workers all contributed to buy large amounts of meat for "cookouts." This was a luxury at Wespen. Bryan also added that he liked the fact that he would receive a deduction from his time to serve in return for his certifications in forestry.

Five of the (24) unskilled workers reported that they were pleased to be able to leave the facility (highway workers, furniture delivery, and out-of-facility public grounds maintenance) to go to work. For two of these subjects this was one of only two redeeming aspects of the work, location and staying busy. Both of those subjects were not generally favorable towards their positions.

One of the three unskilled subjects who was generally favorable towards his job and found it pleasing to leave the facility is William, an African American, 34-year-old. William liked both working outside of the facility with his furniture delivery job, and "get[ting] out to see girls." He also reported that he liked his boss and coworkers, stating "I make them laugh so they like me." William also appreciated the fact that the furniture delivery work was "easy."

Although the skilled forestry workers also worked outside of the facility, of the tangible benefits, they were more likely to favorably recall money and time deductions than location. The unskilled workers did not have this choice in valuing their tangible rewards, as they were paid relatively poorly. It appeared that the skilled workers had more tangible benefits to classify and considered their relatively high available wages as more beneficial compared to the location of the work-site.

An intrinsic reward that the subjects experienced was enjoyment of the work itself. Of seven subjects who explicitly mentioned enjoyment of the work, most (6) were skilled workers, working in complex maintenance, furniture manufacturing, and forestry. The unskilled subject worked as a library clerk. Both the unskilled worker and the skilled workers were generally favorable towards their positions.

An example of the subjects who enjoyed their skilled work is Danny, an American Indian, 24-year-old, who worked in forestry. He described the forestry duties to include “fall trees, fight fires, and [conduct] controlled burns.” Danny stated that he enjoyed “doing the work,” being “out in the wild,” and “doing a lot of labor work.”

The unskilled subject, Edgar, a Hispanic, 41-year-old, library clerk, described his job as “doing inventory, retagging books, [and] giv[ing] out legal forms.” He was proud that he had learned to use the Dewey decimal system. He stated, “I enjoy it. It’s not hard. I read a lot.”

These subjects who enjoyed their work were more likely to describe their tasks in detail, compared to the subjects who did not enjoy their work. One of the subjects who disliked his work in laundry said that his job was to “run a machine.” Similarly a subject who disliked his highway job simply stated that he “pick[s] up trash.” It appeared that

the more appealing jobs included varied tasks, and the subjects did not enjoy the more simple jobs and perceived them unfavorably.

Enduring Effect Work Rewards

Much research has asserted that time in prison impedes the accrual of human capital, or even erodes human capital (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Darity and Mason 1998; Holzer et al. 2007; Pager 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2009). Other research has suggested that certain types of prison programs can increase human capital (MacKenzie 2006). In this current study, some, but not all, of the work programs appeared to have increased the subjects' human capital levels.

The data showed that approximately half of the 49 subjects believed that their Wespen work experiences provided useful skills. Many (20) of the subjects reported that the skills which they had obtained could help them to get jobs after their release; most (80 percent) of these subjects had worked in skilled positions. Many (19) other subjects indicated that the skills would not contribute to their post-release employment success; most (79 percent) of these subjects had worked in unskilled positions. Others (5), mostly skilled, had believed that the knowledge they had gained may prove helpful in some way in the future, but not directly related to work.

An example of the skilled workers who believed that their experience would lead to employment opportunities is Eliseo, a Hispanic, 31-year-old. Prior to Wespen, he had co-owned a body shop. However, the work was unstable and he had sold drugs to supplement his income. When he arrived at Wespen he applied to the forestry program "just to get off the compound." The rewards he received surpassed his expectations.

Eliseo stated, “They’ve taught me a lot. [I] never had touched a chain saw – never knew anything about that stuff.” He said that he expected to obtain a state forestry job after his release, “with all the qualifications it gave me.” Just prior to his release, Eliseo had spoken with the state forestry about a wild-land fire-fighting position and was planning to submit his application as soon as he was paroled.

In contrast, an example of the unskilled subjects who did not expect that their Wespen jobs would be useful is Benny, a Hispanic, 50-year-old. Benny had been self-employed as a house painter prior to his incarceration for forgery and contracting without a license. He had been working in the kitchen, when he had a conflict with a guard and was transferred to grounds maintenance. Benny stated that his duties were to “cut the lawn, weed, plant a garden, [and] plant new grass.” Although he said that “it’s one of the only jobs where no-one tells you what to do,” he also said that the job was not important and that the “experience I have is a lot more than that.” Benny did not believe that his job would contribute to his future employment.

Some subjects (5) believed that, although their Wespen work would not contribute to their future employment, the skills which they learned would be useful in other ways. One of these subjects is Geraldo, a Hispanic, 46-year-old. He had worked in grounds maintenance for two months before he requested a transfer to irrigation “to get away from the facility.” He reported that the bosses were “perfect [because] they don’t bother us – we know what to do”; and, “they take us to lunch.” Geraldo planned on returning to his framer position, which he had held 17 years, after he was released from Wespen. However, he thought that the irrigation experience would be useful “on my dad’s land” for which he would one day be responsible.

Not surprisingly, nearly all, 24 (96 percent), of the 25 subjects who believed their skills or knowledge increased through their Wespen work perceived their jobs favorably overall. Because favorability was measured by the ratio of the positive perspectives to the negative perspectives of a position, the favorable classification is also related to issues other than only whether the job provided additional skills. Apparently the more favorable jobs provided benefits on many different levels, some of which are explored in the following section.

Character-Changing Work Rewards

This section discusses character changes that the subjects underwent through their Wespen work and explores patterns between work experiences and the subjects' views of themselves in relation to connections with mainstream others, productive behaviors, mainstream goals, responsibility to others, and their role in their community. For the skilled subjects, and particularly the forestry workers, their work facilitated a sense of reintegration with a mainstream lifestyle, or rather *integration* as this was new to many of these subjects. This is consistent with recent interpretations of "strengths-based resettlement" (Burnett and Maruna 2006). This component of restorative justice asserts that offenders can best be reintegrated by recognizing, developing, and utilizing their abilities to contribute to society. This theory also includes the importance of "develop[ing] pro-social self-concepts and identity, generally in the form of rewarding work that is helpful to others" (Burnett and Maruna 2006).

Much research has found that negative associations, criminal embeddedness, and other social learning mechanisms have strong hold on the individual, and maintain the

offender's identity (Moore 1978; Sánchez-Jankowski 1991; Bourgois 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997; Krienert and Fleisher 2004). Still, some researchers and theorists (Snow and Anderson 1987; Hagan and McCarthy 1997; Padavic 2005; Uggen et al. 2005; Burnett and Maruna 2006) have claimed, directly or indirectly, that these strong social ties which influence identity are not unbreakable, that identity is fluid, and, that, therefore, criminal identity must also be amenable to change. The present study's data suggest that some of the study subjects sought, or at least recognized, social interactions through which they could redefine their identity.

Some (7) of the 49 subjects were appreciative of exposure to social interactions which either gave them a sense of connection to the outside world, or gave them an opportunity to develop their social skills. Five of the (7) subjects who had these social opportunities worked in skilled positions, and all of these subjects were generally favorable towards their jobs.

The subjects who worked in the facility indicated that they valued talking with staff members. One subject, a porter, liked "mingling with staff" and "being known as someone who is trustworthy." He said that he felt it increased his self-esteem. Another of these subjects, an administrative clerk, said that it was his job to "help make the [administrators'] jobs easier." He benefited from interactions with staff, stating "[It] keeps me in touch with the outside world, [and] my people skills have advanced." These subjects seemed to be reinventing themselves by identifying with and interacting more with the staff than with other inmates.

One of these subjects, Curtis, an American Indian, 39-year-old, worked as a barber at Wespen for one year. He said that the experience was beneficial because he had

not been cutting hair on a regular basis before his incarceration. Curtis believed that one day in the future he might want to be a barber full-time and that with the Wespen experience he would feel better prepared. Curtis also appreciated his contact with staff members when he cut their hair. He stated, “We talk about a lot of things happening on the outside. [It] helps you stay on top of things; [and, it] helps you to stay out of the mess.” Curtis, like the other two subjects, implied that associating with staff also meant associating less with other inmates, and therefore establishing a non-prisoner identity.

The other subjects who spoke of social interactions worked outside of the facility, in forestry. These subjects spoke of being around coworkers and supervisors who were not inmates or corrections officers. One subject stated that he benefited from eating in restaurants with regular citizens, which the forestry crew sometimes did when they were out in the field fighting fires. Another of the forestry workers, Emilio, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, stated that the job “taught me a lot of people skills – to go out with teams from all over the place; [it] gave me skills to act a little human; [it] built me up psychologically and emotionally.” These subjects, like the subjects that worked within the facility, seemed to be reconstructing their identity or character through these mainstream social interactions.

Some (11) of the study subjects spoke of changes in their work habits and work ethic, suggesting that new values had been transmitted through their Wespen work experiences. These values towards work included discipline, attitude, focus, and integrity. The data also suggested that these values and the associated behaviors led to self-esteem. Certain types of these values appeared to be associated with skill level and the different work programs.

Some (11) of the subjects, most (7) working in unskilled positions, pointed to work experiences that improved their work habits, changed their priorities, or changed their attitudes. Several of these subjects stated that their work habits had improved. Calvin, a White-non-Hispanic, 34-year-old, grounds maintenance worker, said that his “work ethic” was better, as he “was lazy before.” This subject had held two pre-Wespen vehicle detailer positions over a period of one and one-half years, and had left both jobs when he failed to report to work because he was intoxicated. A forestry subject, Major, a Hispanic, 42-year-old, clarified the process of work habit change, stating “it gets you up early, gets us ready for work; we know there’s work out there to do.” It appeared that the Wespen work experience may have the potential to redefine workplace norms for these subjects, adding discipline and responsibility – a strong work ethic – to the subjects’ frame of reference.

Major and one other forestry worker spoke of changes to their priorities. Major, who had previously worked as a plasterer, stated that his forestry job led him to see that “your work shows what you’re about.” Before his incarceration, Danny, an American Indian, 24-year-old, had worked as a landscaper and as a laborer pouring concrete. He stated that his forestry job, which he had held for three months, had helped to “keep his mind straight.” After his release from Wespen, Danny planned to get a job with the state’s forestry department as a wild-land firefighter, and said that he expected the job would “add focus to my life when I get out.” These forestry subjects appear to have placed this skilled trade, forestry, at the center of their lives.

Two subjects specifically mentioned a change in perspective. One of these subjects, a kitchen worker, who earned \$1.00 per hour, stated, “I feel like a slave.” Just

before this incarceration, he had only earned \$6.60 per hour as a detailer, and \$11.00 per hour as a flooring installer. Still, he said that the low wages for his Wespen work would “help me to appreciate the money I make” after release.

Another subject, who had worked in forestry prior to his last clerk position, expressed broad revelations. Randall, an African American, 28 year old, was hoping to obtain a government job in wild-land firefighting after his release. He said that his Wespen work had given him a trade “in something I never dreamed of doing”; the job had been “a real good experience for me”; and had given him “a fresh start in life.” Randall stated that it was important for him to succeed in his employment after his release so that he could be a “good role model” for his son. Although, both unskilled workers and skilled workers noted added value to their work habits, priorities, and attitudes, there appeared to be a difference between the quality of change between the forestry subjects and the other subjects. The forestry subjects spoke with more intensity of their experiences. The forestry subjects appeared to have experienced a transformation of their self-perception, their self-esteem.

As noted earlier, the presence of intrinsic rewards appeared to have added a dimension of meaning to some of the subjects’ work; however, for those subjects who assumed a sense of responsibility to others, it appeared to have had an even greater effect upon the relationship between the subject and his work. Burnett and Maruna (2006) posited that the most effective work from which an offender can attain the most significant identity change is that which invokes the “helper principle” (2006:84). The subjects’ reported experiences indicated that when they internalized responsibility for others, and even more so when their work goal was such that it resembled the “helper

principle,” the subjects perceived a connection between their “self” and their work. It appeared that their identity coalesced around the “helper” role and a sense of serving the community.

The subjects described the import of their work according to who benefited from their labor and how necessary the good or service was. The subjects described their roles in their work according to performance measures, or according to their level of responsibility. Although not all of the 49 subjects described their Wespen jobs in these terms, many (20) did. These descriptions varied between these skilled workers (14) and the unskilled workers (6), as well as between forestry workers (6) and all the other workers.⁸

The unskilled subjects were more likely to assess their jobs according to how well they pleased their customer, such as one subject, Bill, who waxed floors at Wespen. Bill said that he felt that he was good at what he did because he received “all kinds of compliments, [and that] people appreciate it.” He added that keeping the floors waxed “makes it a lot more easy to clean the rooms and the guards don’t pay as much attention to those rooms.” Bill believed that he was benefiting the residents of those rooms and took pride in this. However, he also said, “I find it to be very simple.”

Similarly a kitchen worker, Fred, an African American, 61-year-old, said that it was important that “the inmates eat properly.” His job, which he took seriously, was “to do the best to make it edible.” He implied, however, that he received little appreciation from those he served, the inmates, as they perceived the kitchen staff as having more resources than was the case, and, therefore, the inmates were not satisfied that they were receiving the best service that the kitchen staff could provide. Fred stated, “Some

[inmates] think we have access to food. They ask for favors; inmates [are] always thinking in terms of resources [and] opportunities.”

Skilled workers, such as the furniture manufacturers, also spoke of pleasing their customers. One of these subjects, Marco, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, said that making office furniture was “a challenge.” He stated, “It’s important for the people that order it. It makes you feel good when the people like it.” Another furniture maker, Hank, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old, was proud that he was a quick learner and competent. He said, “They bring me stuff and I know what to do.” Marco and Hank indicated that their self-esteem was increased through their competent work which satisfied their customers and their supervisors.

Rather than mentioning their competence, the forestry workers spoke of their responsibilities. One of these subjects, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, noted that one of his responsibilities was to “make sure no-one gets hurt” (when he fell trees). Another subject, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, said that through his job he had “learned more responsibility.” Ruben, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, also spoke of responsibility, as well as necessity, stating, “[The job] is important. We just got through with a controlled burn this past week. If we hadn’t done that, a fire could be a catastrophe.”

The forestry workers tended to describe their work as important, worthwhile, and necessary to many persons, rather than to particular customers. One of these subjects, Saul, a Hispanic, 27-year-old, stated, “[It is] good to be out there to stop fire, help people, their houses, and control fire.” Saul demonstrated that he viewed his role in his work as contributing to a larger customer, the community. Compared to the other groups of workers, both unskilled and skilled, the forestry workers appeared to perceive their work

as having a significant impact on their community. The realization of their impact as protectors of and helpers to their community appeared associated with a sense of personal agency and self-esteem. These workers appeared to have experienced growth in skills, the application of these skills, the realization that their work had significant impact, and the expectation that they had a marketable skill which they were capable of exercising after their release from Wespen.

Almost half (22) of the subjects reported that in their Wespen work, they had experienced work-group identity, through which they had shared values and developed self-esteem. However, this was not equally experienced between skilled and unskilled workers. Most (20) of the 25 skilled workers reported team dynamics or group cohesion within their work-groups. Conversely, only two of the 24 unskilled workers reported these types of dynamics. Of the skilled workers who spoke of teamwork and cohesion, all but two were favorable towards their jobs. Both of the unskilled workers, however, were unfavorable towards their positions.

One of the unskilled workers, an inventory clerk in the furniture manufacturing unit, only stated briefly, "We help each other." The other worker, however, described the teamwork in more detail. This subject, James, a Hispanic, 45-year-old, who worked in the kitchen, spoke of the quality work which the group performed. He said, "It was bad when I first got there. There were roaches everywhere. Since then we've cleaned it good. The crew that I work in, we really maintain the cleanliness and the good work atmosphere there." Regardless of the teamwork environment, both of these subjects did not perceive their jobs as generally favorable, and neither expected that the work

experience would prove useful after their release from prison. However, the expansion of social skills and teamwork ability may nonetheless prove to be advantageous.

Several (3) of the furniture manufacturing workers and all nine of the forestry workers distinguished their respective work-groups through identifying as a team, or family, and through seeing themselves as negatively perceived by other workers. These negative perceptions appeared to unify the forestry subjects, as well as the furniture manufacturing work-group. Their negative status strengthened their bond and their pride in being unique.

The furniture manufacturers distinguished themselves through hard work. They reported that other workers are not in the furniture program because “a lot of them don’t want to work.” One of these subjects, Jeff, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, who was unfavorable of his job, stated “They think we work long hours – work too much. We were working 10 hours [a day] for a while.”

Other furniture workers perceived their jobs differently. A few subjects in this work-group (3) believed that other workers envied their jobs. One worker, Ignacio, a Hispanic, 65-year-old, stated, “They think we have one of the top jobs ... We get to go to a different building, have daylight, [and] have more freedom.”

All of the forestry workers shared similar perceptions of their work and distinguished themselves as a team. All of these subjects were generally favorable towards their jobs. All of the forestry subjects noted that they were either a “team” or a “family.” Major, a Hispanic, 42-year-old, described his coworkers as “all cool. We’re one team; we all stick together.” He also referred to hard work, stating that “the ones that are in forestry are the ones that like to work.”

One of the subjects, Dominic, a Hispanic, 31-year-old, explained how other workers negatively perceive the forestry workers. He stated, “They think we’re different; they think that we think we are different.” Emilio, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, elaborated upon Dominic’s perspective. He said, “They just probably hear a lot of bad stories – hard work, long hours – and, [it] makes them not want to do that craziness.”

Another forestry subject reported that the workers also isolate themselves from other inmates. Eliseo, a Hispanic, 31-year-old, said that he and his coworkers live in the same housing unit. He added, “We stick to [our] selves, not with other inmates.” The data suggest that the forestry workers identify as different both because others perceive them as different and because they primarily interact only with each other. Their cohesion stemming from a team environment and isolation as a group, as well as their sense of efficacy and personal agency, seemed to have increased their self-esteem and their favorable valuations of their jobs.

CONFLICT

Conflict in the workplace interfered with seven of the 49 subjects’ Wespen jobs. Wespen subjects spoke of conflict with supervisors and conflict with coworkers. Several (4) of these subjects had transient pre-Wespen employment histories, which they attributed to substance abuse binging, moving, finding a better job, and arrest. With the exception of the pre-Wespen jobs which were lost due to arrest, conflict cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor to these subjects’ job losses.

One of these subjects clearly indicated that his orientation towards conflict outside of Wespen continued during his Wespen work experiences. Calvin, a White-non-

Hispanic, 34-year-old, said that he was “not a people person,” and “like[d] to work alone”; he also stated that he can be “snappy,” and “[I] have to watch [my] tongue.” He reported that he had left both of his last pre-Wespen jobs because he was intoxicated and unable to go to work. He had held each job for one year or less. During his incarceration at Wespen for attempted murder, he had held 10 different positions in several different types of work programs in three facilities. Only two of these positions were skilled. His left his last skilled position in irrigation when he had an argument with a coworker. He was transferred to an unskilled position, public facility grounds maintenance. Calvin’s conflict-oriented disposition affected, to some degree, his pre-prison employment, his criminal behavior (the attempted murder of his girlfriend), and his Wespen employment.

Six other subjects were also transferred to other Wespen jobs in efforts to remedy conflict problems. Like Calvin, several (3) of these other subjects experienced downward mobility from the transfers. One of these other subjects who moved from a skilled position to an unskilled position is William, an African American, 34-year-old. He stated that he had a conflict with a supervisor when he was working in forestry; William told him that “I don’t give a damn about your job.” William was then transferred to furniture delivery. However, William perceived the conflict as atypical of the forestry field and still planned to pursue wild-land firefighting upon his release from Wespen.

One of two subjects who were assigned to higher skilled positions following conflict in the workplace is Gabriel, a Hispanic, 31-year-old. Believing that he was being “set up” by his supervisor, he requested a work transfer from his kitchen job to furniture manufacturing. For both of these subjects, the job transfer stemming from conflict led them to a better position. However, this was not generally the case.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS

Calvin and several of the other subjects who indicated that conflict had interfered with their employment had attributed their legal problems and employment problems to substance abuse. As seen in Chapter Four, almost all of the Wespen subjects had difficulties with substance abuse before this incarceration. Twenty five of the 49 subject reported that they had received some type of substance abuse counseling while at Wespen; the counseling was provided in several different forms, including comprehensive programs involving support from peers, classes on addiction and relapse, and individual counseling. The analysis revealed variations in the subjects' appreciation of these treatments, as well as in their plans for separating from substance abuse.

About half (13) of the subjects who engaged in substance abuse treatment perceived the experience either negatively, neutrally, or did not comment on the usefulness. Most of the subjects, including Calvin, were neutral about the treatment programs. Four of these subjects, however, were critical of the implementation or effectiveness.

An example of the subjects who were critical is Edgar, a Hispanic, 41-year-old, who participated in the comprehensive therapy group (CTG), which entailed ongoing counseling and residing in a housing unit with other inmates also healing from substance abuse. Edgar's criminal history included drug and alcohol crimes. He had withdrawn from the program, stating "[it] wasn't for me – all the donkey tricks." Despite his negative opinion of the substance abuse program, he did state that upon his release that he would not allow substance abusing associates to tempt him to compromise his success. He said, "That's all on me."

An example of the subjects who perceived a treatment program neutrally, is Danny, an American Indian, 24-year-old. He stated that the program that he attended was “mostly about drugs, but my problem is alcohol.” Although Danny was determined to be successful after his release, and intended to apply for a state wild-land firefighter job, he was not prepared to completely separate from his substance using friends. He said, “I’m gonna give [my friends] a heads up, ‘if you’re gonna drink or do drugs [around me], don’t come by; but, if you’re a true friend and not gonna drink or do drugs, then it’s o.k.” Four other subjects who perceived their treatment program negatively or neutrally also were not prepared to completely separate from substance abuse environments.

Similar to the negative or neutral subjects, most (8) of the 12 subjects who perceived their treatment program positively had planned strategies for avoiding substance abusing friends. One of these subjects is Kurt, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old, who had been jailed or incarcerated for the last two years because he committed burglary while under the influence of drugs. Kurt enrolled in CTG because he “was tired of doing meth[amphetamine].” He said that the program was helpful, and that he intended to remain drug free. Kurt had planned to disassociate from his substance abusing friends, by “moving to [another town], and start[ing] over.”

Although all but one of the 49 subjects reported substance abuse histories, only half (25) reported that they had participated in substance abuse treatment while at Wespen. It can be assumed that others likely had, but did not mention the treatment. It is worth noting that the DOC is not authorized to force inmates to participate in these programs.

About half (12) of the (25) subjects who did participate in these treatment programs perceived the experience favorably; many (9) others were neutral. Four (16 percent) of these subjects who participated did not find the treatment helpful. It appears that the treatment helped the majority of the inmates who participate. However, it was observed that approximately one-third (8) of these subjects either did not plan to avoid substance abuse social environments upon their release, or were resistant to separating from substance abuse social environments.⁹

DISCUSSION

The existing literature (Reynolds 1997; National Corrections Industry Association 1999; Bushway and Reuter 2002; MacKenzie 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007), the state's DOC position (2008, 2010), and the Wespen administrators have all asserted that the purposes of in-prison work programs are keeping the inmates occupied, providing for the institutions' operational needs, and training the inmates for successful post-release employment. The analyses revealed that these goals were achieved to varying degrees. The data suggest that Wespen's work programs did keep the subjects occupied, and did keep the institution operating. However, all of the subjects were not equally trained for successful post-release employment. Additionally, the data showed that all of the subjects were not equally provided pathways to attitudinal change.

The initial point of divergence occurred from the arrival of the subjects to the facility (see Figure 2). Most subjects were initially placed in unskilled operations

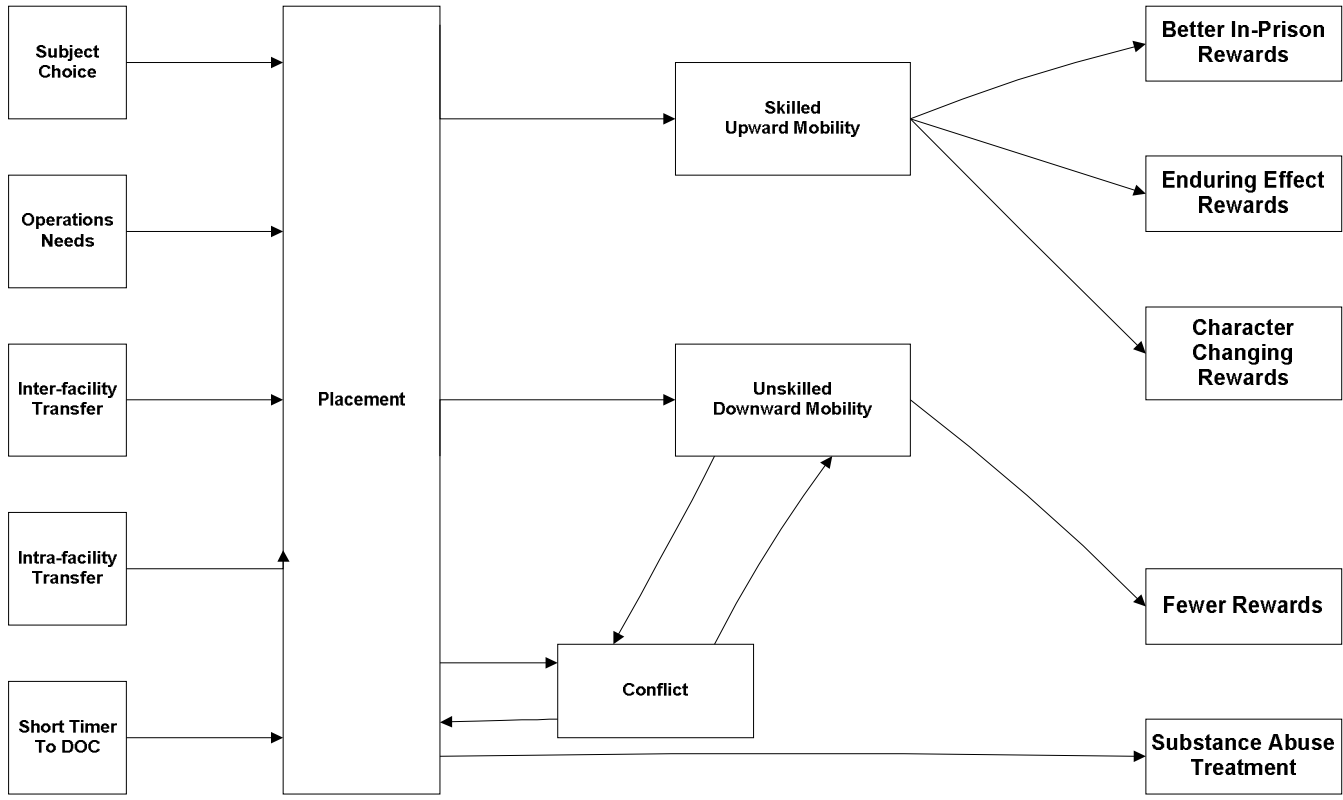


Figure 2: Wespen Work Themes Model

positions. Some, but not all, of the subjects were able to advance from these jobs into more skilled positions. The stagnant placements in less beneficial positions occurred for several reasons: in some cases the subjects' lacked foresight or interest in skilled work; in other cases, problems occurred because of logistical complexity, including operational needs, inter-facility transfers, intra-facility transfers, and little time remaining on the subjects' sentence upon their arrival to the DOC. The job placement procedures permitted a secondary labor sector within Wespen. Although half (25) of the Wespen subjects worked in skilled positions just prior to their release, the limited opportunity for skilled work is congruent with other research findings that many inmates worked in low-skilled operations jobs and did not have the opportunity to accrue more human capital while incarcerated (Reynolds 1997; Visher and Kachnowski 2007).

These problems were consistent with the administrators' insights about the disjuncture between the design and the implementation of work programs within the institutions. These logistical problems resulted in transient employment for the subjects. In some cases, the subjects were unable to participate in beneficial programs because they did not have enough remaining time to serve, as specified for some of the programs. Additionally, some of the subjects who managed to obtain placement in beneficial programs were only able to participate for short periods, months, before they were released from Wespen.

The placements led to either unskilled work or skilled work. The subjects who were placed in skilled positions were more likely to have experienced upward mobility compared to their pre-Wespen employment. These skilled subjects were also more likely

to have perceived their work favorably, and to have believed that it would benefit them after their release. Although the skilled workers benefited to at least some extent, accruing skills and believing that the additional skills would be useful in the future, disparate opportunity can also be problematic because it has the potential to further erode the unskilled inmates' sense of self-efficacy (Wilson 1996).

The administrators pointed out that the programs are designed to “give them the tools to not come back to prison – tools to function as a normal person” (Ben), “to teach a different way [of life]” (Jan), and “give them an opportunity” (Jan). Observation revealed that some of both the skilled and the unskilled workers experienced changes for the better in their work habits and work ethics. The data suggested that these changes appeared to have been culturally transmitted (Wilson 1996) through the Wespen work experience. However, other outcomes and rewards associated with the work differed between the unskilled positions and the skilled positions. Although there were some similarities in immediate in-prison rewards, e.g., for those who valued keeping busy or the work-site location, there were many more differences regarding other types of outcomes and rewards.

The skilled workers, and, most markedly, the forestry workers, were more likely to have obtained skills that were perceived to be marketable and of interest to the subject. The majority of these skilled subjects entered these programs hoping to obtain immediate rewards such as work-site location, better wages, etc. However, the furniture workers, the forestry workers, and to some extent administrative clerks, received long-term rewards which they did not anticipate.

Many of the skilled subjects, primarily the forestry workers, found that the work program provided unexpected intrinsic rewards, and the potential for post-release work opportunities. Most surprisingly, these jobs fostered character changing outcomes, such as social connectedness, productive work habits, and meaningful work that contributed to a greater good. These subjects were able to reconstruct their identity and potentially their roles in the community after their release. These outcomes are consistent with Burnett and Maruna's development of "resettlement theory" in *The kindness of prisoners: Strengths-based resettlement in theory and in action* (2006). Burnett and Maruna asserted that through certain types of work activity, "The alleged benefits of assuming the role of helper, for offenders, include a sense of accomplishment, grounded increments in self-esteem, meaningful purposiveness and a cognitive restructuring towards responsibility" (2006:84-85).

Those subjects who were able to participate in these beneficial work programs were able to experience a sense of personal agency, through attaining skills, and gaining self-esteem and confidence. Through their Wespen work activity, they were able to take pride in applying their skills in a meaningful way. The forestry subjects appeared to have developed self-esteem by believing that their actions mattered and were helping the community. These experiences were of a much higher order compared to the unskilled workers. The forestry subjects appeared to have developed their sense of self through their work activity, alleviating worker alienation (Marx [1844] 1988).

In contrast, the unskilled subjects were more likely to have experienced negative outcomes. These subjects were less likely to have perceived their Wespen work favorably, or to believe that the work would prove beneficial upon their release. More of

these workers also experienced conflict in the Wespen workplace which contributed to unstable employment in prison. Although a few of the unskilled workers noted significant gains from their Wespen work experience, such as appreciation for modest income available in the community, and a revived positive work ethic, their benefits from their work experience were quite different from those experienced by the forestry subjects. In general, only half of the 49 subjects worked in “quality jobs” (Uggen et al. 2005), and only nine worked in forestry, the highest quality of the work programs, which contained the majority of benefits – marketable skills and opportunity for identity transformation through responsibility, accomplishment, self-efficacy, self-esteem and social skills.

Both the unskilled workers and the skilled workers participated in substance abuse treatment while incarcerated at Wespen. Skill level did not appear linked to whether the subjects (approximately half, 12) found the treatment programs beneficial. Although the substance abuse programs were likely more helpful, than not, the data did suggest that the treatment may have failed to provide the subjects with well planned strategies to exit substance abuse environments.

Overall, the Wespen programs met the well intentioned goals of the DOC and the Wespen administrators for some of the subjects, but not for the majority. The more beneficial programs appeared to be, in descending order of positive impact, forestry, furniture manufacturing, irrigation, and administrative clerical work.

Notes: Chapter Five

¹ To ensure the anonymity of the study subjects, and the study facility, the state within which Wespen is located is not disclosed. Unavoidably, citations and the bibliography references for the state’s DOC literature and the state’s DOC website cannot be complete.

² Although inmates can move to lower level units as they exhibit good behavior, upon a disciplinary action they can be transferred to a higher level unit or facility. This movement can happen several times within one incarceration period. In this study, 31 subjects had resided in two or three facilities or units during their current incarcerations; eight had resided in four or more facilities or units. This illustrates the transient nature of the inmates between facilities or classification units. Movement between facilities and within facilities is relevant because work opportunities vary between facilities and between units within facilities. This movement, in addition to job changes requested by the inmates or administration, means that inmates may work in several different positions during their incarceration period. This decreases the length of time in which inmates can learn skills or develop patterns of behavior within a position. Although the following analyses focus upon the study subjects' most recent work experiences within Wespen, it is important to recognize that some of the subjects did not work in these positions for lengthy periods of time. Additionally, some of the subjects reported frustration that work and educational opportunities were interrupted due to changing facilities and units.

³ The types of the DOC inmate work and job training programs include, but may not be limited to, auto mechanics, auto body, agriculture, food services management, culinary, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, HVAC, welding, fiber optics, manufacturing office furniture, furniture delivery/assembly, textiles, cleaning supplies, printing, telemarketing services, forestry, highway litter removal, public works maintenance, administrative services, inmate services, and general operations. With the exception of operating a feedlot that was leased by a private entity, the Wespen subjects' labor benefitted only the public sector, administration, inmates, or facility operations. Four of the types of work were performed off-site from the facility: highway litter removal, public works maintenance, furniture delivery/assembly, and forestry. Wespen subjects participated to some degree in all of these types of work, except auto body, textiles, cleaning supplies, copying services, and telemarketing. Additionally, the auto mechanics and culinary programs had yet to be implemented at Wespen during the time period of this study.

⁴ Only one of these subjects indicated that he had benefited from an automatic placement. This subject, Herman, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, had been automatically placed in the kitchen where he had worked for four months when he was transferred. Without his input regarding the transfer, Herman was placed in furniture manufacturing, with which he was pleased, and where he remained for one year prior to his release.

⁵ The subjects' average time in their last Wespen position was seven months. Most of the subjects, 9 (60 percent), who had worked in their last job longer than seven months held forestry, furniture manufacturing, and barber positions.

⁶ If the subject responded with more negative than positive points then he was classified as *unfavorable* towards his in-prison work. If the subject responded with more positive than negative points, then he was classified as *favorable* towards his in-prison work. In cases where the subject reported equal numbers of negative and positive aspects, favorability was determined according to which of these types of responses seemed most important to the subject.

⁷ Two subjects, one committed skilled furniture maker, and one uncommitted unskilled clerk, however, had pointed out that the low pay for their jobs was unacceptable. These were the only two subjects to explicitly indicate that their in-prison pay was a significant negative aspect of their Wespen work experience.

⁸ Only 20 of the 49 subjects spoke of their roles within their Wespen work in terms of responsibility towards those who they served, whether it was inmates, administration, or the public.

⁹ Only one of these eight subjects had reported that he never had negative associations.

Chapter Six: Post-release Work Experiences/Outcomes

Corrections work programs are designed to prepare the offenders for post-release employment, as well as to address in-prison concerns such as keeping the offenders occupied during their incarceration (National Corrections Industry Association, NCIA 1999, Department of Corrections 2004). The post-release employment issues are based upon the premise that offenders' employment, especially the quality of and stability of their work, is related to their success in the community and to desistance from crime (Laub and Sampson 1993; Uggen 2000; Pager 2007).

Chapter Four examined the subjects' pre-Wespen work, and Chapter Five examined the Wespen work programs. If Wespen work programs affected the subjects, as intended by the state department of corrections (DOC), differences between their pre-Wespen experiences and their post-release experiences should be apparent. In order to adequately compare these two conditions, however, the nature of the post-release work experiences must first be explored.

Several areas are presumed relevant to post-release work for the offender. Research has shown that ex-inmates are more likely to experience discrimination in hiring, assignment, and wages (Holzer et al. 2007; Pager 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2007); other research has found that the prison experience may also affect the offender's post-release employment for a number of other reasons – human capital declines during incarceration, loss of social capital, and lost access to some occupations (Useem and Piehl 2008); another issue frequently considered is whether the offender can meet his financial needs (Crutchfield 1995; Hannon and Defronzo 1998) or has opportunity to

pursue the means to meet his financial needs (Wilson 1996). More recently research has sought to measure more intrinsic needs that are met through work (Uggen 1999; Uggen 2000; Bossler 2004; Burnett and Maruna 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007). This study also looked at social relationships and whether they conform to conventional values, or foster criminal embeddedness (see Toby 1957; Hirschi 1969; Hagan and McCarthy 1997).

In light of these theoretical areas and empirical research, and the DOC's intention to prepare the subjects' for post-release success, this chapter explores the subjects' post-release experiences, including work, obstacles to work, and recidivism. Post-release employment placement resources are also examined, as well as the perceptions of state program administrators regarding the role of post-release work compared to the subjects' experiences.

The DOC goals, and the existing theory and research suggest the following empirical questions: (1) What is the state's department of corrections' (DOC) role in the parolee's post-release employment? (2) What employment programs are available to the parolee through the state's department of labor (DOL)? (3) What types of work did the subjects expect to obtain after their release from Wespen? (4) What types of work did the subjects obtain? (5) Did the subjects encounter obstacles to obtaining and maintaining work? (6) Was there a link between the types of work obtained and the subjects' positive or negative perspectives regarding the work? (7) Was there a link between whether the subjects' received extrinsic or intrinsic rewards from their employment and the subjects' positive or negative perspectives regarding their work? (8) Were the subjects reincarcerated within six months of their release from Wespen?

THE STATE'S ROLE IN PAROLEE EMPLOYMENT

To understand the state operated post-release employment resources available to the study subjects, one DOC administrator and one DOL administrator were interviewed. The interviews address the available programs and the administrators' perspectives regarding offender post-release employment. The DOC administrator, Pete, had been in the corrections field for approximately 20 years. He was an administrator of a comprehensive supervision program (SP) that worked with high-needs probationers and parolees, usually with mental health or substance abuse problems. Pete stated that the DOC supervises approximately 2500 new parolees in a one year period. Of those parolees, a small portion of them are supervised under SP, which provides more personalized services. Parolees on SP are supervised more closely than other parolees because the SP probation/parole officers (PO) have smaller case loads. Since the SP caseloads are smaller than regular supervision caseloads, the officers can give the parolees more assistance with obtaining services, enrolling in programs, and obtaining employment if they are physically and mentally able to work. Pete stated that 20 percent to 30 percent of the SP resources and energy are spent on employment efforts.

Parolees on regular supervision are also required to work if they are not enrolled in school full-time. The regular supervision POs have large caseloads that inhibit close supervision and assistance compared to that offered through SP. Still, Pete explained, the parolees on regular supervision receive at least some employment assistance at two different times - just prior to release and when first placed on parole. First, each inmate is required to have a parole plan prior to his release. The inmate meets with a committee that coordinates his treatment and employment plan. Second, depending on the

geographical location where the parolee is released, he may be required to see an interim probation/parole officer at a re-entry center to initiate the parolee's enrollment in treatment, educational, and vocational programs, and/or employment seeking. Some locations do not have re-entry centers; in these cases, the parolee's PO may have the assistance of re-entry specialists who have knowledge of employment opportunities, such as "what companies are hiring felons."

The DOC is interested in increasing the number of employers who are willing to hire parolees and probationers. Pete explained that when he has the opportunity to speak with employers about hiring felons, he informs them of federal "tax incentives" and "bonding resources." He also said that he explains to the businesses that the POs' involvement with the parolees' employment can increase the likelihood that the parolees will attend work regularly and as scheduled, alleviating some employers' concerns that felons are unreliable. The DOC identifies employers that have a known history of hiring felons, and provides the offenders with lists of those businesses.

Pete said that the DOC also collaborates with other agencies to "get parolees to job fairs" several times a year, and offers parolees "specialized classes for job readiness and resume preparation." He stated that these opportunities are provided as a "tool that they can or cannot choose to use" which "seems to offer hope for some." Pete reported that it is important to communicate a sense of hope to the parolees. He said, "They come home with barriers they didn't have before [going to prison]"; and, "[The] offenders often throw in the towel before they give things a chance." He explained that it is important "to acclimate them." He also stated that it is important for the offenders to quickly

acclimate, for instance by obtaining a job, because the period of time just after release “is a vulnerable time for the offender and for the safety of the community.”

Pete reported that the parolees respond favorably to the employment classes and job fairs offered by the DOC. He stated that the offenders are “used to hearing from others ‘you’re doomed, you’ll be back, the PO’s out to get you.’” He explained that the employment programs provide alternative positive messages. He stated that it is apparent that the offenders “feel like they have a black cloud over them,” and that after attending the job fairs and classes, “you see when their mood lifts.”

Another administrator, John, had been employed with the DOL for over five years and had previously worked for ten years within the criminal justice system. His DOL tasks included coordinating employment between job seekers and employers. A portion of these job seekers were parolees who had participated in a comprehensive educational program (EP) while they were in prison. The EP program includes life skills, job training, education, and post-release employment placement. According to DOC literature, in 2008 there were approximately 500 participants in EP within the state’s prison facilities. These EP participants constitute approximately 9 percent of all DOC inmates.

Of the approximately 4000 inmates released from the state’s DOC correctional facilities in 2008 (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2009), using imputed percentages, approximately 345 of those released inmates were EP participants. Three of the offender subjects in this research study had participated in and completed EP. Another subject had participated in EP for a period of time at another correctional facility, but after he transferred to Wespen he was unable to continue in EP because of the limited time

remaining on his sentence. These four EP participants represent 8 percent of the study subjects.

John said that the DOL helps EP graduates find employment after they have been released from prison. He explained that he visits businesses attempting to arrange employment for unemployment recipients, EP graduates, and other citizens that are seeking employment. John stated that when he is seeking employment on behalf of non-felon citizens, he also takes the opportunity to ask employers if they will hire felons. He said that at one time the DOL had provided felons a written list of employers that were known to hire felons, but that now the DOL only provides verbal referrals.

John also explained that the DOL administers federal employer incentives to hire felons. These incentives include the Federal Bonding Program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. The Federal Bonding Program provides employers with bonding for felon employees who might not be covered through private bonding insurers. This lessens the risk of financial loss to the employer that agrees to hire a felon. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provides a tax credit up to \$6,000 to employers that hire felons. The U.S. Department of Labor (2008) reports that 691,421 tax credits were issued in 2008. These certificates were issued to persons within 12 categories, one of which is ex-felons.¹

Felons who are not assisted by the state's DOL in their employment seeking bear the burden of suggesting these federal incentives to the employer. Only four (8 percent) study subjects reported that they were aware of post-release employment assistance programs other than the DOL's employment services provided to all citizens. When the research interviewer mentioned these federal employer incentive programs, only a few of

the subjects knew of these programs and none knew how to initiate the process. Several of the subjects mentioned three different companies (a cabinet maker, a retailer, and a taxi-cab company) that regularly hired felons. It may be that these three companies regularly hire felons and take advantage of the tax credits. During the follow-up interviews, none of the study subjects said that they had successfully taken advantage of the federal incentive programs. One of the subjects had pursued employment as a taxi-cab driver, believing that the company hired felons to obtain the tax credits; however, the subject stated that he was told that the company had no driver openings. This was the only subject who indicated that he had pursued one of the federal incentives after his release from Wespen. John, the state DOL administrator, stated that there were no designated DOL personnel to assist felons, except for those felons who were in the EP program.

John also spoke of the job fairs which Pete had mentioned. He stated that non-EP graduates can also attend the job fairs, and that oftentimes these are open to the public. Non-EP graduates sometimes learn of the job fairs from their POs. John reported that the last job fair specifically for offenders in which the DOL participated was held two years prior. He stated, “not many employers showed up, mostly education institutions.” John pointed to problems with some offenders as well. He said, “You can tell [that some of the offenders] have been looking for employment; others want to be handed something.” He concluded, however, that it is difficult for offenders “to get their foot in the door ... You get people turning to crime again. We need to get these people back to work.”

LABOR MARKET CONDITIONS

This study was conducted in 2008 and 2009, during the recent severe U.S./global economic recession. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010a), national unemployment rates ranged from 6.2 percent to 9.5 percent during these two years. In the state in which Wespen is located, unemployment rates were similar. Unemployment increased during the six-month period following the subjects' release from Wespen. During the months in which study subjects were released from Wespen and the six months following, the state's unemployment rates were between 4.5 percent and 8.5 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010d).

More specific population unemployment rates demonstrate the greater degree of difficulty that the labor market poses for persons with the study subjects' demographic characteristics. National unemployment rates (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010c) for males without a high school education were 9 percent in 2008, and 14.6 percent in 2009. The national rates for males with a high school education and no college were 5.9 percent in 2008 and 11 percent in 2009. These numbers are significantly different from those for college graduates, which were 2.5 percent and 4.7 percent respectively. There is an obvious disadvantage to those with minimal education, such as these Wespen subjects.² Individuals who had not attended college or trade school comprised 84 percent of the subjects. Also, individuals with less than a high school diploma or G.E.D. comprised 37 percent of the study subjects. These data suggest that unemployment rates would be high for the subjects, even if they had not been incarcerated.

It is difficult to isolate the unemployment data for offenders, or more specifically parolees, from databases such as those from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

However, Visher and Kachnowski (2007) found that 10 percent of the parolees in their study had obtained full-time employment within three months after their release from an Illinois prison; 24 percent had obtained full-time employment within eight months after their release. In the mid-1990s, the unemployment rates for inmates, prior to their incarceration, were estimated to be about 36 percent (Katz and Krueger 1999).

Forty-two percent of the study subjects were not employed at the time of their arrest prior to this incarceration (see Chapter Four). It is apparent that the unemployment rate for these subjects was much higher than that for the general population. Of course, this fact maybe somewhat misleading, in that many of the subjects were likely not searching for work at the time of their arrest. Instead, as noted in Chapter Four, many of the subjects were engaging in illegal activity as a means of support. It is also clear that the labor market provides much less opportunity for these subjects, not only because of their lower education levels, but also related to their criminal histories, which at post-release include one or more incarcerations (see Holzer et al. 2007).

Labor market analyses also consider projected vacancies for individual occupations and industries. The state's DOL reports that 70 percent of the workforce needs within the state can be filled by persons with high school educations (DOL 2010).³ Of the occupations that the state projects to be among the fastest growing, several encompass those occupations that the subjects reported in their work histories, including food preparation, cook, food server, construction laborer, carpenter, maintenance, retail salesperson, janitor & cleaner, cashier, and clerk. The DOL projections are based on expected population growth and industry trends for the period from 2008 to 2018. These projections may be relevant to the subjects' future work opportunities; however, during

the time period that the study subjects were released from Wespen and the following six months (the last quarter of 2008 and first two quarters of 2009), the state suffered an approximate 3 percent net job loss (DOL 2009).

National projections are similar to those of the state. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects an increase in vacancies for several of the job types that the subjects reported within their work histories, including cashier, retail salesperson, waiter, food preparation (including fast-food), clerk, janitor, and counter-attendant (2003). The largest declines related to the subjects' areas of work history are reported for order clerk, shipping and receiving clerk, information and record clerk, transportation laborer, and switchboard operator (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported, "The shift in the U.S. economy away from goods-producing in favor of service-providing is expected to continue. Service industries are anticipated to generate approximately 14.5 million new wage and salary jobs" (2003:8). National projections of the fastest growing industries include, among others, healthcare and social assistance, professional/scientific/ technical services, educational services, administrative, accommodation and food services, and government (2003).

POST-RELEASE EMPLOYMENT

At three months after their release from Wespen, and again at six months, the subjects were interviewed about their post-release employment experiences. Their responses included information about their job searches and the obstacles which they encountered. The subjects who had been employed at some point within the six month period following their release provided information about their jobs.

Not all of the subjects were interviewed at both follow-up intervals. Because the follow-up data at the second interval often contained duplicate information to the first interval, the data for both follow-up intervals are combined. Twenty-eight (57 percent) of the 49 subjects were interviewed at least once during the six months post-release. Family members offered limited information regarding five others. Other accessible data included public records from the state's DOC, which revealed that ten (20 percent) of the 49 subjects had been reincarcerated within six months of their release from Wespen.⁴

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

A majority (20) of 32 subjects for whom employment information was obtained were employed at the time of the follow-up interviews. About half (11) of these subjects were committed to their jobs; all but one of these committed subjects worked in skilled positions.⁵ The majority (7) of the 11 committed subjects had returned to the jobs or trades which they held prior to their incarceration at Wespen, mainly (6) in the building trades.

Several (3) of these subjects who were committed to a prior job or trade indicated that they had experienced intrinsic rewards from their work, including a sense of personal agency from the belief that they could find and perform meaningful, significant work. Their comments included, "It's a calling"; "Every day is learning"; and "It's something unique that you do." One of these subjects, Benny, a Hispanic, 50-year-old, worked for himself as a house painter. He spoke of his abilities and responsibilities: "I'm trying to perfect what I was doing before - trying to get back into it." He indicated a sense of

obligation and responsibility, stating that he was motivated to go to work everyday “knowing that I got something to do [that] needs to be finished.”

Several (3) of the committed subjects were working in jobs related to their Wespen work or training, two of who were wild-land firefighters, and one who was a self-employed computer networking technician. All three of these subjects expected to continue working in their jobs indefinitely. One of these subjects, Abe, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, wild-land firefighter, explained, “I’m gonna be 29 this month. [I] have about 10 years left to do that kinda work [firefighter]; and, then [I will] become a driver [for forestry firefighting].”

There were significant differences between those employed subjects who were committed to their jobs and those who were not. The nine subjects who were not committed to their current post-release jobs mostly worked in unskilled positions (8); these jobs included janitor, yard worker, road construction worker, and security guard. In contrast to the committed, skilled workers, none of these uncommitted, unskilled workers had returned to a job which they had held prior to their incarceration at Wespen. Only two of the uncommitted, unskilled subjects were working in positions related to their Wespen work; however, these were undesirable positions (janitorial) or diluted versions (a forestry worker performing tree cutting) of their Wespen work. Compared to the committed, skilled workers, the uncommitted, unskilled workers were employed in lesser quality jobs.

Additionally, the uncommitted, unskilled workers’ average earnings were much less per hour, \$8.79, compared to the committed, skilled workers average earnings per hour, \$15.50. Half (4) of these unskilled, uncommitted workers did not earn enough

money to support themselves, and even the unskilled subjects who earned enough to support themselves earned low wages. The subjects' work stratification, reported rewards, and commitment measures suggested that the subjects in the more peripheral jobs were less bonded to their work (Crutchfield 1995).

Chris, a Hispanic, 38-year-old, is one of the subjects who reported that he was unable to support himself. He was not committed to his part-time, \$7.50 per hour, security guard position at a homeless shelter. Chris had volunteered at the shelter before he was hired as a regular employee. Although he was grateful to have a job, he stated "I really don't care for it; I don't like having to deal with all the alcohol and drugs." Chris explained that his earnings helped, but that he was unable to rent his own apartment or buy a car. Until he could afford otherwise, he would have to continue to reside with his father in a travel trailer without utilities. He said that his post-release experience had been "different than I expected; I figured I'd be able to get a good job right away."

Like Chris, Gus, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, was also employed in an unskilled job that did not meet his needs, and was unsatisfactory. Upon his release from Wespen, Gus received counseling through a mental health program for veterans. His counselor arranged for him a part-time janitorial job at the institution where he received his outpatient treatment; however, the job was only two days a week and paid minimum wage. Additionally, although Gus felt comfortable around his coworkers, he indicated that it was partly a negative environment. He reported, "They are the same as me - homeless, drugs and alcohol ... [Only] some of them are serious about getting on their feet." Although his supervisor was "real nice, telling me to put in for permanent," Gus, who had either wanted a heavy equipment operator position or to work in an

apprenticeship program, was not committed to the janitorial job and was reluctant to apply for a permanent position. With disappointment he stated, “I thought I would’ve gotten in somewhere.”

Only one of the unskilled, uncommitted workers cited many positive aspects of his job. Ted, an African American, 54-year-old, had planned to either work in a restaurant, using the culinary certificate which he earned at Wespen, or at a department store. However, Ted obtained a telemarketing position through a fellow resident at his half-way house. Although his \$9.50 per hour wage was sufficient, and allowed him to save for an apartment and a car, for one year he would not be eligible for other benefits. Although Ted was not committed to his job, eventually wanting a career in counseling and presently “in the market for something better,” he recognized several positive aspects of the job. He stated, “[The bosses and coworkers are] really cool people”; “right from the start I was welcome there”; “management is approachable – supportive”; and, “it’s comfortable and relaxed – no dress code.”

Ted was also the only unskilled, uncommitted, employed subjects to have reported any sense of personal agency gained through his post-release experiences. He mentioned the following: “You challenge yourself”; “I have a knack for conversation – sales”; “Last week I had an outstanding week”; and, “I’m gonna give it my best effort. It’s been good for me right now.”

However, Ted’s sense of personal agency was tempered when he became disillusioned with his work’s impact on others. He explained that sometimes he felt bad putting sales pressure on people to make donations: “I had my moments; at first I was thinking I’m really doing something beneficial; but, then there was this one point when I

went through this period [of] people saying ‘I just lost my job.’ Hearing so many negative stories, I thought ‘I don’t know if I can deal with this.’ I thought about getting into something else. [It was] mentally draining.”

The only one of these uncommitted subjects who was employed in a skilled position, building maintenance, disliked several aspects of his job. Javier, a Hispanic, 31-year-old, was also the only uncommitted subject to have returned to a prior job. Although his maintenance job included complex tasks which required developed skills, Javier only earned \$8.00 per hour, less than he had earned in the same position previously, and not enough money to support himself without his mother’s help. He also disliked his eight hour per day schedule, the same reason for which he had resigned from the position before Wespen. Additionally, he found some of his tasks frustrating, stating “I don’t understand why we do some things.” At this juncture, Javier was displeased working a standard eight hour day, with his wages, and partly with his tasks. Uncommitted to his job, he had enrolled in community college, and was planning to resign from his maintenance position within a year.

There were apparent differences between the employed committed workers and the employed uncommitted workers. As mentioned earlier, the committed workers were more likely to have been skilled, to have been better paid, to have returned to a prior job, and to have obtained work related to their prison employment/vocational training. The data showed that several of the committed workers (4) had identified intrinsic rewards from their jobs, compared to only one of the uncommitted workers. It appears that the committed workers had better planned their post-release employment; many of

them returned to their prior job. They also tended to have received more job rewards.

NO WORK

Some of the subjects (6, 19 percent) did not obtain employment. The subjects provided four distinct reasons for their difficulties: their criminal histories; the job market; job competition; and, arrest. These subjects either had no job offers, or had offers of employment withdrawn.

The subjects reported significant difficulty obtaining employment due to their criminal histories (see Holzer et al. 2007). Several (3) of the subjects reported that they did not get job offers because they had felony convictions. An example of these subjects is Jack, a White-non-Hispanic, 47-year-old, who reported that “No-one wants to hire me.” Jack had hoped to get a job at a greenhouse or nursery. When he was unable to find a greenhouse job, he applied for a variety of positions, including maintenance, landscaping, and janitorial. He estimated that he had applied for over one-hundred positions. Jack believed that he was not offered many positions because of his criminal record. He reported that an employer who denied him a janitorial position was direct, stating “We don’t hire people with felonies.”

One of the subjects reported that he was offered a position, but that it was later withdrawn. William, an African American, 34-year-old, had worked as a caretaker at a residential facility prior to his incarceration at Wespem. He had been terminated from the position after one year of employment when the health department conducted a background check which revealed an old conviction for robbery. After his release, William applied for another caretaker position with another company and told the

employer of his criminal history. William was hired, but was never assigned a patient or placed at a facility. He attempted to contact the company several times. Finally, he was told that there were no available assignments. Although he was never fired, he was not given work, nor was he paid. William believed that the employer never placed him in an assignment because of his criminal record.

Two subjects found that they could not compete successfully in the job market. One of the subjects, Jack, also discussed above, was not hired for a landscaping job because he could not speak Spanish. The other subject, Marco, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, had been turned down for many types of jobs, including truck driver, machine operator, landscaper, construction laborer, and youth trainer. Although, he believed that his criminal record had interfered with some of the jobs for which he had applied, he also believed that the job market was a factor. He said, "There's a lack of people hiring; there's a lot of people out of work." Marco had become desperate for work, stating "I'm stressing too much; "[It] doesn't really matter what I get."

One of the subjects, Fred, an African American, 61-year-old, had a job offer withdrawn when he was arrested. Fred had planned on returning to his old job as a head cook/kitchen manager. During the first 24 hours after his release from Wespen, while at a bus station, a stranger had asked Fred to help him buy liquor. Fred bought the alcohol for the man who then refused to pay Fred. Fred and the man argued at a bus station; Fred was arrested for disorderly conduct. Because Fred was in jail for several days, he was unable to report to his job at the time he had promised his manager. When Fred contacted his manager, he was told that his job "was put on hold," which eventually became a permanent hold.

OBSTACLES

Obtaining Employment

About half (18) of the 32 follow-up subjects, regardless of whether or not they had obtained employment, reported that they had encountered obstacles to their work search efforts. These obstacles included the subjects' criminal records, the poor labor market, transportation problems, unavailable seasonal work, poor planning, and parole logistics.

Nine of the 32 subjects indicated that their felony records had interfered with obtaining a job. The potential employers knew of the subjects' histories in one of two ways – either through a background check following an application or through the subject's admission on the application. The subjects explained that the parole conditions require that the parolees notify their employers that they are under DOC supervision.

One of these subjects who had difficulty obtaining employment because of his criminal history is Calvin, a White-non-Hispanic, 34-year-old, who had been trained in computer networking at Wespen. He had expected to work for the satellite television company where a family member worked. Calvin stated that he was interviewed for the position with the satellite company, as well as a stocker position for a large discount retail company. He was later told that he was not hired for the computer networking position because of his felony record. Calvin reported that the retail company only told him that he was not selected for the position. He believed that he was also denied the retail position because of either his felony conviction for attempted murder or because another person with the same name had a felony conviction for drug sales. Calvin had thought that finding work would be easy after he was released from Wespen, but had found that it

was “worse” than he had expected. He eventually resorted to self-employment as a computer networking technician, which was not stable or financially sufficient.

Another subject who experienced difficulty due to his felony conviction is Ignacio, an Hispanic, 65-year-old. Ignacio had attempted to return to his old job as a clerk at a casino, but was told that the state’s department which regulated casinos would not approve his employment because of his felony conviction. Ignacio was similarly denied two other positions, a temporary census collector position and a county-level maintenance position. Ignacio finally began buying used items, such as furniture, then refurbishing and re-selling them. He defined his job as “sales,” and stated that he enjoyed the work because he had been “hustling all my life.”

Despite the subjects’ apparent awareness that employers are much less likely to hire felons,⁶ only one of the follow-up subjects said that he had not revealed his conviction on job applications. Several subjects (3) explained that it was risky or futile to lie on the applications by withholding their conviction from their employers. One of these subjects, Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, explained why he regularly disclosed his conviction record: “I usually do, because if you lie, [it] can get you in trouble; I tell them ‘I was young and stupid’ and they say it [does not] matter, but [I] don’t hear from them; The good jobs are going to do background checks.”

Some (7) of the (32) subjects noted that they had difficulty finding job openings. Several (5) of the subjects had planned on obtaining a specific job, but found that there were no openings; these jobs included cafeteria, road construction, taxi-cab company, moving company, and janitorial positions. However, the subjects reported that jobs were also difficult to find in fields other than those they had initially targeted.

An example of these subjects is Hank, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old. Hank had believed that he would be able to get a job at a moving company where his aunt worked. He found, however, that there were no job openings. After searching for over a month, Hank obtained a job as a telemarketer through a friend's referral. He reported that the telemarketing company was "unprofessional," hired many felons, and that he thought he would be tempted to participate in criminal activities. Hank resigned from the telemarketer job.

Following the telemarketing job, Hank's job search worsened. Whereas before his friend and coworker had given him rides to his telemarketing job, after he resigned from the job, Hank was without transportation to work, and he had to focus his job search on workplaces close to his home. His unsuccessful job search included inquiries at fast food restaurants, a luncheonette, a pizza parlor, and door-to-door sales. Hank attributed his lack of employment success to few job vacancies and his felony record. He also believed that his appearance was making matters worse; he said "remember all my tats[tattoos]." Hank's experience was typical of these subjects who had difficulty finding job opportunities.

As Wilson (1996) described, spatial mismatch between employment locations and residences are especially problematic for the disadvantaged populations. Transportation problems interfered with five of the subjects' job seeking efforts. One of these subjects is Gabriel, a Hispanic, 31-year-old, who had planned to return to his prior position as a road construction paving foreman, which paid \$23.00 per hour. When Gabriel contacted his previous supervisor, however, he learned that there were no openings. Gabriel did not have a driver's license so the scope of his job search was limited. He found an entry

level paving job with another company, earning only \$10.00 per hour. Gabriel explained that the job sites varied, and he had to take a bus eight miles to a location where coworkers picked him up to travel to the job sites. Gabriel did not intend to stay with the entry level position, stating “I’m gonna stay with this guy for a month or two, get a license and get set up.” Transportation problems appeared to have limited the subjects’ job seeking options and led to employment to which they were not committed.

Several (4) of the subjects, including Gabriel, had to wait to pursue the jobs they desired because the job availability was dependent on seasonal fluctuations. These other subjects had planned to apply for wild-land firefighting jobs. Although two of these subjects had obtained those jobs, there was a waiting period, during which they had to find other work.

One of these subjects was especially ill-prepared for the job seeking process. Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, was aware that the wild-land firefighting positions would not be available until the spring, and had planned to work in construction until the fire season began. He explained that he went to a particular construction company several times and spoke with the same foreman. The foreman had told Bryan to “keep trying back,” so Bryan returned two times. Finally, the foreman told Bryan that he would put his name on a waiting list for any future vacancy. After Bryan left the site, he realized that he had never given the foreman his name or telephone number. Bryan was too embarrassed to go back to the construction company to give the foreman his contact information.

Bryan was also not prepared to apply for the firefighting position. During the time that he was searching for other work, and had managed to find a temporary job as a

stocker with a department store, the application deadline for the firefighting job expired. He said with disappointment, "I didn't know about the forestry [firefighter] deadline," and "[I will] try again next year." Despite Bryan's good intentions, being ill-prepared may have cost him two different jobs, one of which he particularly desired.

Parole requirements appeared to have affected several (3) of the subjects' job search experiences. Two of these subjects mentioned that their PO would not let them take employment through temporary services; the subjects stated that they were frustrated because temporary job placements could lead to permanent positions. Two of the subjects also complained that meetings with their POs interfered with the workday and limited the jobs for which they could apply.

An example of these subjects is Gus, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, who had taken a janitorial position to which he was not committed. Gus had also sought other types of work, including an apprenticeship job at a sheet-metal fabrication plant. Gus had heard of the job through a close friend. When he applied for the job, the supervisor explained that he would be on standard new-employee probation for 90 days, during which he could not miss any work. Gus contacted his PO to request a reporting time outside of his work schedule. The PO denied Gus' request, stating "If he was any kind of employer, he would let you off of work to report." Gus was forced to decline the job offer. Although the supervisor told Gus that he could re-apply when his parole reporting schedule would allow, Gus was anxious that the job would no longer be available at that time. For these subjects, parole requirements, although having the intended purpose of providing structure and supervision, appeared to limit their employment options.

Maintaining Employment

Many (13) of the subjects were not able to maintain their post-release employment because of various obstacles. Similar to their pre-Wespen work experiences, these difficulties resulted in voluntary resignation, termination, layoffs, or intermittent work. The reported difficulties included undesirable work, unstable work, and termination or layoff due to felony record. The subjects were not committed to the jobs that did not meet their financial needs (Crutchfield 1995; Hannon and Defronzo 1998).

Five of the subjects had resigned from a job because it was undesirable or less desirable than an alternative. One of these subjects, Abe, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, had held several positions before he found his construction job. After Abe had been in his construction job for two weeks, a wild-land firefighting position became available. Abe promptly took the firefighting position, which he had looked forward to since his forestry training at Wespen. Abe was the only of those subjects who had resigned from one job to obtain another job who found a new job which objectively seemed more rewarding.

The other subjects who had resigned either subsequently took equal to lesser rewarding positions, or had not obtained other work. One of these subjects is Nathaniel, a Hispanic, 36-year-old, who had expected to obtain work as a “roughneck” for an oil company or with the railroad upon his release from prison. He stated that the railroad was not hiring. At the time of the first follow-up interview he was working as a cook at a newly opened restaurant, where he earned \$8.00 per hour. He indicated that he was excited about his work, and proud that the restaurant catered to established businessmen in the community. He stated that he believed he had an “opportunity” for a future in

management with the company. However, he also said that his earnings only “kind of” covered his living expenses. During the second follow-up interview Nathaniel reported that he had quit his cook job to take a janitorial/maintenance position that offered more work hours, and paid \$10.00 per hour, earning \$500.00 more per month than the cook position. It appeared that Nathaniel had sacrificed the intrinsic rewards from the restaurant job for the extrinsic rewards from the janitorial job.

Some (7) of the subjects had either been laid off, or were working reduced/intermittent work schedules. Most of these subjects (5) worked in the building trades positions to which they were committed. One of these committed subjects is Geraldo, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, framer. After his release Geraldo returned to work for his previous employer. Geraldo was pleased to have returned to his old job, and mentioned positive aspects such as “I enjoy the day,” and “I like framing.” However, Geraldo said that he was working intermittently on “only remodels; [and] no new homes [are] being built now.” He was concerned stating, “Work is slow; [I] need more hours.” It appeared that the instability of the building trades, coupled with the ongoing recession contributed to the subjects’ unstable post-release work.

Another subject who was laid off is Julian, a Hispanic, 41-year-old, carpenter. Immediately following his release from Wespen, Julian’s former employer re-hired him for home remodeling construction. After two months of employment, the work became sporadic. Six months after his release, he stated that “work has been off and on since I got on ... I was just laid off. I was the last one to be let go.”

Several (3) subjects reported that they had lost jobs because of their felony records. One of these subjects is Abe, a Hispanic, 28-year-old. Abe thought that it would

not be difficult to obtain employment as a wild-land firefighter. However, he expected to take another job until the seasonal firefighter position became available. Abe first obtained work as a motel clerk, for \$7.50 per hour, as he had expected. He enjoyed the clerk position, and worked at the motel for a few days until he was fired because of his felony record for violent crimes. Abe reported, “The owner found out about my record. The manager said it was ok – that he’d give me a chance, [but] the owner told him to fire me.” Abe explained, “A lot of people see that record and they think you’re gonna go all crazy.” Fortunately, Abe was finally hired as a wild-land firefighter.

Two of these subjects had been employed as stockers for a department store during the holiday season. One of these subjects, Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, had planned to work as a wild-land firefighter. Waiting for the position to become available, Bryan took the part-time stocker position, which paid just \$7.50 per hour. Although the job was not what he wanted permanently, he would have liked to have stayed with the company until he could become a firefighter. He spoke of several good aspects of the job: The coworkers “were cool”; “[I] got along with every single one of them”; “It was like a big family”; “[I] liked what I was doing”; and, “I liked going to work.” When the season ended Bryan asked to be considered for a permanent position. He said that his supervisor tried to get him approved for permanent employment, but she was told that the company policy prohibited permanent employment of people with felony convictions. Although Bryan continued to search for work, he had been unemployed for three months at the time of the second follow-up interview.

The subjects who pursued wild-land firefighting positions encountered unique obstacles from their conditions of parole. One of these subjects, Danny, a 24-year-old,

American Indian, had been hired as a firefighter. He was scheduled to take his physical test for the position, which was the last phase of the hiring process. Because the job required fighting fires across the state, and sometimes out of state, Bryan needed to get permission from his PO and also obtain a travel permit. Bryan had been anxious about whether his PO would approve the travel associated with the job. Bryan was unavailable for the second follow-up interview, but records showed that he had been reincarcerated for absconding from his parole supervision.

Other Obstacles to Post-release Success

The subjects also encountered obstacles which indirectly interacted with their employment, and were stressors on their post-release success. These obstacles included persistent substance abuse or substance abuse environments, other negative social influences, health problems, and financial obligations. These obstacles affected about half (16) of the 32 follow-up subjects during the first six months after their release.

Two of these 16 subjects reported that their friends or families had exposed them to a substance abuse environment. One of these subjects is Ignacio, a Hispanic, 65-year-old, whose parole plan included that he reside at a brother's home. Soon after his release, Ignacio's nephews began to visit frequently, bringing alcohol with them. Because parolees are not allowed to be in the presence of alcohol, Ignacio asked his nephews not to bring alcohol with them during their visits, to which they refused. Fearful of violating his parole, Ignacio moved to another brother's home.

Several (3) subjects spoke of their own substance abuse. One example of these subjects is Matthew, a White-non-Hispanic, 32-year-old, who had been incarcerated for

DUI, and also had a drug abuse problem. He had planned on returning to his prior job as a computer tutor, and on continuing his college education. Matthew was overwhelmed because he was unable to get his old job back, unable to find any job, and was having difficulty navigating bureaucratic requirements for felons to enroll in the college. He was also experiencing stress in social environments, deciding whether to reveal his incarceration to new friends. Matthew reported that he relapsed, using alcohol and marijuana, because “the stress of everything piled up.” He said that he confessed his relapse to his PO, who then told Mathew that any future relapse would result in a 45 day prison stay. Matthew was regretful stating that he placed his “freedom at risk.”

Some (6) subjects spoke of negative social influences. Two of these subjects reported that they engaged in activities with coworkers, which although legal were in violation of parole conditions, such as going to entertainment venues that served alcohol or offered gambling. The other subjects, or their family members, indicated that the subjects were exposed to negative attitudes from peers or family.

Several of the subjects had family members who were either unsupportive or had contributed to the subject’s futile perspective, believing that it was useless to continue to succeed on parole. One of the unsupportive family members had turned the subject away, stating “I got rid of him.” The mother of another subject, Brad, a White-non-Hispanic, 28-year-old, appeared to have given the subject mixed messages. She acknowledged that perhaps he had taken on too many responsibilities, both going to school full-time and working almost full-time, stating “I told him that as long as he’s making progress he’s doing fine - that he didn’t have to do all of it, school and work.” However, she also said that she had warned Brad that “you’re not gonna be idle and do

nothing.” These two subjects, and one other subject, who had family members providing negative messages, had been reincarcerated within six months of their release.

Both mental/emotional health and physical health issues affected some of the subjects. An example of the two subjects who experienced physical health problems is Fred, an African American, 61-year-old. Fred, as described previously, had intended to return to his old job as a head cook/kitchen manager, but he lost the job offer when he was arrested for disorderly conduct within 24 hours of his release from Wespen. Soon after Fred’s release his already poor health began to deteriorate further, resulting in a hospital stay for alcohol related illnesses. Fred became unable to work in any capacity, and applied for disability benefits.

It appeared that some (6) of the subjects also experienced obstacles that could challenge their emotional health. These obstacles involved several different types of issues. One recurring issue was self doubt or a sense of futility, such as a subject who said, “I’m trying not to sell myself short”; another subject said that he was experiencing a “fear of success mixed with failure, wondering ‘is it gonna be worth it considering my felony [record]’”; two subjects stated that they were “stressed”; two subjects discussed their embarrassment or shame; four subjects had experienced the loss of family relationships, three of whom had become estranged from their children.

One of these subjects who seemed particularly vulnerable to emotional or mental health issues is Javier, a Hispanic, 31-year-old, who was particularly sensitive to the stigma (Erikson 1962; Becker 1973) of his felon status. During both the in-prison interview and the first follow-up interview Javier had expressed much remorse: He stated that having been in prison “feels like a badge of shame.” He said that upon the release

from Wespen, “at first I didn’t feel I belonged”; he also said that “[I] don’t have anything” and “[I] felt a deep sense of shame - feeling like maybe I was a bad person, [and] people are better than me.”

By the second follow-up interview, however, Javier appeared to have been doing better. He stated that he felt more comfortable at work. He also had enrolled in college to begin the following semester. However, approximately one month following the second follow-up interview the researcher viewed a local television news report involving Javier. The story linked two types of violent crime, and the dangerous nature of persons who exhibited either behavior. During this news report, they used Javier’s crime from several years prior as an example, stating his name, detailing his crime, and showing his booking photo on the television screen. Although Javier had served his prison sentence, expressed deep remorse and shame, and was working diligently to transform his life, in a news segment lasting only a few minutes, Javier was re-branded a dangerous criminal. Due to human subjects review restrictions, the interviewer was unable to contact Javier to discover how the news report affected him, or if he was able to keep his job after the news report had aired; regardless of the impact on his current employment, it seems likely that it would have at least had a significantly negative emotional impact.

A few (3) of the subjects explained that their financial situations were especially problematic. Two of these subjects said that they were having difficulty paying their legal fines and fees, including restitution. Another subject, James, a Hispanic, 45-year-old, was receiving disability benefits and working part-time as a janitor. James stated that although he was trained as a mechanic, he was unable to pursue that type of work

because he could not afford to buy the tools that he would need, and, therefore, was relegated to unskilled, low-paying work. All three of these subjects identified specific ways in which their inadequate wages had affected them. These accounts were in addition to those of other subjects (9) who had earned less than they had expected, and some of whom had found that their low earnings prohibited them from obtaining necessities, such as a car or renting an apartment.

The subjects reported obstacles which interfered with stable and sufficient employment, as well as overall stability post-release. Difficulties stemming from their felony convictions, the poor labor market during the recession, seasonal types of work, and parole requirements, as well as transportation limitations and poor planning, undermined their employment success. In many ways the subjects' post-release employment resembled their pre-Wespen employment. However, many were worse off because the employment effects from the stigma of incarceration were added or exacerbated. Additionally, substance abuse problems persisted for some of the subjects. The presence of negative messages from family members which had an adverse effect on subjects was also noted.

STRENGTHS

Despite the many obstacles which the subjects encountered, many also demonstrated significant strengths. These strengths include post-release substance abuse treatment, positive perspectives of substance abuse recovery, positive social connections, pride in, or gratefulness for, progress, hopefulness, and general optimism. Most (25) of

the 32 follow-up subjects indicated that they had one or more of these positive experiences and perspectives.

Nine of the subjects reported that they had participated in substance abuse counseling (Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), group counseling, and individual counseling) since their release from Wespem. Most (8) of these subjects had indicated that the experience was positive. Only one of the subjects did not have an opinion of the experience. One of these subjects, Fred, who as noted before had serious alcohol-related health problems, reported that he had been attending AA and “psych classes.” He stated that at 61 years old, “I’m just now being able to see the light.”

Several (3) subjects indicated that they were proud to have completed substance abuse treatment. An example of these subjects is James, a Hispanic, 45-year-old, who “finished all the [post-release treatment] programs.” James was pleased that he had completed his required treatment, which included individual counseling, DUI risk screening, and relapse prevention. He stated, with pride, that “at the end I wrote three pages about what I gained and learned ... My PO read it with me”

Additionally, two subjects who had not participated in post-release treatment expressed anti-substance abuse perspectives. One of these subjects proudly stated, “I haven’t touched alcohol or drugs.” The other of these subjects, Geraldo, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, stated that he wanted to “help people” with substance abuse problems. He said, “I don’t know if sometimes I go over the line. [I] talk to people when I can. Alcohol and drugs are not a good life.” He explained that prison helped him to quit using alcohol: “[It] helped me to see real life.”

Many (17) of the subjects had developed, or re-established, positive social connections with friends or family. Nine of these subjects reported that they had distanced themselves from any prior negative associations and had re-established positive ties with family members. These subjects had developed conventional attachments (Toby 1957; Hirschi 1969). One of these subjects, Edgar, a Hispanic, 41-year-old, said that he had “no more friends.” The best experience Edgar had since his release from Wespen was “being with my family - my son ... My dad is my best friend.” These other subjects had similarly indicated the importance of their families, often including their spouses.

Quite a few (8) of the subjects discussed new friendships that they had forged. The subjects had met their new friends through family, church, work, and school. Ted, an African American, 54-year-old, had made new friends through church. He said, “I love my church; it’s like a family.” He was also grateful that he had met his girlfriend through the church.

Another subject, Hank, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old, who was discussed earlier, was excited to have earned his GED, and to have begun classes at a trade college. He had purposefully separated himself from his negative peers, including resigning from a job where many of his old associates were also employed. Soon after he began his trade school classes, he had formed friendships with his fellow students. Hank was proud of his social transition, stating “I’m hanging out with people doing the same thing as me.” The subjects who had mentioned new friendships with positive peers appeared proud and excited about their new roles among mainstream others.

Many (11) of the subjects expressed pride in and gratefulness for their progress towards goals. These goals included obtaining material goods, planning to attend

college, attending college or trade school, planning a new career, and volunteer work. Although their progress towards these goals ranged from inception to completion, all of the subjects came across as excited and motivated.

Two of the subjects had managed to obtain much needed material possessions. Ted was grateful that he was able to reside in a half-way house past the usual allotted period of time so that he could save money. When he was able to buy a car, he was able to save one hour from his commuting time to work on the bus. Both Ted, and another subject, Nathaniel, were able to afford their own apartments, achieving a sense of independence.

Two subjects, one of whom had obtained a forestry position, and the other who was planning to do so the following fire season, had decided that they would attend school in the off-season. One of these subjects had developed a plan to attend community college for “refresher courses” before enrolling at a four year college. The other subject had been contemplating various career paths, but also was unsure what he wanted to study. Ted also was contemplating seeking a career that might entail college; like the other two subjects he was unsure of the field that he would pursue.

Another subject who was planning to develop his career is Bill, a White-non-Hispanic, 49-year-old. Bill had worked as a self-employed welder prior to his incarceration at Wespen. He had abandoned his work when he started doing methamphetamine. After his release he was excited to begin working in his trade again. However, he had lost his customer base, and had lost some of his tools, which he had sold for drug money. After his release, Bill sought the help of a vocational rehabilitation program which helps individuals develop their employment skills or their own

businesses. Although Bill was struggling financially, he was excited to be in the process of “build[ing] the business,” and grateful for the vocational program’s assistance.

Several (4) of the subjects had enrolled in school. One subject had enrolled in classes which would apply either to a degree in nutrition or physical training. Another was continuing his college studies in a business related field. Two other subjects had enrolled in trade school, where one was earning his welding certification.

The other subject is Hank, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old, who was previously discussed. Hank had struggled after his release from Wespen, having been employed in a negative environment, resigning, and thereafter experiencing difficulty finding other work. At the first follow-up interview he described himself as “stressed,” and was anxious about deciding on a career path. By the second follow-up interview, Hank was in the process of getting his car running (with the help of his parents), had completed his GED, and had enrolled in trade school to become a medical technician. He was pleased with his progress, and was excited about his studies, stating that in his classes “everything is interesting.” All of the subjects who had enrolled in an educational or vocational program exuded a sense of hopefulness and confidence that they were on their way to a more satisfying life.

Two of the subjects, in addition to either working or attending school, had been involved in volunteer programs. Matthew, who was also enrolled in school full-time, volunteered as a coordinator for a charitable organization. He said that the work was “rewarding,” and that working around those less fortunate made him more “grateful” for what he has.

Another subject, Major, a Hispanic, 42-year-old, was unable to find employment, so he resorted to self-employment in yard maintenance and tree-trimming. Although his financial situation “varied” and was not ideal, Major was optimistic in general. Having been “strung out on crack” prior to his incarceration, he was grateful for aspects of the prison experience, stating “prison saved my life - really woke me up.” In turn, after his release he wanted to help others. He and a fellow ex-inmate began a volunteer program for jailed inmates, which encouraged the participants to write about their feelings. Major said that the program was important because “some people hide their feelings.” Major was proud that he had not “touched alcohol or drugs” since his release, and that he was doing something to help other offenders heal.

Several (4) other subjects also expressed general optimism, and hopefulness. One of these subjects, the artist/potter was optimistic, despite uncertainty of the success of his art sales. He stated that the work experience had not been as easy as he had expected, but that “It’s been an adventure. We don’t know what to expect every day in our lives.” Similarly, another subject whose plan of working in home repair failed, causing him to have to resort to refurbishing used items, stated with a determined and positive tone, “You have to do the best with what you got.” Another subject who was employed as a yard worker, but had planned to have already begun working in wild-land firefighting, wanted to believe that one day his prison work would be useful. He said, “Hopefully it will; I don’t want to be working in a kitchen.”

A carpenter who had been laid off was optimistic that he would be re-employed within a few months. He stated, “I’ll go back to work after the summer heat.” He also had a positive attitude in general, reporting that since his release he had enjoyed “a lot of

things,” such as “going eating out and [eating] all the food I want to eat,” “hearing music,” and “buying music.”

The subjects’ experiences appeared to have affected them in several ways. The subjects indicated that they were proud of their progress in overcoming their substance abuse problems, developing their career paths, achieving goals, and helping others. They seemed to have begun forming new identities as substance free individuals with mainstream goals and attachments. These subjects had also developed a sense of fortitude by overcoming obstacles. Even when reflecting on the difficulties which they had encountered, several of the subjects demonstrated generalized hope and optimism; these subjects either had skilled pre-Wespen employment or had participated in skilled work at Wespen. The majority, 24 (96 percent), of these subjects who had demonstrated clear strengths had not been reincarcerated within six months of their release from Wespen.

REINCARCERATED

Ten (20 percent) of the 49 subjects were reincarcerated within six months of their release. This rate is likely comparable to the typical reincarceration rates which are between 50 percent and 67 percent at three years post-release (Petersilia 2000; Uggen 2000; Wallerstein 2005). These subjects shared several circumstances, and were considerably different than those subjects who had not been reincarcerated. The majority (6) did not have a well-planned strategy for post-release employment. At least half had not found stable, sufficient employment. And, at least seven of these subjects had

encountered significant obstacles, whereas, only one subject had demonstrated any strength factors.

Only four of the reincarcerated subjects had well-developed plans for seeking employment, such as either employment related to their Wespen jobs, or returning to a prior job. Unfortunately, post-release employment data were only available for two of these subjects, only one of whom had obtained work. This latter subject had received a tentative position as a wild-land firefighter, but he also had encountered several obstacles to his post-release success, as had the other three of these subjects.

Danny, an American Indian, 24-year-old, had expected that it would be easy to obtain a wild-land firefighting position. During the first follow-up interview after his release from Wespen, Danny reported that he had been working sporadically in day labor jobs approximately 2 days a week, until two days prior when he was hired for a seasonal wild-land firefighter position. He was excited to begin his new job, stating “I’m all happy now and looking forward to Monday’s pack test” (a physical endurance test). After Danny passed the test, he would be placed on a list to call as fires occurred. However, Danny mentioned that parole requirements could prohibit him from traveling, possibly forcing him to decline the firefighter position. Danny had experienced two obstacles, i.e., sporadic post-release employment, as well as possible employment interference from parole travel restrictions. Public records indicated that he was reincarcerated for absconding from parole supervision.

The other three subjects who had specific plans for post-release employment also had encountered various obstacles. Aaron, an American Indian, 46-year-old, had planned on seeking work as a delivery driver, similar to his furniture delivery position at Wespen.

Aaron had an apparent cognition problem, and only a 9th grade education. The interviewer was unable to contact Aaron after his release. However, Aaron's sister stated that he was residing in a rural area, he was not employed, and that the interviewer should not call again. The state's DOC public access database revealed that Aaron had failed to report to his PO not long after his release, and that he had been reincarcerated.

Another of these subjects, Marshall, a White-non-Hispanic, 33-year-old, had intended to seek work at his old job where he had been an electrician. Although post-release employment data were not available, the data did show that Marshall had a pattern of transient employment; Marshall was a self-proclaimed "job hop[per]" who sought better pay and work schedules. Also discovered, Marshall did not have strong family support. When the interviewer tried to contact Marshall, his girlfriend stated that she did not know how to contact him, and that she "got rid of him"; Marshall's mother also stated that she did not know how to contact him. It appeared that Marshall did not have strong family support. Data revealed that Marshall had been reincarcerated for absconding from parole supervision.

The other subject who had intended to return to his old job, framing, is Jeff, a White-non-Hispanic, 25 year old. Although the type of post-release work he found, or did not find, was unknown, there were many indications that Jeff would likely experience persistent problems with substance abuse. Prior to his release, he had said, "If I didn't have this [framer] job waiting for me, I'd be selling." Jeff, who was associated with gang activity, indicated that he was not fully committed to a conventional lifestyle. Prior to his release, he stated, "Maybe when I'm off parole maybe I'll smoke marijuana, but don't sell it. Parole is one year." The interviewer was unable to contact Jeff for a follow-up

interview; however, the public records revealed that he had been reincarcerated for absconding from parole supervision.

All of the remaining six subjects who were reincarcerated did not have well-planned post-release employment strategies. These subjects varied in age, from 28 years old to 54 years old, and in ethnicity, i.e., one White-non-Hispanic and the rest Hispanic. Several (4) were associated with gang activity. While in Wespen, these subjects either had no plan for post-release employment, or in one subject's case had believed that a family member could arrange his employment.

We were able to obtain employment information regarding four of these six subjects. One subject had taken a janitorial job to which he was uncommitted; another subject had been a waiter, a job which he had previously described as unpleasant, "hard work"; one subject had "a hard time getting steady work"; and, another subject had not found any work.

All four of these subjects had encountered various obstacles. One of these subjects had become frustrated that meetings with his parole officer prohibited him from taking a desirable job because the meetings interfered with the work schedule. He had told his mother, "Nobody's gonna give me a job where I can't be there when I need to be." Compounding his frustration, his mother contributed to his sense of futility. His mother explained that she was frustrated that his parole conditions were so restrictive, and that she had told her son "If they are not going to trust you, they shouldn't let you out." Subsequently, he gave up on post-release success, committed robbery, and was reincarcerated.

Similarly, another subject had experienced stress, which was likely exacerbated by negative messages from his mother. Brad, a White-non-Hispanic, 28-year-old, was “stressed,” had been laid off from one job, had resigned from another job, and had quit attending school. The mother’s statements indicated that family support may not have been evident to the subject, as she had cautioned him that if he became “idle” that he could not reside with her and his father. Brad stole from his parents, absconded from parole supervision, and was reincarcerated.

The other two subjects, obtaining either no work, or sporadic work, had succumbed to stress, and gave up. According to one of the subject’s mother, “He had a hard time getting steady work when he got out. He was working here and there ... He didn’t report to his PO.” Public records showed that he had been reincarcerated for absconding from parole supervision.

Another one of these subjects, Albert, a Hispanic, 35-year-old, was so distraught that he turned himself in to his PO to finish his sentence in prison. His girlfriend stated, “He didn’t think he could do the time without doing anything wrong. He turned himself in to do the rest of his time.”

Although the reincarcerated subjects comprised 20 percent of the total subjects, one-third of the subjects who did not have well-planned strategies for post-release employment were reincarcerated. These subjects experienced significant difficulties obtaining work, such as not finding work, finding only undesirable work, or finding only sporadic work. These subjects had indicated that they had little hope for a positive employment outcome. Two of the subjects who were reincarcerated had voluntarily returned to prison rather than confront the many obstacles they faced.

Conversely, most of the subjects who were not reincarcerated had reported either acceptable employment, acceptable potential employment, or had exhibited other strengths, such as positive social support, pride and accomplishment, etc. Also, compared to the reincarcerated subjects, more of those subjects who had not been reincarcerated had expressed some degree of optimism or hopefulness.

Both the reincarcerated subjects and some of the reincarcerated subjects' families discussed negative employment conditions and a sense of absolute futility. Nine of the 10 reincarcerated subjects had not demonstrated a single strength factor, such as reporting that they were substance free, that they were attending and appreciating substance abuse counseling, enjoying positive social connections, making progress towards goals, or experiencing general hope or optimism. Instead, it appears that the combination of negative employment conditions and a sense of futility, without strength factors to counteract the negative factors, fostered post-release failure and reincarceration.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this analysis is to assess the subjects' post-release outcomes, specifically determining whether their employment experiences differed from their pre-Wespen employment, and, if so, in what ways. Corrections literature suggests that one of the intentions of prison programs is to prepare the offenders for successful post-release employment, thereby reducing recidivism (NCIA 1999, DOC 2004). Criminology literature asserts that quality, stable post-release employment best achieves these desirable outcomes (Pager 2007, Uggen 2000, and Laub and Sampson 1993). Therefore,

determining whether the subjects obtained quality, stable employment, as well as why or why not, is of particular interest.

The data showed that the DOC and DOL post-release employment programs were limited in scope and underutilized. None of the subjects reported that they had attended job fairs, or had received direct employment assistance from their parole officers. Although two subjects utilized employment and vocational services, both of these services were offered by other agencies. Also, only one of three subjects who had participated in and completed the joint DOC/DOL educational program benefited from the program, when he obtained his GED while residing at Wespen.

However, much of the DOC and DOL philosophy was consistent with a few of the observations. As Pete and John, two administrators, asserted of parolees in general, upon the subjects' release from prison they experienced additional external and internal barriers to employment. Pete pointed out that to reduce the external barriers he continually tried to persuade businesses to hire offenders by educating them of some advantages and incentives. The data, as does other literature (Holzer et al. 2007), corroborate Pete's conclusion that it is necessary to increase the pool of prospective employers. Pete also highlighted one aspect of the internal barriers. He stated that "[The] offenders often throw in the towel before they give things a chance," and that it is important to communicate a sense of hope to the parolees. As will be further described, hopefulness helped the subjects overcome some of the difficulties which they encountered.

In several ways the subjects' post-release employment resembled their pre-Wespen employment. Of 32 subjects for whom post-release employment information

was obtained, 20 subjects were working at the time of the follow-up interviews.

Approximately half (9) of these subjects had obtained unskilled work, and all but one were not committed to their jobs; the other subjects (11) who were working had obtained skilled work, and all but one were committed to their jobs; some (7) had returned to their pre-Wespen jobs. Some subjects (6) had worked at some time post-release, but were not working at the time of the follow-up interviews; and some other subjects (6) had been unemployed since their release.

The subjects cited similar obstacles to their post-release work as they had for their pre-Wespen work. Both skilled and unskilled workers, most of who had been employed in the building trades, reported that layoffs or reduced work schedules interfered with their employment. Several unskilled workers and one skilled worker resigned from undesirable jobs, including low wage jobs; one of who resigned to take a better job in wild-land firefighting. Three of the subjects reported substance abuse, one of whom had lost a planned job, another subject who was unemployed, and a third subject who quit his job, committed a crime and was reincarcerated. One unskilled worker reported that he worked in a substance abuse environment. Moreover, some subjects (6) reported negative social relations: Two subjects had encountered peers who tempted them to participate in mainstream activities, but which were in violation of their parole; several (4) subjects reported family interactions that were either unsupportive or encouraged negative outlooks.

In addition to the obstacles which were also characteristic of their pre-Wespen work, the subjects encountered many obstacles unique to the post-release experience and the time period during which they were released from Wespen. Because the subjects

were released during an economic recession, many reported that they had difficulty finding job openings. The subjects also reported that their stigma as felons further limited their marketability, a limitation documented in prior studies (Holzer et al. 2007; Pager 2007). At the same time, the subjects entered a job market that was increasingly service-oriented, offering unskilled, less desirable jobs which do not constitute quality, stable employment (Crutchfield 1989; Smith 2001; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010b). Several of the subjects reported that they had been terminated, had an offer rescinded, or had been laid off because of their criminal history.

Several logistical obstacles also complicated the subjects' post-release experiences. Congruent with Wilson's (1996) research on spatial mismatch between employment opportunities and disadvantaged persons' residential areas, several of the subjects reported that transportation problems, for example no vehicle, no license, and needed interlock, hindered either their work searches or the jobs from which they could choose. Other subjects were unable to take jobs because the work schedule or work-site was not immediately possible because of their parole conditions. Subjects who sought wild-land firefighter jobs experienced delays or missed deadlines in the application and hiring process because the work is seasonal. These logistical issues limited the subjects' opportunities.

The subjects also reported health-related difficulties. Two of the subjects had health conditions that significantly impaired their ability to work. One of the subjects had resigned to live on social security disability retirement, and the other worked part-time. Some (6) of the subjects reported emotional or mental health difficulties. The subjects described these experiences in terms of anxiety, "stress," depression, or

“shame.” It appeared that these experiences led to or exacerbated negative outlooks. Examples of these expressed outlooks are “No-one wants to hire me,” and “I’m stressing too much ... [It] doesn’t really matter what I get.”

Despite these obstacles, many of the subjects also reported positive experiences which connote strength, as opposed to obstacles which appeared to pummel and weaken the subjects. These strengths included engaging in substance abuse treatment, positive perspectives of substance abuse recovery, positive social connections, pride in, or gratefulness for, progress, hopefulness, and general optimism. Most (25) of the 32 follow-up subjects reported one or more strengths. These subjects who reported these strengths had better outcomes. The subjects whose responses fell within these strengthening frameworks spoke of many issues: One subject who spoke of his recovery stated “I’m just now being able to see the light”; statements of pride ranged from success overcoming drug abuse to personal agency in work, such as “I’m trying to perfect what I was doing before,” “Last week I had an outstanding week,” “You challenge yourself,” and “[I want to] help people”; general optimism was expressed through statements such as “I love my church; it’s like a family,” “I’m hanging out with people doing the same thing as me,” “You have to do the best with what you got,” and “Prison save my life – really woke me up.”

The findings show that the same dynamics involving skill level, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, personal agency, and favorable perspectives applied to the subjects’ post-release employment as they had applied to their pre-Wespen employment. However, this analysis has also revealed that strengths, many which appeared newly acquired, were mitigating forces which altered the trajectory between type of work,

rewards, obstacles, and outcomes. The strengths countered the negative trajectories of unskilled work and/or prohibitive obstacles.

Whether the subjects had positive or negative outcomes reflected not only the previously applied measures (skill level, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, including personal agency, and favorable perspectives), but also whether the subjects had experienced these strengthening effects: engaging in substance abuse treatment; positive perspectives of substance abuse recovery; positive social connections; pride in, or gratefulness for, progress, hopefulness; and general optimism. The analyses also expanded the positive outcomes to include a continuum of progress towards the final goal of quality, stable employment.

The analyses of the subjects' post-release experiences revealed pathways to two different types of outcomes, either positive or negative. The positive outcomes consisted of quality and stable employment, progress towards quality and stable employment, or general optimism and hopefulness, with potential to progress towards quality and stable employment. The negative outcomes consisted of persistent unemployment, undesirable and unstable employment, a general sense of futility, or reincarceration.

Factors, and combinations of factors, which led to positive outcomes (see Figure 3) were also identified. One of these factors is skilled work, which provided both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, and led to commitment which increased stability. However, all of the skilled workers also exhibited one of the strengths which were identified. Another pathway is skilled work in combination with the presence of obstacles, and strength factors that mitigated the effects of the obstacles. One other pathway is unskilled work with or without obstacles, and strength factors that mitigated

the negative effects of the fewer rewards associated with unskilled work, as well as the obstacles; this pathway allowed the subjects to progress towards goals of quality, stable employment.

Two factors and combinations of factors which led to negative outcomes were also identified. One of these combinations is unskilled work, with few extrinsic or intrinsic rewards, which prohibits commitment, especially when combined with no strength factors. Another combination is unskilled work, with obstacles, and no strength factors. One other pathway is skilled work, with obstacles, and no strength factors.

Although reductions in obstacles, increased employment planning, and increases in skill levels were each beneficial to the subjects, the strengthening factors appeared to have significantly impacted the subjects' success. At least a majority, if not all, of the subjects who were reincarcerated had not experienced these strengthening factors. Conversely, only one of the subjects who possessed these strengths had been reincarcerated.⁷

In contrast to the subjects who had positive outcomes, the subjects who were reincarcerated had several distinct characteristics: Most of the subjects had poorly planned or moderately planned post-release work strategies; most of the subjects encountered many obstacles: negative social relationships/interactions, gang membership, perceived parole restrictions impeding work opportunities, cognitive impairment, severe addiction, and poor employment.

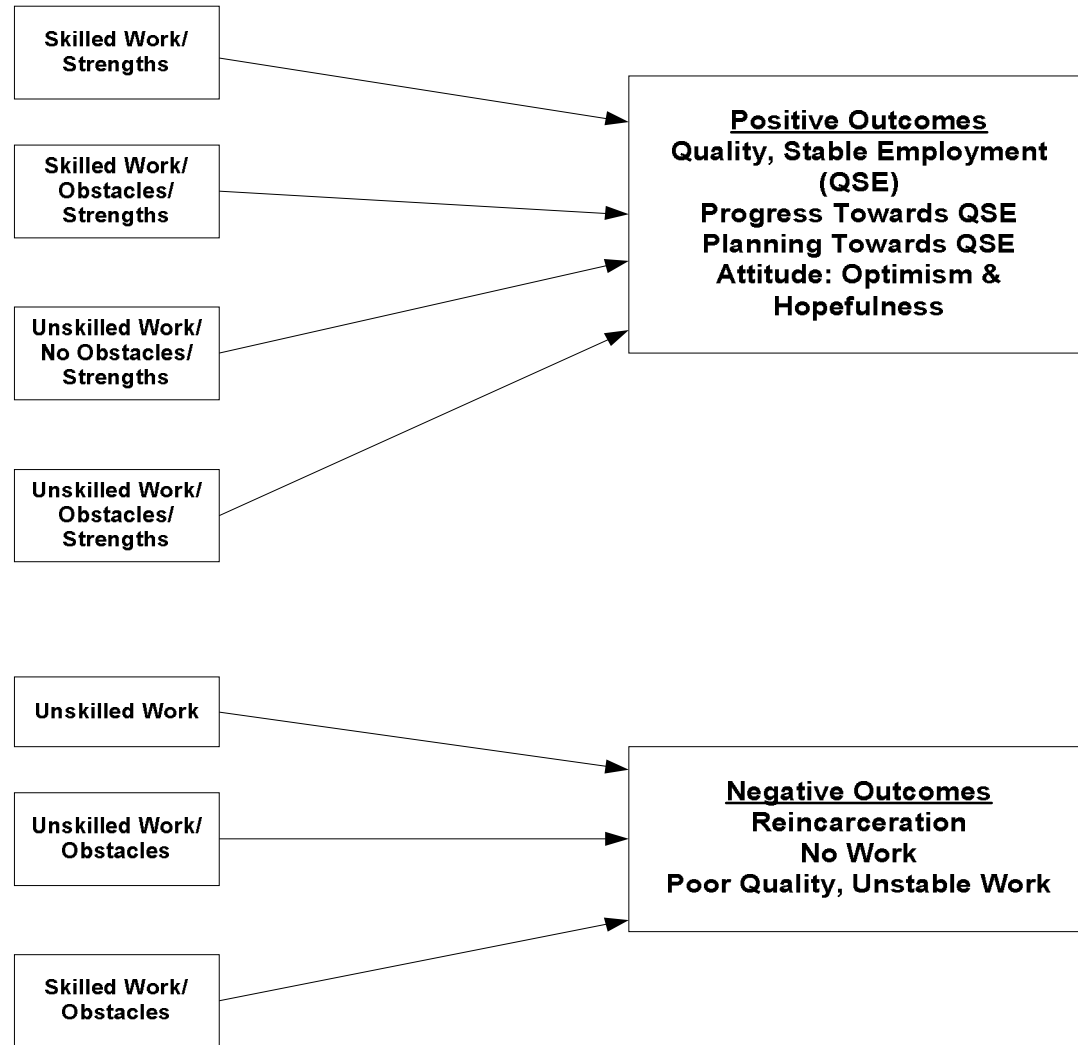


Figure 3: Post-release Themes Model

The reincarcerated negative outcomes subjects and the positive outcome subjects expressed very different attitudes. The reincarcerated subjects had demonstrated very different perspectives in each of the strengths areas compared to the positive outcomes subjects as described above: Prior to his release from Wespen, one of the subjects who eventually was reincarcerated, stated “If I didn’t have this [framer] job waiting for me, I’d be selling ... Maybe when I’m off parole, maybe I’ll smoke marijuana but don’t sell it. Parole is one year”; another of these subjects, expressing futility, stated, “Nobody’s gonna give me a job when I can’t be there when I need to be”; one subject described his coworkers, “They are the same as me – homeless, drugs and alcohol”; and the same subject added, “I though I would’ve gotten in somewhere.”

The positive outcomes subjects, as described above, expressed, often emphatically, numerous strengths. The attitudes of the positive outcomes subjects, expressing positive changes in substance abuse, social relationships, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general optimism appear indicative of significant personal change, resembling Burnett and Maruna’s (2006) “‘strengths-based’ resettlement” model. Burnett and Maruna (2006) asserted that through prisoner work programs which have certain elements critical for development of offenders’ assets, offenders can reconstruct their identities (p. 84).

Notes: Chapter Six

¹ The other categories include youth, veterans, persons receiving low-income financial assistance, persons living within specified geographical areas, disabled, and hurricane Katrina recovery employees.

² National rates between White-non-Hispanic and Hispanic males are less divergent. The 2008 and 2009 rates for White-non-Hispanic males with less than a high school education were 8.2 percent and 13.9 percent, respectively. The 2008 and 2009 rates for Hispanic males with less than a high school education were 8.2 percent and 13.7 percent, respectively. The 2008 and 2009 rates for White-non-Hispanic males with a high school education and no college were 5.1 percent and 9.0 percent, respectively. The 2008 and 2009 rates for Hispanic males with a high school education and no college were 6.2 percent and 10.4 percent, respectively. The comparison between White-non-Hispanics and Hispanics with college

educations is similar. It appears that education is better correlated with the unemployment rates, than is ethnicity. Rates for African Americans and Asians are different, however. African American males experience more unemployment than White-non-Hispanic males and Hispanic males. Unemployment data for Native American males are not available in these statistical databases. These rates of unemployment by education and race/ethnicity are congruent with much of the research previously discussed regarding disadvantage, and strain and human capital theories (Hagan and McCarthy 1997, Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991, Pager 2007). This suggests several relevant points. Unemployment rates are higher for those with lesser education; unemployment rates are higher for African Americans (8 percent of the Wespen subjects); and, these varying rates of unemployment between demographic groups indicate possible significant impact of unemployment upon the Wespen subjects.

³ The information from the "State DOL" is not cited to ensure anonymity of the study subjects by maintaining anonymity of the state and therefore the state's correctional institution, Wespen.

⁴ Work information was gathered regarding six of the subjects who were reincarcerated, either through subject interviews or through family members. Twelve of the subjects were neither interviewed, nor reincarcerated post-release. A few of these 12 subjects were not cooperative and the others were not located. Follow-up interviews were conducted, information was received from family, and/or reincarceration data were obtained for 37 (76 percent) of the 49 study subjects.

⁵ Commitment is measured by whether or not the subject was still employed and responded that he would like to stay in the position for an indefinite period of time, or if he was involuntarily discharged and responded that at the time he would have preferred to have stayed in the position for an indefinite period of time.

⁶ Holzer et al.'s research (2007) showed that 40 percent of employers would not consider hiring persons with felony convictions.

⁷ This conclusion excludes one subject, Gus, who although he had received counseling, a strength factor, had not indicated whether it was a positive experience, but had been reincarcerated. The incarcerated subject had worked in forestry in Wespen. He was the only forestry subject to have been reincarcerated within six months of release from Wespen.

Chapter Seven: Best Outcomes and Worst Outcomes:

Pre-release Factors and Post-release Outcomes

Chapters Four and Five explored the subjects' pre-Wespen work experiences and Wespen work experiences, and Chapter Six examined post-release employment and reincarceration. Several themes have emerged from the analyses thus far: Skill level appears to be related to perspectives on work, employment rewards, and commitment (Crutchfield 1995); job rewards (Shapiro 1977; Guzzo 1979; Wakefield et al. 1987) appear related to commitment to work; substance abuse has an interactive relationship with crime, work stability social relationships, attachments (Hirschi 1969; Sutherland et al. 1970; Hagan and McCarthy 1997), obstacles (Wilson 1996), and, strengths/identity (Burnett and Maruna 2006).

This chapter addresses five important remaining questions: (1) How did pre-Wespen work experiences affect post-release outcomes? (2) How did the subjects' criminal histories affect post-release outcomes? (3) How did the subjects' attachments to negative associations affect post-release outcomes? (4) How did the subjects' substance abuse affect their post-release outcomes? (5) How did the subjects' Wespen work affect their post-release outcomes?

To answer those questions, the subjects who had the best outcomes were compared with the subjects who had the worst outcomes. The subjects were classified into these two groups after combining several factors: employment status, stable and sufficient employment with adequate wages, attitude, and, reincarceration. The subjects (11) who reported the highest number of positive outcomes were placed in the Best

Outcomes group. Those subjects (10) who were reincarcerated were placed in the Worst Outcomes group. These two groups of subjects were then compared with their pre-Wespen and Wespen experiences.

Of particular interest is how the different pre-Wespen and Wespen experiences may have contributed to those strengths, identified in Chapter Six, which helped the subjects to overcome obstacles or redirected their negative trajectories, as well as how experiences may have weakened the subjects or led to their negative trajectories. The Best Outcomes group (BOG) and the Worst Outcomes group (WOG) appeared to have had different experiences in several areas, including prior incarcerations, negative associations, substance abuse in the workplace, skill level, and Wespen work program.¹

INCARCERATION'S EFFECT UPON OUTCOMES

Although the types of crimes for which the subjects had been convicted did not vary significantly between the two outcomes groups,² the number of their incarcerations varied. The WOG subjects had been incarcerated more times than the BOG subjects. Although the averages were close, 2.1 times and 1.9 times, respectively, almost three-quarters (7) of the WOG had been incarcerated more than one time, compared to about one-third (4) of the BOG. This difference did not apply to the total number of years incarcerated, which averaged 3.1 years and 3.23 years, respectively. It appeared that the number of times incarcerated may have had a negative cumulative effect.

Research has shown that incarceration appears to have negative post-release employment effects, and that those negative effects increase as the number of incarcerations increase (Useem and Piehl 2008; Pettit and Lyons 2009). It may be that

employers view these individuals more negatively, that the subjects' employment skills deteriorate or are not updated during incarceration, and/or that the subjects' soft skills deteriorate during incarceration (Useem and Piehl 2008).

The data do not support the hypothesis that differences between the WOG and BOG via number of incarcerations is related to deterioration of skills. The BOG had more subjects (5) who had worked in less skilled positions (relative to their pre-Wespen jobs) compared to the WOG group (2). This difference, however, is also because the WOG subjects were more likely to have last held an unskilled job prior to Wespen.

There is, however, a difference between the WOG and BOG subjects' soft skills. The apparent soft skills of the subjects were analyzed by group as well as by number of incarcerations. Although obviously a very subjective measure, the subjects were deemed to have had adequate soft skills if they were able to communicate effectively, appropriately, and in a reasonably engaging manner. More (6) of the WOG subjects exhibited noticeable soft skill deficits than did the BOG subjects (1); however, the lack of soft skills did not correspond to the number of incarcerations, nor the total time incarcerated. It appears that for these subjects at least, there is no obvious direct link between soft skills and incarceration history. These differences in soft skills, therefore, may be more related to differences in the subjects' accrual of soft skills from other sources, such as family and communities (Wilson 1996).

The data suggest a link between incarceration and outlook. Almost all (4) of the five subjects who expressed a particularly negative outlook had also been incarcerated more than once. None of these subjects were among the BOG, at least partly because positive or negative outlook was a measure of outcomes; however, two of these subjects

who expressed a particularly negative outlook had prior incarcerations and were among the WOG, the reincarcerated. Did prior incarcerations reduce the subjects' employability, resulting in a pessimistic, negative outlook? Several of the WOG subjects' stories illustrate this possible link.

In addition to poor employability due to employer apprehension, two subjects who had prior incarcerations, negative outlooks, and had been reincarcerated repeatedly spoke of another dimension of incarceration effects: parole limitations. One of these subjects, Charles, is a Hispanic, 36-year-old, who had been incarcerated three times for selling drugs. Charles complained that parole requirements had previously interfered with his employment. During his interview while he was in Wespen, he said "It is hard to find a job that will work around parole. You have to pick a job [that will work] around your parole schedule. Sometimes you have to wait to see your PO."

Charles' work history demonstrated the unskilled work that he had held between incarcerations. He stated that his jobs included a bouncer at a strip club, a janitor, and "side jobs." He did not have a plan for finding a job after his release from Wespen. Although Charles was unavailable for the follow-up interview because he had already been reincarcerated, his mother offered, "He had a hard time getting steady work when he got out. He was working an odd job here and there. He didn't report to his PO like he was supposed to." Charles' pattern of poor employment outcomes had persisted from his pre-Wespen work through his post-release experiences, and several incarcerations. Although Charles had worked in a skilled furniture manufacturing position at Wespen, had applied for the job to learn a skill, and while incarcerated believed that he did good work in the job, he also stated that he did not believe that the Wespen job would be useful

post-release. It appears that his history of incarceration led to a sense of pessimism and futility, which also undermined his willingness to comply with parole obligations.

Another subject who had previously been repeatedly incarcerated and who also expressed a negative outlook is Albert, a Hispanic, 35-year-old, who had been sent to prison four times for various crimes including drug sales, burglary, stolen vehicle, parole violation, and firearms. During the Wespen interview, Albert said that “The PO gets in the way of work.” He also reported that previously parole had interfered with family obligations; he explained that while he was on parole in another state, his brother had been killed from gang related violence in his home town. Albert was denied a travel request to attend the funeral. He absconded from parole to attend the funeral and was reincarcerated.

Albert’s work history reflected transient employment, including apartment maintenance for five months, painting houses for one year, and fast food cook for one and one-half years. He had some previous experience as a barber, and therefore was placed in a barber position at Wespen. He stated that he liked the barber job and believed that it might be useful in the future. His plan for finding work after his release from Wespen was to apply for a forklift operator position at a home improvement store. Albert was unavailable for the follow-up interview because he had been reincarcerated. His girlfriend stated, “He was having problems trying not to do anything wrong with his parole. [He] didn’t feel he could do it, so he turned himself in to do the rest of his time.”

Conversely, none of the BOG subjects who had prior incarcerations (4) had negative outlooks or expected to encounter obstacles from parole requirements. Two of the subjects had been in prison one time before, another subject had been incarcerated

two prior times, and another had been incarcerated six times prior. All of these subjects, however, had skilled work experience, and two were planning to be self-employed. One of these subjects, Clarence, an American Indian, 50-year-old, had been incarcerated seven times for various crimes including DUI, selling drugs, forgery, and parole violation. Despite his multiple incarcerations, because Clarence was a self-employed artist/potter, he was relatively unaffected by employer apprehension of hiring felons, as well as less affected by parole scheduling requirements. His plan for employment after his release from Wespen was to return to his artwork; he stated, “[I] have it all set up – just need to buy a kiln.” At the time of the follow-up interview, Clarence had already found one gallery to display his art and was searching for more.

Another BOG subject who had a prior incarceration is Edgar, a Hispanic, 41-year-old. Edgar had been incarcerated two times, and had spent five years total in prison for various crimes, including drugs, vice-crimes, stolen vehicle, possession of a firearm, and DUI. His employment history includes construction, jewelry manufacturing, and welder. He said that his favorite job was that in jewelry manufacturing. He had held his last job as a welder for two years prior to his incarceration at Wespen. At Wespen he worked in the library because he “liked to read.” After his release from Wespen Edgar enrolled in a welding program so that he could get certified, and was doing “side jobs” in welding and jewelry making while attending school.

The literature (Holzer et al. 2007) and some of the findings from Chapter Four and Chapter Six suggest that offenders experience problems obtaining employment because employers are reluctant to hire felons. This suggests that the subjects who have had multiple incarcerations and therefore, multiple releases from prison, would have

experienced more occasions where they had difficulty finding jobs. It is also possible that their experiences may have been worse because stigma levels may vary depending on the perceived level of the subject's criminality, with increasingly negative stigma attached to those who have been incarcerated repeatedly. One would expect that those subjects who had previously encountered more difficulty finding employment would have had more negative outlooks about post-release success, especially regarding employment opportunities.

This analysis of the subjects with the worst outcomes and the subjects with the best outcomes adds two additional factors to the link between incarceration and employment difficulties: self employment and skilled work marketability. Two of the WOG subjects with prior incarcerations expressed negative outlooks, based on prior experience, regarding the effect of parole restrictions on their employment opportunities. However, the BOG subjects with prior incarcerations did not express these negative outlooks. The two groups of subjects also differed in other ways – employer relationship and skill level. It appears that the BOG subjects were able to mitigate parole interference with employment, and likely to mitigate the stigma from employers, through two avenues: (1) their self-reliance and autonomy because of their self-employment; and, (2) through their increased employment options and marketability from their skilled work histories. Only two of the BOG subjects were not trained in a skill, without skilled work histories, and not self-employed. These two subjects were employed in unskilled jobs: janitor and telemarketer.

NEGATIVE SOCIAL ATTACHMENTS

Chapter Six showed that some of the subjects had established new positive relationships after their release from Wespen, and that these relationships appeared to have helped the subjects reconstruct a more mainstream identity. This presented another question: Were some types of subjects more open than other types to changing their social relationships? Because the literature has found that negative associations lead to deviant behavior (Sutherland et al. 1970), or “criminal embeddedness” (Hagan and McCarthy 1997) the social associations of both the BOG and the WOG subjects are of particular interest. Did the subjects from these two outcome groups keep their old social relationships, or establish new social relationships? Did the BOG and the WOG have different experiences in the forming of social relationships? Did identity reconstruction influence the subjects’ selection of social associations (Burnett and Maruna 2006)?

The BOG subjects were more likely to have been willing to disassociate from their pre-Wespen negative peers. The BOG subjects were older, on average, than the WOG subjects were when they first had legal problems, 24 years old and 15 years old respectively. Although both the BOG and the WOG each included four subjects who had gang associations, most (3) of the BOG gang members first had encounters with the justice system at age 16 or older, compared to most (3) of the WOG gang members who first had encounters with the justice system by age 12. It appears that the WOG subjects had become publicly recognized as delinquent or criminal at an earlier age, and that they also were more attached to their negative peers.

Two of the WOG subjects who were indoctrinated into a criminal lifestyle at an early age reported that they had no intention of permanently separating from their prior

associates. One of these WOG subjects is Charles, a Hispanic, 36 year old, who had been incarcerated several times. Charles first had legal problems at age 11 for residential burglary. He stated that he was a gang member and attributed his criminality to “where I grew up, [and] peer pressure.” During his interview in Wespen, Charles said, “I could never push my friends away. But [I will] try to not put myself in [an illegal] situation. But, [at the same time] not get rid of friends.” Charles had absconded from parole supervision within one month of his release and was reincarcerated for violating his parole within six months.

Of the WOG subjects who were gang members, only one subject had indicated that he was willing to disassociate from his negative peers, stating that he had “cut all ties, [and] wouldn’t call them friends.” However, all four of the subjects who were gang members from within the other outcomes group, BOG, had disassociated from their negative peers. One of these four BOG subjects is Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old. Bryan stated that when he was very young his older brothers were in a gang, and that he began associating with the gang. Bryan was first in trouble when he was 12 years old and was arrested for vandalism over \$1,000.00. Bryan reported that between age 12 and his incarceration at Wespen, he had always been on probation, except for nine months when he was committed to a juvenile facility. While in Wespen, Bryan stated that his friends who had also had legal problems were supportive: “They always told me to watch out what I was doing – that I was going to get caught [selling drugs].” After his release, however, Bryan reported that he was “staying away” from his negative friends, stating “they weren’t there for me in prison.”

Bryan was the only one of the BOG subjects who expressed conflicting views of his negative associates; while in Wespen he had indicated favor towards his friends from the gang, but after his release he reported that he was not socializing with them. Bryan was also the only of the BOG subjects who had been drawn into a gang at a very young age, when he was 12 years old. The findings suggest that the earlier these subjects became involved with crime, the less likely they were to disassociate from their negative peers, or they experienced indecision in the process. As reflected in the average age of onset, the subjects with the worst outcomes, WOG, were those who began their deviant behavior at a younger age and therefore were more likely to be inextricably linked to negative peer groups, including gangs. This is congruent with the strong attachments among fellow gang members as described by Sánchez-Jankowski (1991) and Krienert and Fleischer (2004).

These differences between the two outcomes groups in age of onset and attachment to negative associates were also apparent among those subjects who did not have ties to gangs. Two of the WOG subjects who were not associated with gangs, but who first had legal problems at young ages (13 years old and 14 years old) had reported that they were still going to associate with their old peers. One of these subjects stated that when he got out of Wespen, he wanted to help his friend who was addicted to methamphetamine. The other subject stated that he was going to allow his friends to come over as long as they did not bring alcohol or drugs with them. These subjects were also not committed to separating from their old associates.

However, most of the BOG subjects who were not in a gang had their first encounter with the justice system in their later teens or in adulthood, 16-years-old to 60-

years-old. These subjects were more likely to have expressed commitment to breaking ties to negative peers and to establishing new friendships with mainstream individuals. These subjects had developed relationships with either positive family members or with people who they had met at work, school, or church. The age of onset for both these subjects who were not associated with gangs, and for those who were associated with gangs seemed to have some impact on their willingness to disassociate with negative peers.³

One of the BOG subjects who severed his ties to negative associates is Bill, a White-non-Hispanic, 49-year-old. Bill first had a legal problem at age 17. Bill was incarcerated in Wespen for domestic violence. During the Wespen interview, he distinguished between friends and associates, stating that his friends were not a negative influence on him, but that “[an]other group is either someone you get drugs from, or sell drugs to. But I wouldn’t call them friends.” He said that negative peers were not a problem because “I have nobody at this point.” After his release from Wespen, Bill told his old associates “I don’t do that anymore. [I have] too much to lose”

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Given that substance abuse was revealed to have considerable impact upon the subjects’ pre-Wespen employment (see Chapter Four), substance abuse issues were explored in both the BOG and the WOG subjects. The occurrence of substance abuse’s direct interference with work attendance and ability to perform tasks, arrests related to substance abuse, and substance abuse work environments were all analyzed. The subjects’ participation in and appreciation of substance abuse treatment programs at

Wespen, and post-release, were also considered. The BOG and the WOG had similar experiences in most of these areas. However, there were distinct differences in their experiences with substance abuse work environments and in post-release substance abuse treatment.

Two subjects in the BOG had been employed in a substance abuse work environment just prior to their incarceration at Wespen. One of these subjects is Edgar, a Hispanic, 41-year-old, who had last worked for two years as a welder for a construction company. He regularly would “shoot pool” and “drink” with his friends from the building industry. While at Wespen for DUI and a firearms charge, Edgar had participated in the comprehensive therapy group (CTG)⁴ but had withdrawn from the program, stating “[it] wasn’t for me – all the donkey tricks.” However, after his release he attended Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) regularly. Edgar had also joined a gym and was attending church, where he was meeting new friends. He began working for himself as a welder, and was attending school to earn his welder’s certification. Edgar had taken measures to address his substance abuse, to engage in mainstream activities, and form social relationships with individuals who were not substance abusers.

Like Edgar, three other BOG subjects had also obtained post-release substance abuse treatment. These subjects had attributed their legal troubles to “addiction,” “drugs,” and “hanging out with the wrong crowd.” They had been incarcerated for selling drugs, violence, and fraud; however, post release, they took steps to change their lives by eliminating substance abuse.

An example of these BOG subjects who received post-release substance abuse treatment is Ted, an African American, 54-year-old, who had been incarcerated for

selling cocaine. Ted had been unemployed and addicted to cocaine for over ten years prior to his arrival at Wespen. While in prison, he participated in the CTG program, and attended church. After his release, Ted attended “12 step meetings,” was assigned a mentor, and was attending individual and group therapy. He also joined a church, where he had made new friends, whom he portrayed as “a family.” Ted, Edgar, and one of the other BOG subjects who had received post-release substance abuse treatment had also joined other organizations, thereby replacing their substance using relationships with positive mainstream relationships.

Almost half (5) of the BOG subjects had also indicated, either when at Wespen or after their release, that they had adopted a “clean” lifestyle. While at Wespen, Edgar had adamantly stated that offenders have the choice to “clean up and do right or go back to the same crap.” Also, while at Wespen, another subject, Bill, a White-non-Hispanic, 49-year-old, who had participated in the same substance abuse treatment program as Edgar, asserted that he was “20 years sober.” Although three years prior Bill had used methamphetamine which then led to criminal activity and his incarceration, he had considered the drug abuse a relapse. While still at Wespen he had reconstructed his identity as substance free.

Several of these BOG subjects indicated that they had developed a substance free identity and maintained it after their release. After his release from Wespen, one of these subjects, Bryan, proudly stated that he had “been sober from drugs and alcohol for two years. I don’t even think about [using drugs].” Bryan had included the time that he was incarcerated towards his time of sobriety. Bryan, as well as Bill and Edgar, had begun reconstructing a sober identity while residing at Wespen. Thus, it appears that similar to

criminal embeddedness, there is also a substance abuser identity to which some of the subjects were attached. However, also similar to Burnett and Maruna's (2006) strengths-based model for exiting criminal identity, it seems that identity reconstruction can also apply to substance abuse.

Another of these subjects had incorporated his new identity into a personal mission. Geraldo, a Hispanic, 46-year-old, attributed his legal problems to alcohol and had participated in AA at Wespen. After his release he was proud that he was sober and strove to help others overcome substance abuse problems. He said, "I don't know if sometimes I go over the line. I talk to people when I can – alcohol and drugs are not a good life."

Chapter Four revealed that substance abuse in the workplace co-occurred with some of the subjects' other employment problems, as well as criminal behavior. The workplaces where this more frequently occurs include several of the industries in which the subjects are typically employed, such as construction, mining, accommodations, and food services (SAMHSA 2007). Were the BOG or WOG subjects more likely to work within substance abuse work environments (SWE)? In contrast to the BOG, half (5) of the WOG subjects reported that they held pre-Wespen jobs in substance abuse work environments (SWE). For instance, Brad, a White-non-Hispanic, 28-year-old, who had previously held a roughneck position on an oil rig where the workers were "partiers." Immediately after his release he enrolled in college and worked as a waiter for a chain restaurant where liquor was served – a SWE. According to his mother he suddenly quit the waiter position, took another job from which he also resigned, and quit school. She believed that Brad had begun using drugs again when he stole from her and her husband,

absconded from parole supervision, and was reincarcerated. Brad was the only WOG subject with a history of working in a SWE who had received substance abuse treatment while at Wespen. Although he was favorable towards the CTG program, he still was not successful after his release. His mother stated that Brad had not attended any post-release counseling.

Two other non-SWE WOG subjects had participated in post-release treatment. One of these subjects is Danny, an American Indian, 24 year old, who participated in family and alcohol counseling after his release. While at Wespen, Danny had also received drug and alcohol counseling, as well as participated in the CTG program.

Like Danny, the other WOG subject, Gus, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, who received post-release substance abuse treatment, had also participated in the CTG while at Wespen. After his release from Wespen, Gus received substance abuse treatment from a center that assisted military veterans. This center had also hired Gus part-time as a janitor. Gus stated that his coworkers were “the same as me – homeless, drugs, and alcohol.” Gus’ tone implied that he was not very impressed by his coworkers, and did not believe that his workplace was a desirable environment, but acknowledged, “Some of them are serious about getting on their feet.”

One other WOG subject had participated in substance abuse treatment in Wespen. Adam, a Hispanic, 54-year-old, had participated in a treatment program that covered a broad spectrum of issues including relationships and substance abuse. He stated that he chose the treatment program because “I know that I have a problem with alcohol.” Adam had also planned on attending AA after his release from Wespen.

Adam indicated through his above statement that he perceived his alcohol problem as current; five other WOG subjects similarly reported their addiction issues as ongoing and unresolved. One of these subjects is Jeff, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, who attributed his legal problems partly to his methamphetamine addiction. Jeff stated that it was normal for him to “get out of the drug scene for a year or so.” He indicated that this oscillating pattern would continue. He explained that he was glad to have post-release employment arranged: “If I didn’t have this job waiting for me, I’d be selling [drugs].” He also had said that had planned to begin using marijuana as soon as he was off of parole. Uncommitted to a lifestyle change, Jeff was reincarcerated within five months of his release.

Compared to the BOG subjects, the WOG subjects were more likely to have worked in a SWE prior to Wespen. Overall, about half of both the BOG and WOG subjects had received substance abuse treatment while at Wespen. Approximately one-third (4) of the BOG subjects reported that they received post-release treatment; similarly, two of the six WOG subjects for which there was post-release treatment information had received post-release substance abuse counseling. The other four WOG subjects had been reincarcerated or had absconded at the times of the follow-up interviews.

One of the more significant findings is that about half of the BOG subjects indicated that they had reconstructed their identity based upon being alcohol and/or drug free. These BOG subjects had also demonstrated that they had replaced negative social relationships with positive relationships. However, the WOG subjects, rather than

indicating that they had adopted a different lifestyle which was substance free, indicated that they still associated themselves with current substance abuse.

WORK EXPERIENCES

We found differences between the BOG and WOG subjects' pre-Wespen work experiences and their outcomes. Most (7) of the BOG subjects last held skilled jobs before they were incarcerated. Few (2) of the WOG subjects last held skilled jobs. One of the BOG skilled workers is Ignacio, a Hispanic, 65-year-old, who had been self-employed performing home repair prior to his incarceration. He enjoyed the autonomy, stating "To me, it's not by the hour, it's by the contract. You can make your own paycheck. [If] you want a raise, you just work a little harder." Ignacio had been doing well until he was arrested for domestic violence.

During Ignacio's incarceration, he worked in furniture manufacturing, which he chose because it was related to his hobby and partly related to his home repair trade: "I've always had in my house, you might say, a cabinet shop." He believed that after he was released that he would work for himself in home repair.

Although Ignacio found that because of the recession there was not enough business to sustain his work, he used his furniture manufacturing skills to buy used items, such as furniture, restore the items and resell them. He was positive about his resourcefulness and his ability to support himself. He stated, "[You] do the best with what you got."

Marshall, a White-non-Hispanic, 33-year-old, is one of the two WOG subjects who had held skilled positions prior to their incarceration at Wespen. Marshall had been

employed as an electrician since he was 18 years old. His last job was electrician foreman, which he held for five months before he was arrested for stolen property. Prior to his last position, he had worked in another electrician foreman position for two months, which he left seeking higher wages. He estimated that he worked ten months out of each year.

Marshall had received a credit for time served in jail awaiting his trial and sentencing, and only had four months to serve at Wespen. He was unable to participate in any programs that required minimal time remaining on a sentence. While in Wespen, Marshall worked on the highway crew - picking up litter and pulling weeds. At the time of the initial study interview in Wespen, Marshall had just been fired from the highway job for violating rules when he kept a dollar which he had found while picking up litter.

Marshall's plan for post-release employment was unclear. He said, "[I] might do something real quick at my old job." He did not anticipate difficulty finding work: "I'm not gonna have a problem getting a job - never have. There are jobs. If you can't find one, it's because you don't want one." His long-term goal was to start his own electrical business. However, Marshall had been reincarcerated for absconding from parole supervision within two months of his release.

Marshall had held each of his last two jobs for less than one year. Similarly, six others, the majority of WOG subjects, also demonstrated transient work histories prior to their incarcerations at Wespen; only two (18 percent) of the BOG subjects had transient work histories.

These transient work histories represent an obstacle to the stable work which Uggen (2000), and Laub and Sampson (1993) argue is important for desistance. An

example of the WOG subjects with transient work histories is Manuel, a Hispanic 28-year-old, who held unskilled pre-Wespen jobs. He held his next to last job as a flooring installer for seven months until he lost it due to his substance abuse: “I didn’t show up a few times because I didn’t sleep all night on drugs, and they let me go. I was pretty pissed off at myself.” His next job was as a vehicle detailer, where he only earned minimum wage. Manuel held that position for two months when he was arrested and incarcerated for several crimes, including burglary, stolen property, and selling crack cocaine. Manuel also noted that he had worked as a restaurant cook a position which he enjoyed; however, Manuel had explained that the job was stressful as well, and that he would smoke marijuana at work to alleviate his stress.

Similar to Marshall, after credit for time served in jail, Manuel only had a few months to serve at Wespen. He said, “I’d go to forestry if I was here longer.” But, because of the short time which he had remaining on his sentence, he took a position in the kitchen, which he did not find favorable. He explained, “They have us do things that just don’t make sense – things that I know they wouldn’t do in a regular [non-prison] kitchen.”

Another of the WOG subjects who had a transient work history is Gus, a Hispanic, 47-year-old, who first had legal trouble when he was in high school. He attributed his criminal behavior to drugs and alcohol. Gus had served in the military before working in a series of unskilled jobs and being incarcerated two times prior to Wespen. Gus’s next to last job was for an auto parts company where he worked for two months in the warehouse and in delivery, before he resigned. Gus’s next job was as a labor temp worker for three months. He reported that he did not like the temp job; he

stated, "Some days you just go in and sit and wait and get no work; it seems like you're falling a little more each day rather than getting up." Gus lost the temp work when he was arrested and incarcerated for robbery.

At Wespen Gus worked in the kitchen, in which he said he was "treated well." Gus had applied for the kitchen job because he was comfortable in the job, "I've done kitchen in the fourth facility now." He said the work might be useful to him should he want to work in a restaurant. Gus explained during the Wespen interview that he did expect that some of his friends, who also had legal problems, might tempt him after his release. When Gus was released from Wespen, he had a metals manufacturing job offer which he wanted to accept. Gus explained, however, that his PO would not work with him on his reporting time, therefore prohibiting him from taking the job. Instead Gus took a part-time janitorial job which he was very unfavorable towards. Within three months, per his mother, Gus had become frustrated, drank with his friends and turned himself in to return to prison. However, public records show that Gus was rearrested for a new crime: robbery.

Conversely, only two of the BOG subjects had transient work histories prior to their incarcerations. One of these subjects is Abe, a Hispanic, 28-year-old, who had held unskilled pre-Wespen positions. Abe had worked as a laborer for a construction company for two months, earning only \$11.00 per hour, when he resigned because he hurt his hand on the job. He then moved to another state where a relative helped him get a job as a helper with a high-tech company. Although it was an entry-level, unskilled position, it paid well, \$18.00 per hour, and offered opportunity for advancement. After

three months, however, Abe was fired when a background check revealed his criminal history.

Abe was soon arrested for a homicide. At Wespen, Abe worked in forestry, which he found beneficial. Abe identified several positive aspects of the forestry position, including relatively good pay and learning a skill with which he could get work after his release from prison. He said proudly that he earned certificates for his forestry and fire training and “will be able to get on with state [wild-land firefighting] or come back on as crew boss for the program.” Abe said that before he worked in forestry, he never had a career goal; “now I want forestry.”

Abe’s post-release experiences demonstrated the completion of his identity transformation from a gang-member who had committed murder to a young man, separated from his old negative associates, who characterizes his relationship with his PO as “pretty good.” Abe said, conveying a sense of accomplishment and pride, that he was going to Alcoholics Anonymous two times a week, and had completed “100 hours of community service feeding the homeless, finished anger management courses, [and] finished a substance abuse program.”

Finally, following his release, Abe was hired as a motel clerk where he had worked for only a few days when he was fired because of his felony record. Abe did not respond with misplaced anger or futility; rather, he immediately started looking for work again. He then had difficulty finding work; he explained, “A lot of people see that record and they think you’re gonna go all crazy.” However, Abe persevered and eventually found a roofing position, where he worked a few weeks until he was hired as a wild-land firefighter, his goal all along.

Slightly more than half (6) of the BOG subjects had worked in skilled positions at Wespen. Almost half (4) of the WOG subjects had also worked in skilled positions. However, compared to the WOG subjects, the BOG subjects were more likely to have perceived their Wespen work favorably.

Of the subjects who worked in furniture manufacturing at Wespen, the WOG subjects (2) were unfavorable towards the work, whereas the BOG subjects (3) were favorable. It appeared that the subjects from these two groups perceived the same work differently. The WOG subjects stated negative aspects such as the pay was too low, and that the skills would not be useful post-release. The BOG who were favorable earned slightly more per hour compared to the WOG, cited a positive teamwork environment, and spoke of learning. An emerging theme was whether the subjects believed that their Wespen work would help them obtain future employment.

One of the WOG subjects, Jeff, who worked in furniture manufacturing, had pre-Wespen work experience as a framer. He only applied for the furniture position because following a disciplinary action he was unable to return to his previous job as a porter. Jeff indicated that he felt exploited, stating “Furniture making is important for [the department of corrections], but not me. If they paid me good money, [then] that would be important.” Jeff also said that the experience would be useful if he sought a post-release job at a furniture plant, “but I don’t really want to tell people about this.” Upon his release from Wespen, Jeff planned to return to his previous position as a framer.

One of the BOG subjects who worked in furniture manufacturing had a more favorable impression of the experience. Hank, a White-non-Hispanic, 21-year-old, had only unskilled work experience prior to his incarceration. His prior work included

janitorial/simple maintenance, and fast food cook. Hank applied for the position because he “wanted to work with wood.” He believed that his position installing cabinet locks and assembling doors was “one of the good spots.” He also believed that the skills could prove beneficial, stating “I [could] go work in a cabinet or door shop.” The furniture manufacturing job provided Hank with new skills and represented upward mobility for him.

One of the BOG subjects worked in irrigation while at Wespen. He perceived his job favorably, believing that the skills could be applied for personal use. Geraldo, a Hispanic 46-year-old, who was a framer before his incarceration, believed that he could use his new skills cultivating family owned land. Although Geraldo applied for the job because he wanted “to get away from the facility [because] it makes it easier to stay out of trouble,” and he had planned to return to his framing job after his release, he found value in his Wespen irrigation job.

There were three subjects among the BOG and the WOG who worked in forestry at Wespen. These subjects reported familiar favorable perceptions, such as the usefulness of the skills in acquiring employment. They also cited other positive aspects that provided intrinsic rewards. These intrinsic rewards contributed towards the strengths identified in Chapter Six, such as changes in identity, positive social connections, pride, and general optimism. One of these subjects is Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, who was committed to his forestry job. Bryan expressed social cohesion, pride, and optimism. Bryan cited several different positive aspects of the work: He described the relationships of his coworkers as “family,” and that they “take care of each other.” He explained that he liked the job, and that other inmates do not understand the importance of the job or

why it is worth the hard work, stating, “You wouldn’t know until you’re actually involved in it” [how good it is]. They don’t understand.” Bryan said that the job would prove useful after his release, he was planning to pursue a job in wild-land firefighting, and that he “learned other skills for on the streets.”

One of the BOG forestry subjects is Abe, who was discussed earlier as having appreciated the relatively high in-prison wages, as well as the fact that he could apply his skills outside of Wespen in a wild-land firefighting position, which he did finally obtain post-release. He had also mentioned that the forestry crew comprised a social group that resided in the same housing unit and engaged in other activities, such as eating meals together. Additionally, he said that the other inmates “admire the program, but say it’s too hard.” Through his depictions of the forestry crew’s social cohesion and other inmates’ perceptions of the forestry work, he alluded to a sense of status via the difference, whether positive or negative at first glance, between the forestry crew and the other inmates.

The other forestry BOG subject, Bryan, a Hispanic, 25-year-old, had applied for the position to “get off the compound.” However, he discovered other benefits associated with the work program. As did Abe, Bryan cited benefits such as pay, a time deduction from his sentence, and having the skills to work in wild-land firefighting post-release, which he intended to pursue. Bryan also indicated that his identity had been formed in relation to the group. He explained that the forestry crew lived together and socialized outside of the workday. He illustrated their cohesiveness, explaining that the crew was “like a family,” “takes care of each other,” and pooled their resources, such as together purchasing large amounts of meat from the prison canteen for a “cook-out.”

Bryan also spoke of other intrinsic rewards. He expressed a sense of responsibility, stating that part of his duties was to “make sure no-one gets hurt.” He also discussed his status in relation to non-prison, state personnel whom the forestry subjects worked with when they were thinning the forests, conducting controlled burns or fighting wild-land fires; he stated that the “bosses are cool,” and “treat you just the same – like equals.” Bryan’s post-release outcomes reflected both his new skill set, the intrinsic rewards he had experienced, and his reconstructed identity; he had planned to continue his pursuit of a wild-land firefighter job, had separated from his old friends who had been a negative influence, had formed new friendships with people who provided a positive influence, and had defined himself as substance free. Bryan had formed these new friendships at a job where he worked as a department store stocker, which was a seasonal position. He was laid off at the end of the season because the store had a policy that it did not hire felons for permanent positions. Although Manuel was disappointed, he began the job search again, was still searching at the time of the second follow-up interview, and also had planned to pursue a wild-land firefighter position the next season.

Similarly, Danny, a WOG Wespen forestry worker, had planned to apply his new skills upon his release from Wespen. During the initial study interview while in Wespen he cited intrinsic rewards of the Wespen job, explaining that he enjoyed the work tasks, and that “it feels good to be out in the wildlife.” Danny was hopeful, stating “It will add focus to my life when I get out.” He also implied that the work had provided discipline; he said he expected that after his release he would get a wild-land firefighting position which would “keep me busy, [and] keep my mind straight.” Three months after his release Danny was hired as a wild-land firefighter. At that time, Danny had been

anxiously waiting for his PO to approve travel so that he could perform his work duties, which included working out-of-town, and on occasion out-of-state. Perhaps related to a travel difficulty, he later was reincarcerated for absconding from parole supervision.

Of nine forestry subjects, Danny was the only one who was reincarcerated within six months of his release from Wespen (and not for criminal activity). Although post-release employment information from four of the forestry workers was not available, it is clear that they had not been reincarcerated within the follow-up time period. It appears that the Wespen forestry work was more likely to have lasting and beneficial effects on inmates than any other type of work.

These forestry subjects reported similar extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (see Chapter Five). These rewards included personal agency, pride, identity reconstruction, and optimism. Additionally, most (7) of these subjects had held pre-Wespen jobs that were less skilled, or unskilled, compared to their forestry work. For these subjects, the Wespen forestry program had not only provided additional skills, but had also represented upward mobility. The forestry subjects seemed to form their identity around the importance of the work and responsibility: one subject, Eliseo, stated “[We] gotta thin the national forest; if we don’t then it starts burning and gets out of hand”; another subject, Emilio, said that it is important to be “there helping a lot of people out ... save a lot of homes.” Some of the subjects spoke about how it had impacted their character, social skills, and self-esteem: Abe stated, “I will let my work speak for myself”; another subject, Emilio, said “[It] taught me a lot of people skills- to go out with teams from all over the place ... [it] gave me skills to act a little human,” [and] “built me up psychologically and emotionally.”

DISCUSSION

Several important patterns between the subjects' pre-Wespen experiences, Wespen experiences, and their post-release outcomes have emerged. Several factors appear to have facilitated the best outcomes, and other factors are linked to the worst outcomes. These factors broadly include criminal history, social influences, substance abuse, and work.

Several pre-Wespen factors appeared to have undermined the WOG subjects' post-release success. Prior incarcerations appear to have influenced both problems with employment and the subjects' outlook (Holzer et al. 2007; Useem and Piehl 2008; Pettit and Lyons 2009). The subjects' likelihood of detaching from negative peers and developing more positive social relationships seemed linked to the age at which the subject had first encountered legal problems: the younger the subjects were at their first legal encounter, the stronger their attachment to negative peers. This is congruent with social learning theory (Sutherland 1947) and criminal embeddedness (Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Similar to the findings of Uggen and Janikula (1999) the stability, quality, and social environment of the subjects' pre-Wespen work appear to be linked to their post-release outcomes (see Table 2).

Table 2: Pre-Wespen Factors and Outcomes

Best Outcomes Group	Worst Outcomes Group
Older at 1 st Legal Problem	Younger at 1 st Legal Problem
Skilled Work	Unskilled Work Transient Work
Non Substance Abuse Work Environment	Substance Abuse Work Environment
	Multiple Incarcerations

The subjects' Wespen work and treatment programs also appeared related to the subjects' outcomes (see Table 3). The most marked influence upon outcomes appeared to be the subjects' outlook, which also reflected many factors, including substance abuse treatment, identity reconstruction, and the quality of the Wespen work. Compared to the BOG subjects, the WOG subjects did not seem to gain as much from Wespen substance abuse treatment programs. However, other factors, such as pre-Wespen conditions and outlook, may moderate the subjects' amenability to such treatment. Most of these factors appear to be interwoven.

Table 3: Wespen Factors and Outcomes

Best Outcomes Group	Worst Outcomes Group
Identity Reconstruction, Detachment From Negative Peers	Attachment to Negative Peers
Positive Outlook	Negative Outlook
Effective Substance Abuse Treatment	Ineffective Substance Abuse Treatment
Skilled/Favorable and Marketable Work	Unskilled/Unfavorable and Un-marketable Work
Forestry Work at Wespen	
Intrinsic Job Rewards	Few perceived job rewards
Upward Mobility: Pre-Wespen → Wespen	Downward mobility at Wespen

Some conditions imposed unique effects at the post-release stage (see Table 4). Continuity of substance abuse treatment into the post-release stage appeared salient to the success of several BOG subjects. Also, the WOG subjects, who were less autonomous, less skilled, and had more experience with parole constraints compared to the BOG subjects, experienced a greater impact from parole interference with employment.

Table 4: Post-release Factors and Outcomes

Best Outcomes Group	Worst Outcomes Group
Identity Reconstruction	Parole Interference
Detachment From Negative Peers	Attachment to Negative Peers
Positive Outlook	Negative Outlook
Effective Substance Abuse Treatment	Ineffective Substance Abuse Treatment
Autonomous Self-employment	Transient, unskilled employment
Potential Marketable Skills	Lack of marketable skills

Finally, one particular Wespen work program appears to have had a significant impact on identity, outlook, and reincarceration. The subjects who participated in the forestry program were likely to have successfully endured obstacles to their post-release success while remaining optimistic and expressing a sense of personal agency. Only one of these forestry subjects had been reincarcerated within six months of release (for parole violation). The forestry program appeared to have offered the subjects additional skills, a marketable trade, and to have transformed their self-perception by increasing self esteem. The subjects indicated these changes while in Wespen and discussing their experiences, as well as in their discussions post-release.

During the Wespen interviews, the forestry subjects discussed the intrinsic rewards from their job, including its importance and their responsibility. Several of the subjects mentioned that the forestry crews were like a “family,” and that the crew participated in family-like activities like “cook outs.” Danny stated that he liked “[being] out in the wild,” and “liked the work.” Eliseo, one of the forestry workers, stated “They’ve taught me a lot.” Another subject stated to “we stick to ourselves.” The subjects talked of responsibility, such as the workers need to “make sure no-one gets

hurt,” and “We just got done with burn a controlled burn this past week. If we hadn’t done that, a fire could be a catastrophic.” Saul stated, “[I]t’s good to be out there to stop fire, help people.”

They also discussed the ways that the job changed them, including building self-esteem and implications that their work instilled within them a sense of self-efficacy, or personal agency. Most of the forestry subjects intended to pursue this type of work outside of Wespen after their release. Eliseo said that because “of all the qualifications it gave me,” that he would plan to apply for wild-land firefighter. Emilio stated “[I]t taught me a lot of people skills ... to act a little human; [and] built me up psychologically and emotionally.” Others internalized the positive messages about their work, for example, “Your work shows what you’re about,” that the work provided “a fresh start in life,” and his job provided “a good role model for [my] son.”

The subjects also spoke similarly after they were released. One of the forestry subjects who had just been hired as a wild-land firefighter at the time of the second follow-up interview, was already planning his long-term career. Abe, who previously had stated that he had no career goals before he worked in forestry at Wespen, had not only decided on a trade, but had mapped out his future. He stated, “I’m gonna be 29 this month. [I] have about 10 years left to do that kinda work [firefighter]; and, then [I will] become a driver [for forestry firefighting].”

The other work programs did not produce as remarkable results as did the forestry program. The positive statements from other work programs were not as emphatic: (building maintenance) “I enjoy it a lot”; (furniture manufacturing) “they think we have one of the top jobs ... we get to go to a different building, have daylight, [and] have more

freedom”; (furniture manufacturing) “They bring me stuff and I know what to do”; (furniture manufacturing) “it’s important for the people that order it. It makes you feel good when the people like it”; (furniture manufacturing) “we help each other”; (porter) “[I like] mingling with staff ... being known as someone who is trustworthy”; (kitchen worker) “to do the best to make it edible”; (kitchen worker) “I feel like a slave”; and, (highway crew) “clock went by fast.” Although some of these other programs’ responses are intrinsic, and in a way similar to the forestry subjects, there is still something missing in their nature compared to the forestry workers’ responses.

What are the mechanisms underlying these marked shifts that the forestry subjects underwent? Burnett and Maruna (2006) have recommended a focus on the development of offenders assets, “‘strengths-based’ resettlement,” is a more effective approach than more traditional models that are “‘risk-based’ and ‘need-based’” (p. 84). Burnett and Maruna (2006) concluded that this approach is beneficial for the offender and the community; they pointed out several important elements of this approach: strengths-based offender work provides an opportunity for the offender to contribute to his community; contributing to the community is a redeeming act; the work “would involve challenging, intrinsically interesting tasks that could utilize the talents of the offender in useful, visible roles” (p. 88); and, “The idea is to ‘turn participants on’ to the satisfaction of this sort of work” (p. 88). They added, “Rather than coercing obedience, strengths-based practices are therefore thought to develop intrinsic motivations towards helping behaviors” (p.89).

The forestry program, as depicted by the subjects, reflects Burnett and Maruna’s (2006) “strengths-based resettlement” model. It appears that the forestry program meets

these criteria: “challenging”; contributes to the community; “intrinsically interesting tasks”; “develop[s] intrinsic motivations towards helping behaviors” (2006: 88-89). The majority of the subjects had come from areas of social disorganization (Wilson 1996). However, the forestry program, given that it is designed around crews of workers and provides dedicated housing units, becomes a microcosm for these workers. Despite the obstacles which the subjects face in employment it appears that the design of the forestry program has created an ideal arena in which the offenders had the opportunity to transform themselves. These particular subjects have transformed their identities, embraced conventional values, have become more positive, are experiencing more meaning from their work, and have been in less legal trouble than the subjects who worked in the other offender programs.

Through its design, the forestry program creates a mini-community where the members have shared experiences, shared goals, and shared values. This seems to fit well within Durkheim’s ([1933] 1984) theory of solidarity, strain, and anomie. In a sense, the path which these subjects took began in a state of anomie and strain, and then transformed into a type of solidarity. Also, as Marx ([1844] 1988) asserted, man is alienated from his work, other people, and himself when his labor power is taken by someone other than himself. The transformation of the forestry subjects’ work-lives to include work that is meaningful provided an avenue for them to get beyond alienation, reconnecting with themselves, their co-workers, and the community. This analysis suggests that the forestry program, and any work program that entails aspects such as a broad vision beyond profit, shared values, and shared goals, is a viable approach to rehabilitate offenders. Several different outcomes have emerged, which imply that prison

is an appropriate location for such work programs. Prison programs make use of time that the offender would otherwise be wasting. Additionally, because the released inmates are especially vulnerable as soon as they return to the community, to have their employment training, opportunities, and placement already in development before release is important. Hopefully these findings can be used to foster better development of in-prison work programs, ones which will replicate the advantages of the forestry program with other types of work.

Notes: Chapter Seven

¹ In this study, there were no convincing links between the outcomes and age, race/ethnicity, family structure, or education.

² The BOG and WOG subjects had committed property, drug sales, violent, and DUI crimes. The BOG also included one subject who had been convicted of only white-collar crime.

³ There was only one BOG subject who was not associated with gangs, but who was a very young, age 13, when he first got in legal trouble, which was for public intoxication. Although he was incarcerated for selling drugs, he denied that he had any negative peers with whom to either associate or disassociate. Similar to the other outcomes group, WOG subjects who were first involved with deviant behaviors at a young age, he was not concerned that his old friends might prove to be a negative influence.

⁴ CTG is a substance abuse treatment program that requires participants who reside in the same housing unit receive group therapy, and provide peer support and peer monitoring.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This research project was planned during a lengthy period of prison expansion and inmate population growth in the United States, a 240 percent increase since 1980 (Schmitt et al. 2010). This also means that large numbers of prisoners are released into communities every year; in 2004, approximately 670,000 prisoners were released from state and federal correctional facilities (Useem and Piehl 2008). In the state in which Wespen is located, approximately the same number of prisoners were released in 2008 as were admitted to prison that year (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2009). Useem and Piehl (2008:13) wrote, “Society is still struggling with how to change policy and practice to accommodate the large number of inmates that leave secure confinement each year.” Additionally, recidivism rates are high; between 50 percent and 67 percent of those released from prison will be reincarcerated within three years (Petersilia 2000; Uggen 2000; Wallerstein 2005). In 2007, the three year recidivism rate for the state in which Wespen is located was approximately 45 percent (DOC 2010). As Useem and Piehl (2008:118) put it, “Those leaving prison have increasingly long criminal histories. A substantial fraction of those released from prison return within a short time, either for a violation of parole or for a new crime. This group accounts for an increasing share of prison admissions.”

These conditions have caused a sense of urgency in efforts to reduce crime and recidivism. Given the rate at which the prisons in the United States have expanded in recent years, and given the compounding effects of incarceration, there is clearly a need for more rehabilitative and effective corrections. Around 2001, reentry and evaluation

programs increased to address the difficulties which offenders encounter upon their release from prison. Given that offenders typically have employment difficulties, these programs have included work training and placement programs.

Unfortunately, much of the research on post-release work programs and recidivism has yielded conflicting findings (Redcross et al. 2010; Zweig et al. 2010). Uggen (1999) asserts that these programs are ineffective because they have placed offenders in low-skilled, poor paying jobs, and that the strategies of work interventions have overlooked job quality. Uggen (1999) and others (Bossler 2004; Wadsworth 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007) have argued that job quality matters, and have introduced variables such as job quality measures, job satisfaction, and social interactions in the workplace. This line of study appears promising.

It also appears that relying on post-release programs for work interventions may be problematic. Brooks et al. (2008) found that 65 percent of their subjects who were released without parole had committed a new crime within six months of their release. Even more astounding, regardless of parole status, “One out of four respondents who reported dealing drugs committed this offense within 48 hours of release. An additional 22 percent reported selling drugs between one and four weeks after release and another 33 percent between one and six months” (Brooks et al. 2008:24). Given this evidence that criminal behavior can begin very soon after release, is it reasonable to expect post-release employment programs to intervene in time? Or would prison be a more viable location for offender work interventions to begin?

Although research has shown that prison work programs have had little effect on recidivism (Martinson 1974; Bushway and Reuter 2002), in the same vein as Uggen’s

(1999) assertions that job quality matters, perhaps inadequate measurement of both prison work quality and post-release work outcomes (studies have typically looked at employment status only) may have obscured existing relationships. Therefore, the present study explored whether prison programs do have an impact on post-release outcomes, and if so, how? If job quality matters (Uggen 1999; Bossler 2004; Wadsworth 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007), does prison work quality also matter?

A qualitative study design was chosen based on several factors: (1) Conflicting findings from previous research on offenders and employment suggests that inadequate specification of variables may be an issue; (2) Quantitative research has not been able to explain the suspected mechanisms between job quality and outcomes (employment and recidivism); (3) Studies have not explored the nature of the offenders' work experiences from their perspective; and, (4) Qualitative methods might be able to identify mechanisms operating between variables, so as to help us to gain better understanding of offenders' work experiences in general.

The study was designed to explore several general questions: (1) What factors most affect offenders' work experiences, and how so? (2) How does prison work impact offenders? (3) How do the quality of work and the meaning of work affect crime, criminality, and recidivism?

FINDINGS

PRE-PRISON WORK

Research has suggested that work is protective against criminality (Wilson 1996, Uggen 1999, Wadsworth 2006). This study found that over half of the subjects were

employed just prior to their arrest which led to their incarceration at Wespen, which suggests that employment is not necessarily protective. Simple employment status, however, does not take into account different types of work.

Chapter Four found that the subjects with more skilled work were more likely to be committed to it, corroborating Osterman's (1975) finding that quality of work is associated with commitment. Other research has found that stable and quality work both increases commitment and reduces criminal behavior (Laub and Sampson 1993; Uggen 1999; Wadsworth 2006; Pager 2007). However, the current study found that stable, quality work was rare among these subjects. Most of the subjects held non-quality jobs in the secondary sector,¹ and those who held jobs which were partly within the primary sector and were skilled jobs, were subjected to work instability (i.e., layoffs). The subjects' poor quality employment is congruent with offenders in general, and with Crutchfield's (1995) finding that offenders are typically limited to employment within the secondary sector to which they are not likely to bond.

Offenders, as well as other disadvantaged populations, have limited opportunity to accrue the human capital necessary to exit the secondary labor market and obtain better employment (Burriss 1993; Crutchfield 1995; Wilson 1996; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Similar to others' findings (Irwin and Austin 1997; Williams 2005; Reiman 1995; Western 2008), the subjects within this study reported low levels of human capital compared to the U.S. population. Despite their educational deficits, some of the subjects had held relatively well-paid, skilled work to which they were committed; nonetheless, these subjects had committed crimes that led to their incarceration at Wespen.

A central reason why even skilled jobs to which these men were committed were not protective against crime was substance abuse. Uggen (1999) found that quality jobs are negatively associated with criminality, “net of prior criminality and substance use” (p. 144). Petersilia (1999) reported that most of the parolees in California are chronic substance abusers. The present study also found that certain types of jobs and environments fostered substance abuse. The data reveal a circle of causality between substance abuse, work, and crime. There were reciprocal relationships between the following: substance abuse and work; substance abuse and crime; and, work and crime.

Not surprisingly, the study found that substance abuse also affected work. DeSimone (2002) evaluated the impact of marijuana and cocaine upon employment, and found that “the use of each drug substantially reduces the likelihood of employment” (p. 952). Terza (2002) had similar findings regarding alcohol abuse and employment. Similar to the findings of Newcomb (1988), the present study also found that substance abuse led to terminations when employees arrived to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol; additionally, the subjects reported that they resigned from jobs because of substance abuse. However, the present study also found that these circumstances were not similarly experienced across skill levels. The subjects were more likely to have been fired or to have resigned from unskilled positions due to substance abuse than from skilled positions.

Work was also found to encourage substance abuse in some cases. Although Newcomb (1988) concluded that correlations between work conditions and substance abuse at work likely occurred because substance abuse and other characteristics, such as human capital levels, influenced employment choices, the present study found a more

reciprocal relationship between work and substance abuse.² In particular, the present study found several relationships between work and substance abuse: (1) Most of the subjects already had substance abuse histories when they entered jobs where there was ongoing substance abuse among the workers (substance abuse work environments – SWE); (2) Skilled subjects who worked in the building trades spoke of substance abuse work environments; (3) Several of the skilled subjects working in the building trades lost their jobs following their arrests for DUI; (4) Subjects who reported stress and dissatisfaction with their work were more likely to have substance abuse histories; (5) For some subjects, illegal drugs were used to make stressful and unsatisfying work more “tolerable”; and, (6) Unskilled workers were more likely to have been dissatisfied with their work and to have resigned or have been fired from their jobs because of substance abuse.

Several mechanisms appear to be operating within these work – substance abuse relationships. Subjects with substance abuse histories accrued little human capital, and were limited to undesirable unskilled work to which they were not committed; these unskilled jobs were not protective of (and sometimes even encouraged) substance abuse; for many of them, substance abuse led to loss of employment. Subjects who had little human capital but were able to enter skill building occupations, or subjects who had accrued some skills, held skilled jobs which were unstable and were often substance abuse work environments, which fostered further substance abuse, resulting in loss of employment following DUI. Thus, although almost all of the subjects had substance abuse histories, many of those who had jobs that were undesirable, unstable, or within a

substance abuse work environment experienced continued or exacerbated substance abuse which led to job loss.

Congruent with Newcomb (1988), who found that “disruptive drug use is engaged in by those who practice other deviant behaviors and hold nontraditional values” (p. 133), this current study also found that substance abuse was related to crime. The crime which stemmed from substance abuse occurred in three forms: DUI, Illegal Drug Sales, and other crime. Most of the subjects who had lost their jobs and were incarcerated because of DUI had worked in jobs within substance abuse work environments (see SAMHSA 2007).

The Wespen study found that the notion of “criminal embeddedness” (Hagan and McCarthy 1997) also applied to substance abuse issues. Moore (1978), Bourgois (1996), and Krienert and Fleisher (2004) also alluded to embeddedness in their discussion of identity, such as “squares” versus “deviants,” illegal drug sellers, economic class, and culture. The present study’s subjects communicated this embeddedness and its connection to substance abuse specifically in their discussions of their entry into substance abuse through their peers, which mostly occurred at a young age, and through their coworkers as adults.

Crime and criminal embeddedness also interacted with work and employment. The most obvious interaction was that the subjects lost their jobs when they were arrested for their crimes. The analyses also showed that the subjects’ criminal embeddedness interfered with the protective benefits from work. Although Hagan and McCarthy (1997) found that delinquents who were embedded in criminal behavior experienced “dissonance contexts” through their work experiences which then led to their exit from criminality (p.

234), Krienert and Fleisher (2004) argued that those embedded in a criminal culture cannot easily make the transition to conventional roles. Others (Moore 1978; Sánchez-Jankowski 1991; Bourgois 1996) have suggested that the embeddedness is rooted in culture and loyalty, which strengthens the bond to criminality. The current study demonstrated one of the mechanisms through which this negative bond interferes with work: the majority of the subjects who attributed their legal problems to substance abuse began associating with negative peers and using alcohol or drugs at a young age, and this pattern persisted into adulthood. One subject explained that his peers interfered with his work because “They want you to take a day off.” This subject had explained that he had been associated with a gang and under some type of corrections supervision since he was 12 years old.

Several studies have found that financial need can lead to a variety of crimes (Crutchfield 1989; Allen 1996; Hannon and Defronzo 1998; Parker and Auerhahn 1998; Uggen and Thompson 2003). This study also demonstrated that financially inadequate work can lead to crime, such as theft, robbery, and drug sales. For instance, the data showed that in most cases, illegal drug sales were at least partly motivated by financial need. The subjects reported that they sold drugs to either supplement their meager legal earnings, or as their only source of income, often after having lost their job or resigning from their job because selling drugs provided more income.

The analyses of pre-prison work experiences, then, revealed the reciprocal interactions between substance abuse, work, and crime. The findings illustrated the operating mechanisms between these three areas, also including other mediating factors, such as low human capital, criminal embeddedness, poor quality work, substance abuse

work environments, and unstable work. The study particularly demonstrated how the protective nature of work against crime is weakened through these various interactions, especially the ongoing effects of substance abuse.

IN-PRISON WORK

The DOC literature (2008) and the prison administrators interviewed both stated that the objectives of the inmate work programs are to improve the inmates' skills, teach economic self sufficiency, rehabilitate, reduce inmate idleness, and lower operations costs. The data showed that the objectives were met, but that these benefits were not equally distributed among the subjects. Logistical limitations and processes, such as inter-facility transfers, intra-facility transfers, and various processes that result in little time left on the subjects' sentences, combined with minimum time requirements for certain work programs, led to unequal opportunity for placement in skilled Wespen jobs: about half of the subjects were placed in unskilled operations jobs.

Reynolds (1997) found that less than 10 percent of male inmates worked in prison jobs other than housekeeping or maintenance. Although Wespen's division was more equal (50 percent), the distribution resembled the pre-Wespen ratios of unskilled and skilled work. The subjects' wages were most disparate between the most unskilled work (janitorial – 20c per hour) and the most skilled work (forestry - \$2.50 per hour). The Wespen data also allowed for analysis of mobility from their pre-Wespen jobs to their Wespen jobs. Most of the unskilled workers had experienced downward mobility, whereas most of the subjects who had experienced upward mobility worked in forestry, which included wild-land firefighting tasks, or furniture manufacturing. Similar to the

pre-Wespen jobs, the skilled Wespen jobs clearly offered better extrinsic rewards. This analysis suggested that the Wespen job placement process created a secondary sector within the prison, in which, compared to the skilled workers, the unskilled operations workers were paid much less, were more likely to have experienced downward mobility (see Piore 1972), and some of these subjects had no opportunity to advance to a skilled position. These unskilled workers were less likely to be committed to (perceive favorably) these positions (see Crutchfield 1995).

However, in addition to better extrinsic rewards, the skilled subjects, particularly the forestry workers, also experienced intrinsic rewards more characteristic of primary sector work, and all of forestry workers perceived the work favorably. Morin (2008) identified several broad themes that captured the more intrinsic or symbolic rewards from work, including “social purpose, moral correctness, autonomy, learning opportunities, positive relationships and recognition” (p. 13). She also discussed several different types of commitment to work, including an employee keeping a job because “he wants to,” because “he believes he has a moral obligation,” and “he needs to” (Morin 2008:18). She concluded that the meaning of work was positively linked to psychological well-being and commitment to work. The skilled subjects, and, again, particularly the forestry workers, described job rewards fitting most of Morin’s (2008) reward themes, as well as indicated two of her types of commitment (“wants to” and “has a moral obligation”).

The skilled Wespen workers reported intrinsic rewards which corresponded to Morin’s “social purpose” (2008:13). Although all of the subjects spoke of their responsibility to please their customers, the forestry subjects appeared to have taken the responsibility to another level. These subjects spoke of things, such as keeping

coworkers safe, learning “more responsibility,” that “[the job] is important,” and “[it is] good to be out there to stop fire, help people, their houses, and control fire.”

The skilled subjects also reported changes to their work ethic. As with the rewards that corresponded to social purpose, both unskilled and skilled workers reported that their prison work had helped them to develop better work habits, but the forestry subjects, again, were more emphatic about the role of their work in changing their perspectives. An example of the unskilled workers’ statements is that his “work ethic” had improved, from when he “was lazy before.” In contrast the forestry workers made statements such as “it gets you up early, gets us ready for work; we know there’s work out there to do ... your work shows what you’re about”; the forestry work had helped to “keep my mind straight”; forestry would “add focus to my life when I get out”; and forestry was “something I never dreamed of doing,” and “[it gave me] a fresh start in life.”

The skilled subjects also appreciated that they had learned new skills. Forestry workers learned about weather and fire behavior, how to fight fires, and about prescribed burns to prevent wild-fires. Furniture workers learned how to work with wood and assemble the furniture. Irrigation workers learned about crops and irrigation systems. These types of skilled prison work increased the inmates’ human capital.

Two groups of the skilled workers, the furniture manufacturers and the forestry workers were also more likely to speak of teamwork and camaraderie: “we help each other,” “we all stick together,” and we are like a “family.” These two groups of workers were also more likely to set themselves apart. Forestry workers stated things such as “the ones that are in forestry are the ones that like to work,” and, “They think we’re different;

they think that we think we are different.” Similarly, a furniture worker stated that “a lot of [inmates in other work programs] don’t want to work.” These feelings of teamwork and camaraderie led these workers to view their jobs more favorably.

Some of the subjects also spoke of bridging that divide between themselves and the rest of society via communication and interaction in the workplace, and trying to exit their criminal status. Both unskilled workers and skilled workers spoke of “mingling” with prison staff, keeping “in touch with the outside world,” and that discussions with prison staff represented “being known as someone who is trustworthy.” The forestry workers, however, discussed similar types of interactions, but at a deeper level. The forestry subjects spoke about their interactions with regular citizens when they are out in the field, as well as interactions with non-prisoner fire crews. One of the subjects stated that “[it] gave me skills to act a little human; [it] built me up psychologically and emotionally.”

Uggen (1999) found that job quality has a negative association with criminal behavior, and that quality jobs elicit commitment to work. Similarly, Wadsworth (2006) found that the “subjective experience of having a good job may deter criminal behavior ...” (p. 357). The forestry subjects held “quality,” “good jobs,” to which they were committed. The forestry subjects appeared to have reconstructed their identities via their work experiences. The data show that these subjects transformed from gang members and drug dealers to wild-land firefighters who were proud to protect their communities.

These findings are similar to those of Burnett and Maruna (2006) who found that their subjects who participated in “strengths-based reintegration,” and “rewarding” volunteer civic work while incarcerated indicated that they were “reacclimat[ed] to the

world of work”; received “training in transferable skills”; gained a “sense of perspective” of gratefulness and empathy; were “helpful” and “caring”; developed a “pro-social self-conception”; “contribut[ed] to the well-being of others”; and, engaged in “identity reconstruction” through civic work (pp. 92-95). Similarly,³ the present study found that the forestry workers at Wespen had reconstructed their identities through their civic (although paid) work.⁴

Different types of Wespen work affected the subjects differently. The data show that the subjects received the most benefit, including human capital skill building, attitude change, and identity change, from the following the work programs in descending order of impact: Forestry provided intrinsically rewarding “important” work for the public good, integration with non-prisoners, and skill building directly applicable to job opportunities; furniture manufacturing entailed production for the public good, and skill building somewhat applicable to job opportunities; irrigation offered skill building with possible job opportunity, skill building for personal use, and contact with non-prisoner entities; and, clerical work required some responsibility, and provided integration/contact with non-prisoner corrections staff. Conversely, very little positive impact was associated with operations jobs such as janitorial, kitchen, grounds-keeping, or with menial public service work, such as highway clean-up.

POST-RELEASE OUTCOMES

Reentry goals are to reduce recidivism and transform offenders into productive employed citizens. The ability of prison programs to contribute to reentry success has been debated. Martinson (1974) concluded that prison programs do not rehabilitate, and

that “nothing works.” Since then, others (Saylor and Gaes 1992; Wilson et al. 2000; ACI 2004; Baer et al. 2006; MacKenzie 2006; Visher and Kachnowski 2007) have found that some types of prison employment/vocational programs do affect reentry outcomes. However, the studies have often measured work in only terms of employment versus unemployment, been inconsistent, and been of relatively low magnitude, thus obscuring any underlying mechanisms.

Follow-up interviews with the released subjects reveal that they encountered many obstacles after their release from Wespen. Some of these post-release obstacles were also characteristic of their pre-Wespen experiences. Some Wespen subjects had only found undesirable jobs to which they had not bonded, and from which they resigned. Subjects working in the building industries had lost their jobs or had their schedules reduced. Other post-release problems which were similar to their pre-Wespen experiences included substance abuse, negative associates, and financial problems.

The subjects also encountered new obstacles or exacerbated obstacles due to their incarceration. Not only did the subjects report that jobs were scarce because of the recession, but they also reported that they felt stigmatized, and that their criminal history had dissuaded some employers from hiring them, similar to previous research findings (Holzer et al. 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2007). Additionally, several of the subjects expressed stress and depression related to the obstacles they were encountering. One subject had stated that he felt like he had a “badge of shame.”⁵

The subjects also experienced logistical difficulties. Several of the subjects had trouble finding work because they did not have adequate transportation and the available jobs were not in close proximity to their residences, as Wilson (1996) had also described

of disadvantaged people in general. The subjects also reported that their employment choices were limited by parole conditions and meeting requirements.

Some of the subjects demonstrated obvious strengths after their release, such as overcoming substance abuse, developing positive social connections, including with supportive family members, and having a positive attitude. These subjects appeared to have developed new identities associated with being substance abuse free and having mainstream goals and attachments. Even though many of these subjects who had obvious strengths had also experienced obstacles, the strengths appeared to have weighed more, thus, producing better outcomes. Of these subjects who possessed the strengths, 96 percent had not been reincarcerated. Conversely, all but one of the subjects who had been reincarcerated (the Worst Outcomes Group) did not indicate that they had any of these strengths. The analysis suggested that although most of the subjects experienced obstacles, having these strengths led to more favorable outcomes.

Aside from difference in demonstrable strengths, there were other differences between the subjects from the Best Outcomes Group and those from the Worst Outcomes Group. The Best Outcomes subjects were more likely to have worked in skilled Wespen jobs about which they were favorable, and to have been incarcerated for the first time. The Worst Outcomes subjects were more likely to have perceived their Wespen work unfavorably, to have had transient work histories in unskilled jobs and in substance abuse work environments, to have become embedded in criminal activity at a younger age, to have been more likely to maintain relationships with negative associates, to have remained embedded in substance abuse, to have been incarcerated for the second time or more, and to have had a poor outlook regarding their post-release success.

The less desirable characteristics of the Worst Outcomes subjects are characteristic of low human capital and few opportunities to acquire more human capital (Crutchfield 1995; Wilson 1996), criminal embeddedness (Hagan and McCarthy 1997), and fewer opportunities following prior incarcerations (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Darity and Mason 1998; Holzer et al. 2007; Pager 2007; Pettit and Lyons 2009). However, the findings of the Wespen study show that these obstacles are not insurmountable. Only one of the forestry subjects was reincarcerated within six months and, even prior to their release, the forestry subjects demonstrated positive strengths and identity transformation. Most importantly, several of the forestry subjects had experienced disadvantages similar to those subjects in the worst outcomes group: most had worked in unskilled jobs before Wespen, almost half were under 16 years old when they first got in legal trouble, most had negative associates prior to Wespen, almost half were associated with a gang, and two had been incarcerated before. These forestry subjects demonstrated that these disadvantages can be overcome.

Some research has found that the quality of work has a bearing on criminality (Uggen 1999; Wadsworth 2006), and that the purpose and meaningfulness of volunteer and unpaid work activity out of prison and in prison, particularly civic-oriented activity, can be transformative (Uggen and Janikula 1999; Burnett and Maruna 2006). Research on civic-oriented non-prison volunteer work (Uggen and Janikula 1999) has found that such work was associated with fewer arrests, and research on unpaid civic oriented prison was associated with identity reconstruction while incarcerated (Burnett and Maruna 2006). The Wespen study found that civic-oriented work, and in particular, forestry/

wild-land firefighting work, was associated with identity reconstruction while incarcerated and with less reincarceration post-release.

The Wespen forestry subjects reported more intrinsic rewards from their prison work experience, which appeared to have a lasting impact after their release. The forestry subjects who were available for follow-up interviews, reported positive outlooks and referred to their Wespen work favorably. Only one of the nine forestry subjects had been reincarcerated within six months post-release (due to conflicts between parole obligations and work demands), compared to a much higher rate for subjects who worked in more menial jobs in prison. These findings show that the forestry workers experienced meaningful and intrinsically rewarding work in prison, which led to identity reconstruction and reduced recidivism rates in this group. This suggests that the forestry jobs were rehabilitative work that spawned a change in the subjects' life trajectories away from criminal embeddedness, perhaps through dissonance contexts created by the work experience (Hagan and McCarthy 1997). The forestry subjects seemed to form their new identities around the perceived importance of the work and their expanded sense of responsibility towards it, demonstrating mainstream values. One forestry subject explained that "[The job] is important. We just got through with a controlled burn this past week. If we hadn't done that, a fire could be a catastrophe." Another subject also spoke of his responsibility to "make sure no-one gets hurt." One of these subjects' statements particularly well demonstrated the impact of the work on identity; he stated, "Your work shows what you're about."

Recent literature corroborates this model of quality work, identity reconstruction, rehabilitation, and enduring desistance from crime (Uggen 2005; Burnett and Maruna

2006): Burnett and Maruna (2006) wrote, “It is such a reconstruction of identity that is most associated with sustained desistance from crime. Whereas ‘primary desistance,’ intermittent and temporary cessation of criminal activity, is a characteristic of most persistent criminal careers, phenomenological investigations distinguish a changed ‘self’ as fundamental to enduring, or ‘secondary desistance’ (Maruna and Farrall, 2004)” (p. 94). The Wespen study demonstrates that even those offenders who have been disadvantaged and have been immersed in criminal embeddedness can dramatically change their trajectories by reconstructing their identities while incarcerated through quality work of intrinsic value.

THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Wespen findings provide support for the restorative justice approach, especially Burnett and Maruna’s (2006) theorization of “strengths-based resettlement.” However, this begs the question of why meaningful work, which thus far appears to have been realized through civic oriented activity, has such a transforming effect on offenders? What problem does meaningful work resolve?

Social control theory (Toby 1957; Hirschi 1969) asserts that the criminal urge is experienced by all, and is only restrained by the fear of losing desirable objects or social relations. Toby (1957) argued that possession of desired objects or relations provides a “stake in conformity” which roots the individual in conventional behaviors and value systems. Wilson (1996) found that the absence of opportunity in disadvantaged communities, characteristic of most offenders’ environments, creates social disorganization and erodes the enforcement of norms that govern social expectations.

This model also relates to Durkheim's (1951) anomie theory which claims that the lack of norm consensus results in the failure to establish limitations on the means by which to pursue goals, and to Merton's (1938) version of the theory that disjuncture between goals and the means to obtain those goals results in dysfunctional responses such as "innovation" or "retreatism." In this light, for the meaningful work experienced by some of the Wespen subjects to be able to resolve a social control or anomie problem, the experience would need to involve the attainment of desirable objects or relations, as well as the recognition and acceptance of conventional norms and values.

The Wespen work that produced the most beneficial change, forestry, which included wild-land firefighting tasks, did appear to fulfill these requirements: The forestry work experience included the regular participation of conformist others, such as non-prisoner state forestry workers and program staff. Moreover, because the training provided the subjects with the skills and opportunities to carry out their duties, the subjects had the tools to accomplish the goals which matched their new values, and therefore experienced an expanded sense of personal agency and self-esteem; this process generated an identity transformation.

However, this model does not explain the underlying reason why this type of work would be more effective at generating such significant identity change, compared to the other types of Wespen work programs. It would make as much sense to expect that corrections staff could convey to workers that kitchen work or janitorial work is helpful to their fellow inmates and that the values of hard work and responsibility are necessary to accomplish those tasks. Indeed, some subjects expressed these types of perceptions about these more menial jobs; however, their storytelling lacked the commitment and

enthusiasm expressed by the forestry subjects, and their outcomes lacked the efficacy demonstrated by the forestry subjects.

What is the underlying attraction to and appreciation of the forestry work?

Burnett and Maruna (2006) would likely cite the civic nature of the work. In fact, these subjects did say that they recognized the importance of serving the community. But why would serving the community be more alluring and satisfying than would be serving more specific customers, such as inmates, or staff, or highway travelers?

Marx's ([1844] 1988) alienation theory answers this question. Marx explained that the human capacity for conscious, creative, and social work is a central component of what it means to be a human being (species being); when people are alienated from meaningful work, they become dehumanized. Not only are they alienated from the production process itself, they are also alienated from other people and their own human potential. He also claimed that the alienated worker's labor creates another's private property, and "[i]t produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labour by machines—but some of the workers it throws back to a barbarous type of labour, and the other workers it turns into machines. It produces intelligence—but for the worker idiocy, cretinism" (Marx [1844] 2005:43).

These elements of Marx's theory provide insight into the mechanisms underlying the subjects' different Wespen work experiences. First, if the unalienated worker's labor is characterized as conscious, creative, and social work, it is apparent that menial, rote jobs, such as picking up litter on the highway or assembling pieces of furniture according to a diagram, would approximate meaningless and machine-like labor, alienated work. Second, if private property is the product of alienated labor, it seems logical that more

civic-oriented work that serves the community would be less alienated or unalienated.

Thus, the Wespen worker who engaged in the most conscious, creative, and social work would be the least alienated of all the workers.

This analysis suggests that the mechanism underlying the allure, satisfaction, and character-changing effects of Wespen forestry work is the fact that it allowed these men to replace pre-Wespen experiences of alienated work with an experience of more meaningful and social work in prison. Although the data showed that the subjects did not knowingly pursue meaningful work when they sought the forestry positions, instead seeking extrinsic rewards, the intrinsic result was achieved nonetheless. One of the subjects demonstrated this result, stating “[it] gave me skills to act a little human; [it] built me up psychologically and emotionally.”

Thus, through this unalienated, civic-oriented labor, the work itself becomes meaningful, rather than simply an economic means to exist. For the offender who has typically been disadvantaged and denied the opportunity to work as part of a team to serve the community, the experience of less alienated labor appeared to cause him to reconstruct his perception of himself and his efficacy - in other words, his identity. In the same vein, Smith and Bohm (2008) have proposed a rehabilitative approach, suggesting the need to develop policies which address offender alienation: “The concept of alienation suggests that crime can be reduced via critical criminology based policies that include: restoration, integration, social support, and community building—policies that have the potential of decreasing the influence of an alienating social structure” (p. 12).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings suggest that in-prison work programs should provide equal opportunity for skill building and meaningful work, including intrinsic benefits which offer avenues for identity reconstruction. A compromise between less skilled and less meaningful operations work, such as janitorial, housekeeping, and grounds maintenance, and the more beneficial work could be designed, so that only one or two days of each inmate's work week is allocated to the operations work and the remaining three to four days is spent in more rehabilitative work activities. It seems clear from this study that more civic-oriented work is likely to produce better outcomes, and more inmates should have the opportunity to experience such work in prison.

Also, because inter-facility and intra-facility transfers appear to interfere with program continuity, work programs should be implemented across facilities to permit the inmates to proceed with their skill building and rehabilitation regardless of their physical location. Incentives to participate in and continue with the rehabilitative work should include extrinsic benefits that are most likely to attract inmates who are unaware of the intrinsic values prior to their involvement in the programs.

The data show that some of the subjects were ill-prepared for post-release work, including unplanned delays before seasonal work opportunities became available, as well as poor planning for layoffs or intermittent work. Preparation for post-release employment should be expanded to include contingency plans for seasonal work, such as budgeting skills and seeking interim employment. Interdepartmental coordination with probation and parole should arrange post-release flexibility to allow out-of-town travel and alternative reporting times to maximize choice of post-release employment.

Corrections, the private sector, and the public sector also need to collaborate more fully to provide quality work upon release.

The subjects encountered a variety of obstacles post-release. Preparation to counter these obstacles should also be implemented. This preparation should address several issues, such as combating negative messages from family and peers, handling conflict, avoiding temptation from coworkers and peers to use substances, and developing positive social relationships. Also, post-release substance abuse counseling should be arranged for most inmates upon their release.

Future research is warranted in the following areas: Because the Wespen research examined a relatively small number of study subjects and utilized non-probability sampling, similar studies should be conducted with larger samples and quantitative methodology in order to assess whether the findings can be generalized; studies should also be conducted which examine other programs, such as substance abuse treatment in prison, private industry work in prison, and other types of work programs; additional qualitative studies could seek to discover how to make different kinds of work more meaningful and how to expand work opportunities both in and out of prison.

CONCLUSION

The Wespen study has revealed the factors that most affect offenders' work experiences. The results show that the subjects' human capital, substance abuse at work and outside of work, negative associations, and criminal embeddedness had reciprocal interactions with work and crime, affecting the quality and stability of work. Higher

quality work, both extrinsically and intrinsically, yielded better employment outcomes and less recidivism.

The analyses have shown that different prison work programs varied in their meaningfulness and effect upon the subjects. The most beneficial work program, forestry, provided skill building and other intrinsic rewards which motivated identity reconstruction and were associated with less recidivism. This finding supports the “‘strengths-based’ offender reintegration” model which found that civic oriented work promotes identity reconstruction that is rehabilitative (Burnett and Maruna 2006:83). This study found that the subjects typically had a long history of substance abuse, negative peer associations, crime, and alienated work experiences that combine to create cyclical disadvantage that can be hard to overcome. However, the data also showed that prison can be an effective arena for rehabilitative work, less alienated work that serves to reintegrate the worker with himself and with the community. The present research also supports the recommendation that reintegration needs to begin prior to community reentry. Future research and policy development should focus on rehabilitation strategies that address alienation, the meaning of work, and identity change among offenders.

Finally, pursuing this line of theory and policy developments is of great importance. Although this study was completed amid a recession and growing fiscal crises at all levels of government, these fiscal problems should not be used as an excuse to delay the development of programs which will promote offender rehabilitation, for if the cycle of recidivism is permitted to continue, the cost in both monetary and victimization terms will be greater in the long-run. As this study also revealed, there are

significant costs to the offenders themselves, and significant benefits to be gained from rehabilitative work.

Notes: Chapter Eight

¹ Piore (1972) described two sectors within the labor market – the primary and secondary markets. Piore asserted that the primary sector includes skilled jobs that provide high wages, good working conditions, fair rules and processes, job security and stability, and offer more opportunity for advancement. The secondary sector includes jobs with characteristics opposite those of the primary sector. Osterman (1975) pointed out that Piore’s primary sector also included an upper tier of jobs which have even greater degrees of rewards, such as higher wages and more opportunity, as well as have positive “affective characteristics,” like status, autonomy, participation, variety, and creativity. Osterman (1975) implied that the upper tier primary sector jobs promoted “a sense of personal commitment or attachment to the final product or service” (p. 510).

² Although Newcomb (1988) found positive correlations between job dissatisfaction and substance abuse, as well as loss of jobs and substance abuse, he did not posit that work caused substance abuse, but rather the opposite causal direction, that substance abuse caused work problems. However, he acknowledged that other research has shown mixed results, including that job characteristics led to substance abuse. He wrote, “[D]espite the well-founded theories that job stress and dissatisfaction lead to alcohol and drug abuse, such associations have not been consistently identified in empirical studies” (p. 82).

³ Burnett and Maruna’s (2006) subjects were inmates who were eligible to leave the prison grounds on work-release; therefore the subjects were not high-risk prisoners at the time they participated in their civic oriented volunteer work. One of Burnett and Maruna’s (2006) subjects described himself, and the other subjects, as “‘la crème de la crème’ among prisoners” (p. 92). This was also the case with the Wespen forestry subjects who were eligible to leave the prison grounds for their work duties. However, the low-risk status does not mean that the notion of civic work as a means to transform identity is applicable to only minor offenders; although the Wespen forestry subjects were housed in the low-level security compound, most of these subjects were not minor offenders; the forestry subjects’ offenses included, but were not limited to, murder, shooting into a crowd, armed robbery, burglary, battery, domestic violence, trafficking drugs, larceny, and DUI; four of the forestry subjects were also involved with gangs.

⁴ Similarly, this current study found that the forestry workers at Wespen had reconstructed their identities through their civic work. The subjects had also indicated that they felt different than other inmates because of their work, such as they were willing to work hard, whereas they portrayed other inmates as “lazy,” begging the question of whether it was their civic work or their sense of pride through being different. Because Burnett and Maruna (2006), as well as Uggen (2004), also found an association between civic work and identity reconstruction among their subjects who did not do physical “hard work,” and they did not note that the subjects found their identity through comparing themselves to a reference group, it can be presumed that the mechanism of change, at least partly, for the Wespen subjects was indeed the civic nature of the work, even though it was paid work.

⁵ This is analogous to the difficulties described by Braithwaite (1989) when adequate reintegration is not realized.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Wespen Administrator Interview Guide	286
Appendix B: Other Administrator Interview Guide	288
Appendix C: Initial Offender Interview Guide	290
Appendix D: Follow-up Offender Interview Guide	295

Appendix A

Wespen Administrator Interview Guide

[Explain study. Obtain consent]

Study ID # _____

Position

How long have you been in this field?

What brought you into this field? Why?

Program Name

How long have you been working with this program?

What brought you into this program? Why?

When did the program begin?

How many have gone through the program?

What is the goal of the program?

How is the program designed? What are the different components and how do they take place?

Who is served and how are they selected?

Does it work?

What parts of the program seem to be helpful? Why?

What parts of the program do not seem to work? Why?

What other effects are there which were not intended?

Is there continuity of treatment, or the program upon release?

What do the offenders get out of the program?

What does the institution get out of the program?

Are there any obstacles that present themselves?

Are there any pending changes to the program?

What are your thoughts on offenders and the role of employment and work upon the likelihood of re-offending?

* Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix B

Other Administrator Interview Guide

[Explain study. Obtain consent]

Study ID # _____

Position

How long have you been in this field?

What brought you into this field? Why?

Program

How long have you been working with this program?

What brought you into this program? Why?

When did the program begin?

How many have gone through the program?

What is the goal of the program?

How is the program designed? What are the different components and how do they take place?

How much interaction is there between you or your employees and the employers?

What type of feedback do you get from the employers?

What are their experiences?

What are their concerns?

Which offenders are served and how are they selected?

Does it work?

Which parts of the program seem to be helpful? Why?

Which parts of the program do not seem to work? Why?

What other effects are there which were not intended?

What do the offenders get out of the program?

Are there any obstacles that present themselves?

What are the labor market conditions for offenders versus the general population?

Are there any pending changes to the program?

What are your thoughts on offenders and the role of employment and work upon the likelihood of re-offending?

* Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix C

Initial Offender Interview Guide

[Explain study. Obtain consent]

Study ID # _____

Age Ethnicity Religion

Marital Status Number of Children

Education level attained before this incarceration Educational level now

Risk assessment level at incarceration Current risk Assessment level

Offense 1 – sentenced to this incarceration

Offense 2 – sentenced to this incarceration

Offense 3 – sentenced to this incarceration

Prior number of prison incarcerations Total years in prison, not jail

Prior number of convictions

Programs involved in/activities in prison

What types of jobs have you had? Years of work experience?

What things in your life have contributed to your being in trouble with the law?

What age were you when you first got in trouble with the law?

When were you incarcerated this last time?

When did you come to Wespen? When are you getting out?

Where are you going to live? With whom?

Do you have a transportation plan?

Gang Association

What programs are you participating in here in prison?

What work program are you in?

Tell me about the work program

What have you found helpful about the work program, or what do you like?

What have you found not helpful about the program, or what don't you like about the program?

What are the tasks that you do? Is there down time?

What do you think about the work you do?

Do you feel your job is important?

Do you feel you are good at what you do?

Do you have any input into how your job is done?

Is there any opportunity for advancement in the program?

What do you think about the administrators / supervisors of the program?

Is there one supervisor, or several, how does that work?

What do you think about the other inmates in the program?

Do your coworkers have cliques?

Are some of your coworkers treated better than others?

Do you associate with your coworkers outside of the work hours –

for dinner, working out?

Have you had any problems in the program – with the work, with bosses, or coworkers?

Is your boss fair?

Do you get paid for your work? How much? What do you use that money for?

Do you think this program will be helpful to you when you get out?

How do other inmates who aren't in the program view it, or your participation in it?

Why did you get into this work program?

How did you do it – what was the process?

Tell me about the other activities you are involved in here.

Why did you choose those?

Tell me about your work experience and jobs outside of prison?

Were you working right before you were incarcerated this time?

When was your last job before incarceration? What was your job?

Where? How long did you work there? How much were you making?

How many hours per week? Did that cover your living expenses?

Were there benefits such as health insurance, sick leave and vacation?

What did you like about your job? What did you not like about your job?

How did you leave your job, and why?

(If did not resign) How long do you think you would have stayed there if you had not been incarcerated/laid off/fired?

Was there opportunity for advancement at the company?

Tell me about your relationships with your coworkers.

Tell me about your relationship with your boss. Was your boss fair?

Tell me about the last job you had before that.

What was your job? Where? How long did you work there?

How much were you making? How many hours per week?

Did that cover your living expenses?

Were there benefits such as health insurance, sick leave and vacation?

What did you like about your job? What did you not like about your job?

How did you leave your job, and why?

How long do you think you would have stayed there if you had not been incarcerated/laid off/fired?

Was there opportunity for advancement at the company?

Tell me about your relationships with your coworkers.

Tell me about your relationship with your boss. Was your boss fair?

Since you were an adult, what other jobs have you had?

What has been the best job you've had? Why?

What has been the worst job you've had? Why?

What jobs have you had that you felt you did well?

In an average year, how many months have you worked?

What things make work tolerable or good?

What things interfere with work or make it bad?

What problems have you encountered in the workplace?

Employers? Customers? Co-workers?

Tell me about your friends on the outside.

Are your friends on the outside people you've met from work?

Have your friends on the outside also had problems with the law?

If you refrain from illegal behavior and lead the conventional life, do you have friends who would give you a hard time for that?

Do you normally socialize with people who you work with?

When you were a kid what kind of job did you think you would have as an adult?

What kind of job did you want to have in your lifetime?

In the neighborhood that you lived in before being incarcerated, what types of jobs did people have?

When you were a kid, in your neighborhood, what kinds of jobs did people have?

Do you have work lined up for when you are released?

What kind of job do you expect to get?

How much do you believe you will be able to earn?

What are your plans for finding work?

Do you think it will be hard to find a job?

What do you want to get out of your next job?

What is important to you about a job?

Are you aware of any programs on the outside regarding assistance with employment?

Do you have any long term goals regarding work or career? Education?

Do you have anything you would like to add about the issues of work and having problems with the law?

* Wrap up describing the follow up portion of the study. Explain follow-up interviews.

Do you have any questions? Comments?

* Appreciation for participation.

Appendix D

Follow-up Offender Interview Guide

[Explain anonymity]

Study ID # _____

Marital Status

Who do you live with?

How are things going?

Are you having any difficulties in general?

Have you had any problems with your parole?

What programs are you involved in?

Has your educational status changed since we last met?

Have you received any additional training or certification since we last met?

Do you have access to transportation?

Own car _____ Share use of car _____ Someone takes me places _____ Bus _____

What is your financial situation?

Are you involved in any recreational activities, groups, or hobbies?

Tell me about the friends you are associating with.

Are they supportive? How so?

Do they have problems with the law?

Job 1:

Tell me about your current job (or your last job).

Company name? How far is this from your residence?

How do you get to work?

What is your job title? Dates of employment?

How much does this job pay? How many hours per week?

Does that cover your living expenses?

Are there benefits such as health insurance, sick leave and vacation?

What do you like about your job? What do you dislike about your job?

Is there opportunity for advancement at the company?

(If the job has terminated) How did you leave your job, and why?

(If the job has not terminated) How long do you think you will stay with the company?

What do you think about the work you do?

Do you feel your job is important?

Do you feel you are good at your job?

Do you have any input into how your job is done?

What do your non-work friends think of your job?

What does your family think of your job?

Is this the type of job you wanted to get when you were released?

(If still there) Do you have plans to obtain different work?

What problems have you encountered in the workplace?

Employers? Customers? Co-workers? Schedule? The tasks?

Tell me about your relationships with your coworkers.

What do you think about your coworkers?

Do your coworkers have cliques?

Are some of your coworkers treated better than others?

Do you socialize with anyone from work?

Do you feel like you are accepted by coworkers and your managers?

Tell me about your relationship with your boss. Is your boss fair?

Is there one supervisor, or several, how does that work?

What do you want to get out of this job?

What is important to you about a job?

What things make work tolerable or good?

What things interfere with work or make it bad?

Do you have any long term goals regarding work or career?

Do you have any long term goals regarding education?

(Repeat for additional jobs in the last three month period, e.g., Job 2, Job 3, etc.)

Tell me about your job search for the last three months.

Did you seek work at any particular places because a family member, friend, or associate had recommended you do so?

What was the outcome of this?

What other methods of looking for work did you use?

What were the outcomes?

Did you look for employment in any particular area of the town or city?

What types of work did you apply for?

Did you use the company's application form, or a resume?

Were there some jobs that you inquired about only verbally, without a formal application?

Tell me about the process of applying for jobs, or inquiring about jobs.

Did you mail in applications?

Did you get responses from those applications?

Was your conviction indicated on the application?

Did you speak with people about the positions?

Who?

What were those interactions like?

Were these persons aware of your conviction status?

How did they respond to you?

Tell me about the negative experiences.

Tell me about the positive experiences.

What were the results of these interactions?

Were you contacted again about the positions?

Did you have any interviews?

With whom?

What were those interactions like?

Were these persons aware of your conviction status?

How did they respond to you?

Tell me about the negative experiences.

Tell me about the positive experiences.

What were the results of these interviews?

Which of the jobs that you inquired about, or applied for, did you want?

Why did you want a particular job?

What did it pay?

What benefits were there?

What would you say is the most difficult thing you have experienced about working since you have been out of prison?

What has been the most difficult thing you have experienced in general?

What has been the best thing you have experienced about working since you have been out of prison?

What has been the best thing you have experienced in general?

Has the experience of looking for employment, or being employed, been the way you expected it would be?

What things have helped you regarding work?

What things have made working or looking for work, difficult?

Do you think the work activities that you were involved in while you were incarcerated have had an effect on your work experiences after you were released?

Do you think your work experiences in prison will be helpful in the future?

Are there other things that you did in prison that are affecting your work situation now?

How has your work experience, or job seeking experience, been the same or different than your experiences before you were last incarcerated?

Is there anything you would like to add about issues of work?

* Wrap up describing the follow-up portion of the study, and continuing to document the job search. Do you have any questions? Comments?

* Appreciation for participation.

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