

2015

# Neighborhood Risks and Resources Correlated With Rates of Successful Reentry of Youth Returning From Detention Centers in Massachusetts

Nokuthula Sibanda  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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2015

Abstract

Neighborhood Risks and Resources Correlated With Rates of Successful Reentry of

Youth Returning From Detention Centers in Massachusetts

by

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MA, John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, NY 2008

BA, York University in Toronto, Canada 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

July 2015

## Abstract

Youth delinquency is a major social problem in the United States with approximately 29% of youths aged 18 to 21 reoffending within the first year of release in Massachusetts. Given the amount of state resources used for youth corrections, the factors that encourage the youth to reoffend becomes important to understand. The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional correlational study was to examine whether community and environmental risks and resources are related with successful reentry of youth returning from detention centers in Massachusetts. Using the collective efficacy and routine activities theory to explain the motivations to reoffend, the study sought to answer whether the level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, availability of schooling, and availability of prosocial activities have an effect on recidivism rates. Publicly available data consisting of 347 youth returning from Massachusetts detention centers in 2008 were analyzed using logistic regression. The results showed that neighborhood resources available such as schooling and prosocial activities were statistically related with the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration. These results have important policy-making, education, and legal implications in reducing the reoffending rate of juveniles who have been released from incarceration. That is, educators, detention center personnel, and the community can benefit by collaborating to provide youth offenders with a special learning community that focuses on educating the child during and after release. All members of society stand to benefit from lower recidivism rates by increasing the perception of safety in the neighborhood.

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## Dedication

I dedicate my work to my family and friends who have provided encouragement and support throughout this process. A special feeling of gratitude to my husband, Ralph, for his words of wisdom and reassurance. To the young people at YouthBuild, I thank you for the daily inspiration to be able to add to the body of literature on youth reentry.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my committee members who were more than generous with their time and expertise. A special thank you to my chairperson Dr. Lori Demeter for assisting me in putting together this study and most of all patience throughout the entire process. Thank you Dr. Michael Burkhead for providing content knowledge.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Youth delinquency is a major social problem in the United States. According to Aizer and Doyle (2013), incarceration rates for juveniles have increased even faster than those of adults over the last 20 years. In 2010, 70,792 juveniles were detained in the United States, a rate of 2.3 per 1,000 aged 10 to 19 (Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP] 2011). According to Mendel (2011), the United States spends approximately \$6 billion per year on juveniles with an average direct cost of \$88,000 per juvenile per year (OJJDP 2011) on the treatment of youth offenders. It is estimated that the United States has a juvenile corrections rate that is five times higher than the next highest country (Aizer & Doyle, 2013). Over a million delinquency cases have been handled by the U.S. juvenile courts annually since 1974 (Knoll & Sickmund, 2010). Although the number of youth arrests decreased by 2% overall and murder arrests rates showed 9% decrease from 1999 to 2008, youth arrests still accounted for one in 10 murder arrests in 2008 (Puzzanchera, 2009).

Youth delinquency negatively affects families and local neighborhood morale. Further, taxpayers bear the financial burden of treating and incarcerating youths. However, the reintegration of youth offenders to the community has continued to be a challenge. Therefore, this study sought to assess the relationships between neighborhood risks and resources available to youths returning from detention centers specifically in Massachusetts where 931 Department of Youth Services were discharged during the year 2008 (Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, 2012).

## **Background of the Problem**

Nearly 100,000 youth offenders are released from detention centers across the United States each year, with approximately 97,000 youth who remain in detention centers (Abrams & Fields, 2010; Anthony et al., 2010; Nasir, Phillips, & Young, 2010). Abram and Freisthler (2010) estimated that 200,000 youth transition back into their neighborhoods each year. The disparity between estimates of youth returning to their communities stems from the different definitions of youth in terms of the age limit. Some researchers have defined youth as anyone younger than 19, while others have defined it as anyone under the age of 24 Abram and Freisthler (2010).

Incarcerated youth who are released have spent varying lengths in detention centers for a variety of crimes such as assault, drug trafficking, stolen property, and more. The success of juveniles following detention has been measured by their recidivism rates. Recidivism has been defined as no repeat contact with the criminal justice system following commitment to a state juvenile justice system (Hartwell, 2010). The existing literature documents high rates of repeat contact with the criminal justice system for juveniles upon reentry to the community. According to Tansi (2009), Massachusetts data indicated that 29% of youth ages 18 or 21, who are released from the supervision of the Department of Youth Services, reoffended within the first year. A study of a large juvenile detention system in the Southwestern states of the United States provided an observation that rearrest rates are as high as 85% at 5 years post release (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Moreover, according to Abrams and Freisthler (2010), the initial year post release is crucial for a youth's success on recidivism. At the onset of reentry, a youth

is expected to adjust to community factors such as antisocial peers, alcohol, and drug availability. Nonetheless, recidivism is only one indicator of reentry success for youth offenders.

As offending youth return to their communities, they face many challenges that they must overcome in order to achieve successful reentry. When young people return to their communities, they are likely to return to the same situations that played a role in their delinquent behavior. For example, upon their return home, youth may be exposed to contact with delinquent and/or drug-using peers, dysfunctional parents or households, and opportunities for engaging in illegal behavior (Harder, Kalverboer, & Knorth, 2011). Furthermore, juveniles may encounter barriers that make it difficult for them to reintegrate back into the school system. For example, a youth's reenrollment documentation may be incomplete. Some school districts' policies require that a youth produce documents that establish residency immunization status. If the detention center does not forward these documents and the youth is unable to provide them, the student may be denied enrollment (Feirman, Levivck, & Mody, 2009). Moreover, a youth could experience discrimination within their community (Feirman et al., 2009). Other members of the community are likely to place judgement on the youth based on his/her previous delinquent behavior. Thus, the youth opts to keep distance with the community rather than to fully reintegrate (Harder et al., 2011). Nevertheless, these challenges faced by youth offenders upon their reentry may play a significant role in committing an offense after reintegration (Harder et al., 2011).

A large body of the research on barriers to successful transitions into mainstream society has focused on youths' individual risk factors, problem behaviors, and negative peer associations (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010; Anthony et al., 2010). Consequently, this individual approach has failed to address risks posed by the context of the neighborhood they return to. Research has proven that neighborhood conditions play a role in contributing to delinquent behavior and patterns of criminal activity (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Patterns of criminal activity in neighborhoods may be influenced by factors such as alcohol outlet density, the availability of supportive services, or opportunities for youth to engage in prosocial behavior (Abrams & Snyder; 2010). Adequate conceptual and empirical research exists sustaining the notion that neighborhood influences have a more significant role in youth violence over individual risk factors of offending (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Regardless of the existing findings from the current research, theory and interventions on juvenile reentry have failed to acknowledge neighborhood factors as a key source of influence for reducing recidivism rates for juveniles.

A limited number of studies have sought to study neighborhood-level factors that affect the reentry experience and outcomes for adult offenders, and only one study has specifically focused on youth reentry (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Abrams and Freisthler (2010) used archival data from postal codes in Los Angeles County, California to analyze the associations between the level of neighborhood risks and resources and the success rates of youth returning to communities following incarceration. Abrams and Freisthler (2010) concluded that rates of successful reentry were positively associated with

neighborhood risks, such as density of off-premise alcohol outlets and level of community violence. Although this study contributes to the existing knowledge that neighborhood disadvantages play a significant role in the experiences and outcomes for an offender upon reentry, available research remains sparse, especially research focusing on juvenile offenders.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the increased theoretical evidence that neighborhood conditions play a significant role in structuring success for high-risk youth, individual risk factors continue to dominate the focus of community reintegration of incarcerated youth. Research has indicated that when institutional resources that address the needs of community members are made accessible, neighborhood risks decrease. More specifically, neighborhood resources provide reentry youth with support services that can mitigate risk of reoffending, such as programs that provide school and job placement assistance and recreation centers (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). However, the positive benefits linked to use of social services for reentry youth has not been confirmed empirically (Anthony et al., 2010). Therefore, further extensive research is needed to support the suggestion that access to resources mitigates neighborhood risks for reentry youth. Moreover, existing research has focused on the reintegration of adults to communities. On the other hand, there is lack of focus on youth reentry in relation to neighborhood risks and resources available. This study sought to examine the relationships between neighborhood risks and resources available to youth returning from detention centers in Massachusetts.



### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional correlational study was to add to the current knowledge on youth reentry by examining what neighborhood risks and resources are related with rates of successful reentry of youth returning from detention centers in Massachusetts. This study included the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationships between the level of neighborhood risks and rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.
2. To examine the relationships between environment resources such as availability of jobs, schooling, prosocial activities, and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study evaluated the following research questions and their corresponding hypotheses:

RQ1: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration?

$H_{01}$ : There is no relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.

$H_{a1}$ : There is relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.

RQ2: To what extent, if any, do relationships exist between availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community?

*H<sub>02a</sub>*: There is no relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*Ha<sub>2a</sub>*: There is a relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H<sub>02b</sub>*: There is no relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*Ha<sub>2b</sub>*: There is a relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H<sub>02c</sub>*: There is no relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*Ha<sub>2c</sub>*: There is a relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on two theoretical frameworks: collective efficacy and routine activities theory. Institutional resources, in the context of the collective efficacy theory, refer to the quality, quantity, and diversity of institutions in the community that address the needs of individuals. Collective efficacy theory stems from the hypothesis that “neighborhoods with high levels of social cohesion and community assets are better equipped to contain individual risks for delinquency and youth violence” (Abram &

Snyder, 2010, p.10). For example, such institutions include, but are not limited to, libraries, schools and other learning centers, child care, organized social and recreational activities, medical facilities, family support centers, and employment opportunities (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). In this study, I sought to challenge the individual approach in explaining juvenile delinquency and put forth the hypothesis that neighborhood factors such as cohesion and social control may predict rates of self-reported delinquency and documented arrests (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). I sought to extend the theoretical framework to understand whether risks or supports associated with a neighborhood to which a youth must reenter can support or deter successful transition.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions were used in this study:

*Availability of jobs:* The number of available jobs per each identified neighborhood that can be accessed by young people.

*Detention facilities:* Any residential facility that is designed to restrict the movement and activities of juveniles adjudicated of having committed a criminal offense (OJJDP, 2013).

*Dual status youth:* Youth who are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (Abrams et al., 2008).

*Environmental resources:* Factors that exist outside the individual such as jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities (Abrams & Snyder, 2010).

*Level of neighborhood risk:* Crime risk ratings by crime type for each identified neighborhood. The types of crime that will be looked at are homicide, sexual assault,

aggravated assault, burglary, robbery, motor vehicle theft, larceny, total property crime, and total violent crime.

*Neighborhood effects:* “The effects imposed on individuals as a result of living in a specific neighborhood that the same individual (or household) would not experience if living in a different neighborhood” (Abrams & Snyder, 2010, p.1789).

*Probation service:* A disposition where youth are placed on an informal/voluntary or formal/court ordered supervision (OJJDP, 2013).

*Prosocial activities:* The number of local community organizations that provide activities tailored for young people.

*Rates of reoffending:* The number of youth who are reconvicted following post one year of release.

*Recidivism:* Rearrest occurring following 1 year post incarceration after an initial juvenile commitment (Hartwell et al., 2010). This excludes juveniles who are returned to detention for violating the terms of their releases and have not committed a new crime.

*Reentry program:* Reintegrative services that prepare out-of-home placed juveniles for reentry in the community (Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2013).

*Schooling:* The number of schools that are available to youth for each identified area.

*Youth:* Someone younger than 21 (Hartwell et al., 2010).

*Youth offender:* Youth who have been under the supervision of the Department of Youth Services under the age of 21 (Hartwell et al., 2010).

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. All information on each juvenile offender in Department of Youth Services (DYS) supervision will be correct and current.
2. The rates of juvenile offenders released back to the community after serving a sentence in DYS will be correct and current.
3. The list of environmental risks related to juvenile offending will be correct and current.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Each year between 100,000 to 200,000 youth offenders face the transition from incarceration back to their neighborhoods (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). The main focus in the literature of youth reentering their communities following incarceration has primarily focused on individual risk factors for negative outcomes, while overlooking the importance of the context of the neighborhood upon which they return. Since each state differs in their definition of the term youth and how recidivism is measured, in this study, I focused on the state of Massachusetts and used publicly available statewide data. In 2009, the most recent data available, there were 1,637 youth in Massachusetts who committed to DYS supervision, and of those who were released back into the community, 816 had their conditional release revoked for violating the conditions of their release (Hartwell, 2010). Thus, this study, sought to add to the knowledge base regarding the relevance of neighborhood context in youth reentry research.

### **Significance of Study**

Youth offender reentry occurs in all communities and neighborhoods and has specific risks and resources that influence the outcomes for youth. The majority of research that addresses neighborhood disadvantages and assets that may influence reentry outcomes for offenders has been geared toward adult parolees. However, one study conducted by Abrams and Freisthler (2010) was based on the neighborhood effects theory and assessed the environmental context of youth offenders reentry in a large urban area. This initial study has laid the groundwork for examining the role social and environmental factors play in reducing repeat offending for reentry youth, yet further research is needed to understand the associations between neighborhood risks and resources and juvenile reentry. There is a need for further exploration of the communities in which offending youth return, specifically whether resources deter or create opportunities, as well as the role that neighborhood risks play in the outcomes for these youth. Thus, it is important to study neighborhood resources and assets to assess their ability to curb and disrupt the continuous cycle of youth crime and incarceration. The results of this study were significant for social change at the societal level in that it provides guidance for public policy development by determining how neighborhood risks and resources available affect the reoffending behavior of incarcerated youth. Hence, the results of this study could be used to develop policies and programs that could help youth offenders have a better quality of life after being incarcerated. Further, this study impacts social change at the individual level in that it identified necessary resources that

juveniles need to be successful upon their return to the community. More specifically, the use of specific resources may aide youth offenders in reducing their delinquent behavior.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations existed for this study. This study had a limited geographic focus that made it difficult to generalize to areas with dissimilar racial/ethnic compositions. Since zip codes were used as the unit of analysis, they might not correspond with what other researchers might consider as the immediate neighborhood. Due to zip codes being permeable boundaries, it is easy for individuals to relocate within the same county without realizing that they have crossed over to another zip code area. Moreover, this study was limited by its cross-sectional design. The use of a cross-sectional design limited the study in understanding how reentry rates affect service availability and limited the ability to fully understand how services influence rates of reoffending, which is a factor that is given great importance in the literature. In addition, another limitation for this study was that the number of available resources were undercounted due to a reliance on a social service directory for each study area. This study also only consiidered youth who had been reconvicted of new crimes rather than those youth who returned to detention centers for technical violations, causing the actual recidivism rate to be lower and thus limiting the applicability of this study's results. Lastly, the usual criteria for a recidivism study is a minimum of 2 years post release, and since this study only looked at 1 year post release, this might affect the reliability of the results.

## Summary

The discussion in Chapter 1 provided the introduction to the study as well as a focus on the problem that was addressed. Specific research questions and hypotheses were presented in Chapter 1. Moreover, limitations and assumptions that were considered in the study were also discussed. Chapter 2, examined current theoretical and empirical literature pertinent to neighborhood risks and resources available to reentering youth. This includes significant literature relevant to address the research questions and illuminates the background, problem statement, and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, in Chapter 3, I will provide a discussion on the methodology that was considered for this study. This chapter includes a discussion on the appropriateness of the research design as well as the data collection and data analysis procedures that were used to answer the research questions.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional correlational study was to add to the current knowledge on youth reentry by examining what neighborhood risks and resources are related with rates of rearrest of youth returning from detention centers in Massachusetts. In this section, I present the review of literature related to the topic. Approximately 100,000 youth transition back into their communities each year following incarceration (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Research has largely attributed the challenges faced by youth offenders following their transition into the community to individual risk factors such as poor school attachments, antisocial behavior, negative peer relationships, and problem behaviors (Anthony et al., 2010). However, there is significant evidence that neighborhood conditions play a substantial role in the success of a youth upon reentry as well as contribute to delinquent behavior in young offenders. The following research focused on two questions:

1. What neighborhood risks are associated with rates of reentry youth (per postal code)?
2. What neighborhood or area resources are associated with rates of reentry youth (per postal code)?

Thus, Chapter 2 represents a review of the literature relevant to the following topics related to juvenile reentry:

- Characteristics of a youthful offender approaching reentry,
- Race and juvenile reentry,

- Gender differences,
- Barriers to successful reentry,
- Approaches to juvenile reentry,
- Risk factors post discharge,
- Neighborhood effects: theory, and
- Environmental social factors,

There are several nationally acknowledged government agencies, such the OJJDP, that study juvenile delinquency, recidivism, aftercare programs, and current youth trends. All of these publication sources offered different views on how to address the needs of youth reentering their communities following incarceration. These differing views may be because most existing work on reentry has focused on adult offenders.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature for this review was found using Walden University's electronic databases held within EBSCOhost, which included Psyc ARTICLES, Pscy INFO, SocINDEX, and Criminal Justice Abstracts. The use of certain websites was necessary for this dissertation to capture national statistical data posted by government organizations on juvenile offenders. For example, the OJJDP was used to capture the current efforts to address the issue of juvenile reentry. Search terms included, but were not limited to, *juvenile offenders, recidivism, reentry, rehabilitation, risk factors, juvenile corrections, juvenile justice system, aftercare, juveniles in custody, community reentry, discharge, reoffending, residential treatment, correctional institutions, ethnography, youth offenders, substance abuse, mental health, neighborhood disadvantage, transition*

*services, service utilization, education, gender differences, female offenders, racial differences, neighborhood effects, community resources, and post incarceration.* Articles were obtained in PDF format and other sources were gathered using Google and other government websites.

### **Characteristics of a Youthful Offender Approaching Reentry**

Youth come in contact with the juvenile justice system in various stages of processing. This may include commitment, detainment, and diversion. For the purpose of this study, the focus was on youth returning from detention centers and reentering their community following incarceration. This study examined data on young offenders in the United States, in particular in the state of Massachusetts. There is limited detailed information available on the specific characteristics of detained youth transitioning from incarceration back into their communities. However, an overview can be found from existing statistical data on youth who are currently detained. According to a 2010 report from OJJDP, the majority of detained youth are male (85%), even though female offenders have shown an increase (Sedlak & Bruce, 2010). The ages in detention vary with the largest percentage (51%) of youth ranging between 16 or 17 years old, more than 15% between the ages of 18 and 20, and preteens ages 10 and 12 make up 1% of the population (Sedlak & Bruce, 2010). Black and white young offenders represent the majority of youth detained with 32% being Black, 35% being White, and 24% being Hispanic. It is important to note that minority youth, most visibly Black, are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system (Anthony et al., 2010; Sedlak & Bruce, 2010). According to Sedlak and Bruce (2010), the offense profiles of youth in residential

placement were as follows: 31% of youth reported just one offense, 33% indicated two or three offenses, and 34% indicated four or more offenses. Of the youth who reported offenses, 45% reported having committed property offenses, 43% reported person offenses, and 42% reported status offenses. Of the 43% of youth in custody who were classified as person offenders, approximately 20% were classified with some form of assault as their serious offense, and 69% of them claimed they knew their victim. Twenty six percent of youth in custody had a property offense as their most serious offense, with 19% of those youth reporting burglary, arson, or theft.

Youth who exit the juvenile system following incarceration exit in a number of ways that may lead to adult courts and adult correctional facilities (Anthony et al., 2010). Youth who come across the juvenile justice system enter in various ways, with a set of unique characteristics that need to be addressed to increase the likelihood of success upon their reentry into the community.

### **Barriers to Successful Reentry**

The goal of juvenile treatment programs is to reduce the risk at which youth are likely to reoffend. Several factors identified in the literature have been linked to predicting the chances a youth will likely reoffend. According to Hartwell et al. (2010), current literature on juvenile offenders gives little attention to prior criminal history factors such as the age of onset of criminal behavior. The number of arrests prior to being detained have been said to be a predictor of future criminal behavior. Recent studies have associated environmental and personality characteristics as factors predicting recidivism (Baglivio, 2009; Hartwell et al., 2010). Furthermore, findings from

a general review of juvenile criminal risk factors concluded that school problems, substance abuse, age at first offense, intelligence, family dysfunction, parental substance abuse, family criminal involvement, and poverty to be the most prominent factors associated with youth becoming offenders (Hartwell et al., 2010). It is important to further analyze these specific juvenile criminal risk factors so as to reduce the rates of recidivism for young offenders.

### **Education**

Youth reentering their communities face many challenges when attempting to reintegrate into their schools. Research has documented a number of educational deficiencies among delinquent youth. These youth have a range of poor educational outcomes that stem from histories of educational neglect, learning disabilities, and poor school records (Sedlak & Bruce, 2010; Synder & Abrams, 2010). In a study conducted by Anthony et al. (2010), the authors categorized the educational needs of incarcerated youth reentering the community into three components. Incarceration imposes a disruption in youth's education that often makes it difficult for them to be reintegrated back into mainstream school. The educational deficiencies among detained youth play a significant role in their delinquent behavior. For example, a strong link has been identified between youth with serious emotional disturbance (SED) and psychosocial issues such as delinquency. Youth with SED represent approximately 5% of the school population, thus creating an increased struggle for the educational system to coordinate educational services for these youth with the juvenile justice system involvement (Hatcher, Maschi, Rosato, & Schwalble, 2008). More specifically, special services such

as Individual Education Plans (IEP) that are used to address a youth academic needs while incarcerated may be lost in the transition process, or specific changes made to the IEP during incarceration may not be communicated upon the youth's release.

In 1992, the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act mandated that detained youth receive educational opportunities (Braithwaite, De La Rosa, Holliday, Toldson, & Woodson, 2010; Painter, 2008). However, the OJJDP concluded that 75% of facilities housing juveniles were in violation of the regulations put in place to address educational opportunities (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Painter, 2008). Further, the quality of support youth receive to address their educational needs differs greatly during their period of incarceration. For example, Anthony et al. (2010) cited a study by Zimmerman (2005) that established that 46% of youth reentering their community within a 1-year period were functioning at a grade level 3 or more years below their appropriate grade level. Thus, youth who receive special education services prior to incarceration experience a greater disadvantage by not receiving appropriate support during their period of incarceration and poor transition back into the educational system. These youth are placed back into the same schools, which lack an appropriate means to address their unique educational needs following detention (Anthony et al., 2010). Lastly, Goldkind (2010) claimed that schools have a tendency to be resistant in reenrolling students who are returning home from mandated placements. A school's resistance can stem from its memories of prior negative experiences with the student or fear that the student will lower the school's overall test scores as a result of the time they spent without proper

instruction (Goldkind, 2011). Failure to address the needs of a student upon their return increases the educational gap between that student and their classmates.

According to Puzanchera (2009), the rate of juvenile delinquency reached to 2.11 million in 2008. Accordingly, more than a million juvenile delinquency cases have been handled by the U.S. juvenile courts annually since 1974 (Knoll & Sickmund, 2010). Although the number of juvenile arrests decreased by 2% overall, and murder arrests rates showed a 9% decrease from 1999 to 2008, juvenile arrests still accounted for 1 in 10 murder arrests in 2008 (Puzanchera, 2009).

The combination of histories of educational neglect, learning disabilities, poor transition back into mainstream school, and the disruption caused by incarceration has resulted in poor outcomes for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and high school diplomas for youth who have been incarcerated (Abrams & Synder, 2010). It is estimated that less than 20% of youth who have been detained earn their GED or high school diploma (Abrams & Synder, 2010; Courtney, Foster & Osgood 2010). A 2007 report published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that only 39% of black high school dropouts were employed at age 19, compared to 60% of white dropouts (Goldkind, 2011). Furthermore, nearly 60% of black male dropouts were incarcerated between the ages of 30 to 34, compared to 11% of non-Hispanic white dropouts (Goldkind, 2011). These poor outcomes leave youth offenders who have been detained with less job opportunities and increase the likelihood for them to reenter the criminal justice system.

Youth with learning disabilities may experience increased frustration upon their return to the classroom setting. This frustration stems from a history of inadequate coping

skills that may translate into defiant or aggressive behaviors when encountering challenges that exceed their capabilities in the classroom. Nonetheless, research has shown that a comprehensive approach in addressing educational needs of juvenile detainees is essential for them to be successful upon reentry. Bailey (2008) recommended increased scrutiny of special education services offered through juvenile detention facilities. Braithwaite et al. (2010) suggested an integrated approach that focuses on transitioning youth from the detention center back to the school as a necessary tool for juvenile offenders to reach their academic potential. Educational institutions should implement new strategies to tackle the educational needs associated with reoffending for youthful offenders.

### **Mental Health**

Studies have shown strong evidence of the prevalence of mental health illness among the juvenile justice population. Literature has outlined that the majority of youth in detention centers exhibit high occurrences of a variety of mental health needs (Grande, Hallman, Rehfuss, Underwood, & Warren, 2012). According to Hatcher et al. (2008), studies have concluded that between 50 and 75% of youth incarcerated in the country have diagnosable mental health disorders. Studies have found that within the population of incarcerated youth, 40 to 82% have been diagnosed with at least one mental disorder (Grande et al., 2012). In contrast, community samples of adolescents reported 33% of adolescents needing mental health treatment. Studies have concluded that community samples require significantly less mental health care than those youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system. For example, a study of juvenile detainees in Cook, IL



reported that an estimated 66% of their incarcerated youth had been diagnosed with internalizing disorders or externalizing disorders (Wood et al., 2008). Wood et al. (2008) also stated that “externalizing disorders can be defined as being characterized by symptoms that are situated within the individual and involve problematic affective/emotion states. ... Externalized disorders are characterized by symptoms that are overt and likely to be disruptive to other people” (p.514). In particular, 18.7% of the detained youth were diagnosed as having major depressive episodes, dysthymia, or manic episodes, and 21.3% of the youth reported anxiety disorders (Wood et al., 2008). As for externalizing disorders, 16.6% of the youth were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, 41.1% were diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder, and 50.7% of the youth were diagnosed with some form of substance abuse disorder (Wood et al., 2008). Thus, mental health disorders are a significant challenge faced by youth during their period of incarceration. Therefore, the initial treatment for such young people needs to begin while they are detained and continued after their release.

Even when youth receive mental health treatment, they still remain at risk for engaging in delinquent behavior. A study conducted by Davis et al. (2009) found that female adolescents who were receiving public mental health services were at much greater risk for justice system involvement than their counterparts. Further, these female youth receiving public mental health services were arrested, had an earlier age of onset of arrest, were arrested more frequently, and had been charged with more serious offenses. While some youth receive treatment during their periods of incarceration, it has been

found to be inadequate. A study conducted by Gau, Unruh and Waintrup (2008), which looked at incarcerated youth who participated in a reentry intervention, found that youth who had received mental health treatment prior to incarceration were less likely to reoffend than those whose mental health treatment began in the detention center. It is a significant problem that treatment provided during incarceration has little to no impact at addressing the diagnosed mental health disorder. Therefore, earlier identification of mental health needs leading to treatment in the community along with continued treatment while youth who are in correctional facilities may assist in the reduction of recidivism rates.

In addition, mental health disorders play a significant role in juvenile detainees' successful reintegration back into the school system. According to Wood et al. (2008), youth who have been diagnosed as having internalizing disorders may not be a problem for teachers. However, a decline in their grades may occur as a result of their diagnoses. On the other hand, youth who have been diagnosed as having externalizing disorders face significant challenges as they reintegrate into their school setting. Since externalizing disorders are characterized by overt behaviors, once in a school setting, students may become aggressive, be involved in fights, have difficulty focusing, and engage in drug and alcohol abuse (Wood et al., 2008).

The management of psychotropic medications needed to manage the symptoms associated with a mental health diagnosis can be challenging for youth re-entering the community. Youth may feel uncomfortable having to take medications out in the community, or become defiant and refuse to take the medication. Medications often have

adverse side effects such as sleepiness or loss of appetite, making it difficult for youth to follow through with their intake (Wood et al., 2008). Along with the barrier of medication management, youth with mental health disorders coming upon their reentry may face some challenges associated with discharging planning. A juvenile's discharge plan has an important impact on their success in the community. The timing of the discharge, or change of status to probation or parole, can be problematic if sufficient time is not allotted for the detention center to make the necessary referrals to ensure that the youth can continue with treatment upon their release (Wood et al., 2008). A youth's release from incarceration is determined by their general behavior or completion of a sentence rather than specific treatment goals that address their mental health needs. Thus, a youth's status may hinder their progress in treating their diagnosis. For example, if a youth is released from probation/parole leaving them without any criminal justice involvement, they may be resistant to following mental health recommendations once the official oversight has been eliminated.

Lastly, family involvement in the youth mental health treatment is key for a youth's reintegration to be successful. Upon discharge, a youth may be referred to a community-based mental health treatment center. Challenges may arise at this phase of treatment such as caregiver's ability to transport the youth to and from appointments, caregiver's ability to request time off from work to accompany youth to appointments, or the caregiver's lack of support of youth continuing treatment.

## **Substance Abuse**

Along with mental health needs, youth that have spent time in locked facilities face challenges that stem from drug use. Research has found that juvenile offenders who continue to use drugs have higher chances to continue their offending (Chassin, 2008). Further, these young offenders have higher rates of early drug use than the general population. According to Belenko, Childs, Dembo, Schmeidler & Wareham (2011), gender differences in illicit drug use is complex. However studies suggest that boys report higher levels of marijuana use than girls involved in the criminal justice system. Nonetheless girls have been found to report earlier initiation and higher levels of serious drug use, such as cocaine and amphetamines (Belenko et al., 2011). Both girls and boys detained youth were affected similarly with drug use. Anthony et al. (2010) cited a study from Teplin (2007) that showed that within residential placements, 25.9% of males and 26.5% of females had been dealing with alcohol use disorders; 44.8% of males and 40.5% of females had marijuana use disorders; 2.4% of males and 6.9% of females have other substance abuse disorders; 20.7% of females have both alcohol and other drug disorders. Substance abuse is a significant risk factor for recidivating for both boy and girl youth. Similarly Mallet, Stoddard-Dare & Welch-Brewer (2011) stated that there are no significant differences between boys and girls substance abuse in their sample of probation-involved youth. However the use and patterns of substance differs across race in populations of juvenile justice involved youth. Mallet et al. (2011) cited results from a study which found out of their stratified sample of 1,829 detained youth that significantly more white boys met criteria for a substance abuse disorder than did non white boys.

Similarly more white girls met criteria for substance abuse disorder than did not white girls. In a similar study by Vaughn et al. (2008) of a state-based sample of incarcerated youth it found that white youth had higher prevalence of substance use and substance related problems than did black youth.

Nonetheless scholars have identified that a percentage of youth that enter the juvenile justice system report having engaged in some form of substance abuse. A study in Arizona juvenile court found that 43% of the girls that appeared in court were current drug users or had a history of drug use (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). In California, 17% of the delinquent youth reported as being users of drugs other than alcohol and 36% reported being chronic users (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). Notwithstanding these high reports of drug use, only 26% of the girls reported ever receiving substance abuse treatment (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). Despite the existing literature that cites the effectiveness of drug treatment programs in reducing criminal involvement, neighborhoods continue to struggle with providing adequate resources to increase substance abuse treatment for youth. Thus, resources that provide substance abuse treatment should be a main focus for communities with large numbers of young offenders returning home. Furthermore there is a need to increase continuation of treatment of youth upon their release into the community in order to maintain successful reentry outcomes. Even though youth receive treatment during incarceration, the progress they make is not followed upon exiting residential placements.

## **Employment**

Incarcerated youth face short and long-term employment needs upon their release. Abrams & Snyder (2010) cited a study conducted by Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2006) which concluded that adults that had been incarcerated experienced a reduction in earnings by 10% to 30% due to time spent in detention. Youth who have minimal work skills and little prior work history face even greater challenges when attempting to obtain employment (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Research has shown that employment serves as a deterrent for youth out of detention within the first six months. Youth experience a more successful transition when it is linked with community-based social service agencies other than mental health or parole (Harder, Knorth & Kalverboer, 2011). Furthermore, Harder et al. (2011) notes a study by Bullis & Yovanoff (2002) which found a positive relationship between vocational training while incarcerated and post release employment. Therefore as part of the transitional process for youth leaving the correctional system and returning to their community a focus should be placed on employment along side education and social support services (Harder et al., 2011).

Youth re-enter communities at different developmental stages, thus needing different age appropriate work interventions in order to gain successful employment. For example, the needs of youth between the ages of 11 and 14 are geared towards pre-employment and basic job exploration skills (Anthony et al., 2010). However, youth between the ages of 18- and 20 have more immediate needs for work experience and vocational training (Anthony et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that

employment training during incarceration and post release must take into consideration the age-specific needs of the youth in order to achieve a positive outcome.

### **Dual Status Youth**

Dual status youth is defined as those youth who are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (Abrams et al., 2008). Juveniles face other unique challenges along with their individual issues. One such challenge is youth that have histories of child welfare involvement or foster care placements. There is an increase in research on the number of youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice system. However; exact numbers of juveniles that have had child welfare involvement has been difficult to narrow down. For example, Abrams et al. (2008) noted a study by Johnson-Reid and Barth (2008) which looked at youth who had been incarcerated in California Youth Authority facilities and found that 19% of these youth had child abuse cases that were investigated after the age of six. Research has documented that maltreatment and dependency have been identified as significant risk factors for juvenile delinquency and incarceration (Abrams et al., 2008). Doyle (2008) documented that children who are placed in foster care have been found to be more likely to enter the juvenile justice system. Doyle (2008) found that children who were on the margin of being removed from their homes and those placed into foster care had arrest, conviction, and imprisonment rates equivalent to that of adults, and they were three times higher than those children who remained in the home (Doyle, 2008). The challenge of having spent time in the foster care system adds another layer of unique risk factors that need to be addressed upon reentry.

Dual status youth preparing to leave foster care face their own set of unique challenges. More specifically, results of their study found that 18% of youth leaving out-of-home care had been arrested at least once within twelve to eighteen months. A follow up study found that the number of offenses committed by youth transitioning from out-of-home care was double than that of the national sample (Abrams et al., 2008). Dual status youth often lack family support when they return to their communities. Furthermore, in some states youth can lose their foster care placements upon being detained (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Research has shown that children who are placed in foster care are more likely to enter the juvenile justice system (Doyle, 2008). Moreover, Jonson-Reid and Barth (2008) note that child maltreatment particularly sexual abuse is often a precursor to girls offending. In addition, research has shown that youth in foster care are arrested more often throughout adolescence and begin offending at an earlier age relative to youth who are not involved in the child welfare system (Courtney et al., 2012). According to Jonson & Barth (2008), research studies have concluded that having experienced maltreatment is associated with committing crimes or displaying anti-social behavior. Even though research has established the challenges that result from an overlap between child welfare, foster care placement, and juvenile justice system involvement for dual status youth, little research has focused on the outcomes of detention or programming for this population (Abrams et al., 2008).

### **Youth in Adult Facilities**

Annual reports released by the Bureau of Justice have documented the increased number of juveniles entering adult facilities, which is an issue that needs to be addressed



in order to increase the knowledge surrounding the set of challenges faced by these youth upon reentry. According to Carmichael (2010) between 1983 and 1998 there was a 366% increase in the number of juveniles in adult jails and a 218% increase of juveniles in adult prisons. In addition research has identified that juveniles sentenced to adult courts instead of juvenile courts face significant consequences. One such consequence is that juveniles who are sentenced in adult are more likely to receive prison terms rather than probation (Carmichael, 2011). Furthermore these young people who are sentenced to adult correctional facilities are at greater risk of physical and sexual assaults while in prison.

Sending juveniles to adult prisons for their crimes has proven not to be effective. When examined recidivism rates showed that juveniles sanctioned to adult correctional facilities had higher recidivism rates than those juveniles that remained in the juvenile justice system (Carmichael, 2011). Nonetheless the increased rate of juveniles in adult prisons varies across each state in the United States. Explanations of these variations have focused on the size of the juvenile population or the variation in youth crime.

The existing research on sentencing has traditionally focused on individual-level factors that may influence sentence length or aggregate level shifts in certain crime control outcomes such as the number of police personnel out in the community (Carmichael, 2010). A study conducted by Carmichael (2010) sought to study both offender characteristics and state-level indicators on the length of sentence given to juvenile offenders sent to adult prisons. The author concluded that juveniles adjudicated in adult courts did not receive consideration for their age in the form of shorter sentences.

As discussed in the above juveniles face unique challenges as a result of their age and should therefore be given leniency when being sentenced. However from this study it appears judges in adult criminal courts do not consider the youthfulness of juveniles as a legitimate factor when sentencing.

### **Approaches to Reentry**

The existing literature on juvenile youth documents several approaches that have been used as a way to reintegrate youth back into their communities upon their return from detention facilities. These approaches have stemmed from various aspects of the youth's life. These lenses include: the family and the individual.

#### **Social Service Programs for Youth Offenders**

Researchers have identified a number of proven crime prevention programs for youth. Programs, which have proven to be most successful, are those that prevent youth from engaging in delinquent behavior in the first place (GreenWood, 20008). For example, community based programs; school based programs and home visiting programs have proven to be successful in reducing delinquent behavior. Although, there has been 20 years of research conducted on social services available for juveniles it still remains that the majority has not proven effective or have yet to be evaluated (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011).

Community based programs that have proven to be successful are those that emphasize engagement; work to provide skills to adults who supervise the youth and train the child. For example, functional family therapy (FFT) is a family-and community-based treatment which aims to establish and maintain new patterns of family behavior in

order to replace the dysfunctional ones (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011). FFT is one of the most widely used evidenced based family therapy. FFT is used in 270 programs worldwide and treats 17, 500 youth and their families each year (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011).

Multisystemic therapy (MST) is a community-and family based treatment that places its emphasis on treating youth with serious clinical problems such as violent juvenile offenders, juvenile sexual offenders, and substance abusing juvenile offenders. (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011). There have been 21 research studies conducted and published on serious juvenile offenders and their families. This theory stems from the idea that youth are nested within multiple systems such as the family, peer, school, and neighborhood that have direct and indirect influences on behavior. Research from several clinical trials has shown improvement in family functioning, a decrease in association with deviant peers resulting in positive outcomes for juvenile offenders.

Research has shown that school or classroom based programs are effective in preventing drug use, crime, anti-social behavior and early school dropout which have been shown to lead to criminal behavior (Greenwood, 2008). Prevention school based programs share common themes collaborative planning and problem solving that involves teachers, parents, students, community members and administrators. For example, Life Skills Training, which is a, classroom based approach to substance abuse prevention, has proven to be successful in reducing alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana use among participants. This program is listed as a model program by the Surgeon General and Blueprints (Greenwood, 2008).

Nonetheless, community based programs that focuses primarily on the individual offender have not proven to be successful. For example, intensive supervision, surveillance, extra services and early release programming has proven to be unsuccessful. Further some probation strategies have also proven not to be effective such as bringing younger offenders together for programming, and deterrence approaches such as scared straight. Despite the research on the benefits of evidence-based programs only about 5% of youth who are eligible participates in this programming (Greenwood, 2008).

### **The Family**

Juveniles are faced with the challenge of returning to generations of family poverty and communities that historically had very few resources (Spence & Jones-Walker; Anthony et al., 2010). Moreover, youth in the juvenile justice system typically lack permanent and supportive families. For example, in a 1990's California study, 59% of the girls who were interviewed felt that their primary influence of breaking the law was their relationship with their parents (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). Furthermore, Anthony et al. (2010) stated that a lack of parental preparation for the changes in the behaviors that youth exhibit, along with caregivers' inability to intervene when youth begins to display negative behaviors, are factors that may hinder youth success upon reentry. Research also showed that emotional support from parents has also been linked to reducing the adolescent's aggression level. "The presence of emotional social support does perform a preventive protective function" (Rosenthal & Wilson, 2008, p.695). Sibling relationship is also another crucial aspect of adolescent relationships, given the fact that it is an important aspect of adolescents' lives. A significant number of youths in

the United States live with a brother or a sister and there is increasing proof that sibling relationships affect youth adjustment significantly (Soli, McHale & Feinberg, 2009).

Understanding the process and impacts of sibling relationships are critical towards any intervention designs to improve optimum development. However, the vast majority of research pertaining to the threats and benefits of sibling relationships are mostly about Anglo populations, therefore creating a small body of work on the sibling relationships of African Americans, a group considered to have strong family values (Soli et al., 2009).

Family distinctiveness has been dependably considered to be among the most powerful determinants of antisocial behavior of adolescents, although only a small amount of studies has specifically examined youths from the ethnic minority (Park, et al 2010). In fact, there are very few qualitative studies on African American families and youths that have studied the relationships among parenting strategies, social capital, the juvenile justice system, and mental health (Richardson & Brakle, 2011).

Another common issue faced by youth preparing for reentry is the instability of their family housing arrangements. A study conducted by Fields & Abrams (2010) found that of the sample youth who were interviewed, 51% reported that they had moved between homes or caregivers three or more times in their lives (Fields & Abrams, 2010). In order to understand the barriers posed by families for juveniles' successful reentry, it is important to look at the family compositions. It has been reported that approximately 50% of youth in juvenile justice system in the United States had a parent in the adult system (Goldkind, 2011). The lack of consistent parenting caused by a caregiver's incarceration creates a breakdown in family support. Lack of family support may cause a

youth to look for support elsewhere in the community making them more susceptible to environmental risk factors that influence delinquent behaviors. Moreover, while parenting styles impact delinquency among youth, conclusions are difficult to draw concerning the extent of this relationship. This difficulty can be attributable to the heterogeneity of the findings in the area (Hoeve et al., 2009).

Participation of parents in their children's activities is of paramount interest to their social identity and psychosocial behavior. Parents who are enthusiastically involved in the youth's education have helped improved their children's reading, writing, and behavior (Chang, Park, Singh & Sung, 2009). Research on parental involvement show that children of the ethnic minority dwelling in poor, crime-infested, racially and economically differentiated neighborhoods are more prone to academic failure due to the absence of early socialization and a home environment that is not conducive to academic discussions (Chang et al., 2009). Thus, "for educationally and socially disadvantaged groups, parental involvement is a form of social capital" (Chang et al., 2009, p.311).

Research has associated family risk factors with predicting juvenile offending. Predictors of youth's antisocial behaviors were poor child rearing practices, poor parental supervision, criminal parents and siblings, measures of social deprivation, and low educational attainment (Hartwell et al., 2010). Multi-systemic therapy is a family and community-based therapy for juveniles involving a combination of empirically-based treatments such as cognitive behavior therapy, behavioral parent training, and functional family therapy to address the different variables shaping juvenile behavior such as the family, school, and peer groups (Sexton & Turner, 2011). As a result of research that has

shown that the family plays an important role in youth behavior, family-inclusive interventions such as multi-systemic therapy are being touted as effective in addressing adolescent problem behaviors (Hartwell et al., 2010; Sexton & Turner, 2011).

A number of reentry programs have focused on the family as the primary target for reintegrating youth back into their communities. Research has demonstrated that using family interventions to tackle the issue of delinquency has proven to be successful in reducing the likelihood of recidivism than other interventions that focus solely on the individual level (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Further comprehensive therapies that include intensive family interventions and family empowerment approaches have been credited with reducing criminal risk and recidivism of delinquent youth (Hartwell et al., 2010). For example, functional family therapy (FFT) is an evidence based intervention program that has demonstrated positive outcomes in improving client care in community settings (Sexton & Turner, 2011). Sexton & Turner (2011) conducted a study concluding that when practiced with specific model adherence, FFT resulted in a significant (34.9%) reduction in felony and violent crimes, and a non-significant (21.1%) reduction in misdemeanor crimes for young offenders. Drake, Aos, and Miller (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of seven FFT evaluations and concluded that on average, FFT decreased the likelihood of committing a crime from 70% to 57%. In addition another study looked at youth who had participated in multi-systemic therapy following their incarceration and found that youth who had not received treatment were 3.2 times more likely to recidivate than those who had received treatment (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). The OJJDP recommends that youth offenders continue to receive family focused treatment

upon their release from detention. More specifically, when this treatment targets reducing criminal risk factors, it enhances protective factors post release. Additionally, the time a juvenile offender spends with his or her family upon release into the community prior to recidivating provides insight into the reasoning behind the delinquent behavior (Hartwell et al., 2010).

### **The Individual**

A large body of research focusing on youth offender reentry has used the resiliency framework in an attempt to predict the odds of recidivism following discharge from placement. Resilience theory can be seen in different studies and used by social workers, psychologists, sociologists and more others. Resiliency theory describes the strengths that people and systems possess and show whenever they are dealing with adverse situations. The emergence of resilience theory reduced the highlight on pathology and transferred the emphasis on strengths (Rak & Patterson, 1996). This research has attempted to gain an understanding of who is likely to re-offend based on individual youth's characteristics. According to Abrams & Snyder (2010), the majority of the studies have found that those most likely to recidivate following placement are male youth who began engaging in delinquency at an early age, youth who were arrested for property offenses, youth with extensive prior records, and those who had a history of out-of-home placements. The knowledge gained from the resiliency framework brought forth individual approaches to addressing the issue of youth offender recidivism rates. For example, one such approach is known as the classification system that filters lower risk offenders into community-based diversion programs, and higher risk offenders into



secure detention centers. Risk classification systems have been effective in ensuring that lower risk youth offenders are not exposed to further risk by experiencing unnecessary out-of-home placement. However, the classification system has not been an effective tool of reducing reoffending amongst youth (Justice Policy Institute, 2009).

Further increased attention has been given to removing individual barriers to reentry by focusing on a youth's individual strengths. For example, the OJJJD developed an Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP), in which treatment begins during the period of incarceration and transitions the youth into the community. At the onset, this model showed positive effects on its participants. However, follow up studies showed that there was no significant impact on recidivism among youth offenders who positively completed the program (Abrams et al., 2008; Snyder & Abrams, 2010). Evaluations of the IAP identified significant predictors for recidivism, which included known risk factors that have been linked with repeat offending such as age of first arrest, gang membership, race, and older age at release (Abram et al, 2011). The findings from IAP studies are consistent with other research that has been conducted on probation based aftercare programs that have shown little to no reductions in re-arrests rates (Abrams et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that the above studies conducted on the IAP model did not consider length of participation in reentry services. Abrams et al. (2011) conducted a study examining the influence of length of service in aftercare services on juvenile and adult recidivism in relation to other known risks of reoffending. Abrams et al. (2011) found that male youth who participated in an aftercare program for an average of 8.9 months vs. 6.6 months had better results in regards to repeat juvenile convictions

(Abrams et al., 2011). The focus of reentry services needs to be on providing programming for youth upon release to ensure a stable reintegration.

Community based approaches, such as mentoring programs, have been used in an effort to rehabilitate youth offenders at the community level. The notion behind mentoring is to help youth develop a prosocial relationship with a positive role model who can assist them in tackling challenges they may encounter during the transition phase back into the community (Snyder & Abrams, 2010). Recent studies focusing on assessing the effectiveness of mentoring programs have shown mixed results. For example, a study undertaken by Aftercare for Indiana in 2004 found 24% recidivism rates for the treatment group compared to 60% of the control group (Snyder & Abrams, 2010). However, other studies have reported differing results. A study by Bouffard and Bergseth's (2008) showed that an intervention program was delivered as intended, successfully created intermediate change in participants, and was quite effective in reducing recidivism tendencies and increasing time to recidivism. Furthermore another study found that there was an initial reduction in recidivism following participation in a mentoring program, however these results significantly lessened when follow up was conducted at 24 and 36 months (Snyder & Abrams, 2010). The above interventions are rooted in the resiliency framework that has been shown to predict risks and reduce the risk of offending. However, interventions that have stemmed from this framework have not been effective at assisting youth beyond services provided during the period of incarceration. These individual focused programs have yet to demonstrate a significant

reduction in youth's repeat contact with the criminal justice system (Abrams & Snyder, 2010).

### **Risk Factors Post Discharge Within One Year of Discharge**

The first year of reentry for juvenile offenders is one that has been identified as involving a significant number of struggles. These struggles stem from readjusting to community norms such as anti-social peers, alcohol and drug availability, family stress, and economic stress (Hartwell et al., 2010). According to Hartwell et al. (2010), data collected in Massachusetts indicate that 29 % of youth discharged from the Department of Youth Services (DYS) supervision at the age of 18 or 21 re-offend within the first year. According to Hartwell (2010), in 2009 eight hundred and sixteen youth out of 1,637 committed to DYS had their conditional release revoked. In addition, research shows that approximately 50% of youth that are released from DYS violate the conditions of their release into the community (Hartwell, 2010). Similarly, in the state of New York, approximately 42% of youth who are released were rearrested within six months of their first release, and over 50% were rearrested within nine months of their release (Hartwell, 2010). Research studies on youth offender recidivism rates tend to show an overall decrease in reconviction following two years, indicating that the initial time period post release is indicative of future arrest and conviction. Therefore, it is critical that attention be given to these initial days and months post release (Hartwell, Fisher, & Davis [in press]; Tansi, 2009; Hartwell et al., 2010).

Current research has demonstrated the importance of understanding how reentry efforts effectively benefit youth. However, there still remains a knowledge gap in the

area of youth's own perceptions of their own reentry needs (Fields & Abrams, 2010).

According to Fields & Abrams (2010) research shows that offender perceptions correlate with actual experiences upon their release. A similar study in Chicago found that 54% of adult offenders, who anticipated finding employment in their neighborhoods, located and sustained jobs for longer compared to 21% of adult offenders who perceived their communities as lacking in work opportunities (Fields & Abrams, 2010). Fields & Abrams (2010) found that offenders who perceived their neighborhoods as safe had a 22% recidivism rate compared to a 52% recidivism rate for those who perceived their environment as unsafe. Therefore, it is important to change how youth perceive their environments in order to increase their chances of accessing resources in their communities.

### **Neighborhood Effects: Social Disorganization Theory**

Prior research that has been conducted on neighborhood effects and juvenile delinquency can be attributed to various theories. The initial theory that outlined the influence of neighborhood effects and youth delinquency can be traced back to Shaw and McKay (1969) in their initial conceptualization of social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory points out that conflicting values from the neighborhood, family, and friends neutralize values that deter an individual from committing a crime. This conflict stems from different values among members in the community. Thus, the conflict in values prevents the development in social ties, or otherwise known as social capital, which assists in maintaining neighborhood social control and community safety related to juvenile and adult crime (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Shaw and McKay's theory was

developed from their historical study of Chicago juvenile records between the periods of 1900-1906, 1917-1923, and 1927-1933 (Abrams & Snyder 2010; Kornhauser 1978; Shaw & McKay 1969). Evaluating records from these time periods demonstrated that rates of delinquency and recidivism for youth offenders were occurring in a particular geographical area with high rates of families on public assistance, low income units, highest densities of commercial and industrial activities and public health disparities such as high infant mortality rates, and increased mental health needs. Rates of recidivism decreased as distances increased away from these areas. As a result of these findings, Shaw and McKay (1969) concluded that social disorganization could be linked to three structural factors: poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential transience (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Nonetheless research conducted by Shaw and McKay (1969) created the historical foundation of supposing that known neighborhood disadvantages influenced patterns of juvenile delinquency.

### **Routine Activity Approach**

This historical foundation has been met by criticism pointing out that it failed to explain causal mechanism underlying juvenile crime. For example, Cohen and Felson (1979, 1980) informed that social disorganization theory fails to address how the organization of everyday activities can inhibit or foster the development of neighborhood social control. In order to address this gap, Cohen and Felson (1979, 1980) offered an alternative theory known as routine activity approach, which assumed that juvenile crime is only able to occur in situations, locations, and times where there is no adult presence. In order to provide evidence for their assumption, Cohen and Felson (1979) analyzed

annual crime incident data which included crimes of rape, robbery, assault, and personal larceny against 1960 Census data. It is important to note that the data was not juvenile delinquent specific. From their findings, they reported that greater incidences of crime occurred in areas with higher rates of female headed households.

### **Modified Theories**

Researchers have continued to use social disorganization theory in their studies of juvenile delinquency with some modifications. Social disorganization theory has been criticized for blaming the victim by associating social problems with neighborhood characteristics ((Abram & Snyder, 2010)). This association fails to attend to the fact that some neighborhoods are dislocated socially and proximally from public resources that could provide better conditions and in turn deter crime (Abram & Snyder, 2010). Moreover, neighborhoods found to have higher levels of social cohesion and community assets, are better able to address individual risks for delinquency and youth violence (Abrams & Snyder, 2010).

### **Environmental and Social Factors**

In 2009, the MacArthur foundation released their initial findings of their pathways to desistance longitudinal study of over 25, 000 juvenile offenders (Abrams et al., 2011). The researchers' initial findings concluded that longer stays in juvenile facilities did not contribute to resistance in engaging in criminal behavior but rather, youth benefited from ongoing support upon reentering their community, which in turn significantly decreases the risk for recidivism (Abrams et al., 2011; Models for Change, 2009). "Neighborhoods constitute a distal part of the ecological context for adolescent achievement" (Henry,

Merten, Plunkett & Sands, 2008, p. 582). Neighborhood context can be factors such as jobs, schooling, and the availability of youth resources (Abrams & Snyder, 2010).

Therefore, it is imperative to understand how modifying an individual's neighborhood context can foster increased success upon reentry.

The lack of available resources tends to place youth at greater risk of juvenile justice involvement. For example, youth who had been incarcerated had unstable housing situations even when compared to youth with similar socio-economic backgrounds (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). The lack of available resources places youth at a disadvantage in their communities. Research has shown increased need for health, education, mental health, and substance abuse resources for youth who are placed in confined care (Hatcher et al., 2008).

For some youth the treatment they receive during their detention period is the first time their treatment needs are being addressed (Hatcher et al., 2008). Research has shown that during are multiple points in a youth's life, administering appropriate social services are likely to reduce the need to place a youth in residential placement (Anthony et al., 2010). However, once a youth has been incarcerated the barriers they face increase. In order to improve the outcomes for detained youth post release, there is a need to strengthen the use of social services.

Research has shown that the use of formal resources decreases youth's chances of returning to the criminal justice system. However, this has not been empirically confirmed (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010; Abrams & Snyder, 2010 Anthony et al., 2010). A study of 500 juveniles incarcerated in Oregon, and concluded that youth who had

received mental health services in their community were 4.8 times as likely to be engaged in work or school at one year post-release (Anthony et al., 2010). In another analysis of these youth, when compared with youth who had not engaged in school or work, found that the group who were engaged were at least twice as likely to avoid repeat contact with the criminal justice system (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010; Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Therefore, communities must equip themselves with resources that are tailored to the needs of transitioning youth.

The availability of alcohol outlets has been linked to a variety of problems for youth. These problems include injuries from assaults, traffic accidents, child abuse, and accidents (Abrams and Freisthler, 2010; Freisthler et al., 2008; Gruenewald et al., 2010). More specifically, off premise outlets such as liquor stores, and convenience stores have been associated with violent crimes for youth between the ages of 15-24 years old, as well as accidental injuries and injuries from assaults (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Similarly, access to alcohol through off-premise establishments exposes youth to other harms that are associated with the illegal sale of alcohol, such as drug dealings and violence. In some cases, youth are exposed to additional risks when they purchase alcohol in areas prone to other problem behaviors such as drug sales and prostitution (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Nonetheless, community supports are an important aspect of achieving success for youth reentry. More specifically, social services that can be offered to assist youth in their social reintegration with family, living situations and geographical neighborhoods (Anthony et al., 2010).



An unbalanced number of youth are taken from communities of color that are economically disadvantaged and return to these communities (Anthony et al., 2010). Research shows that black and Hispanic youth, compared to their white counterparts, receive more dispositions at each stage of the juvenile justice system, even when controlling for similar crimes (Maschi et al., 2008). These youth return to communities that have low opportunities for education and employment, and have high crime rates (Anthony et al., 2010).

Youth who return to urban areas face higher recidivism rates, parole violations, and poor parole adjustments as a result of increased crime rates, higher caseloads for parole officers, and lack of support services that target reintegration (Anthony et al., 2010). Studies have shown that returning to a high-crime neighborhood is a risk factor for reoffending. When a youth relocates to a lower crime neighborhood community, risks faced at reentry significantly reduce (Anthony et al., 2010).

Another barrier faced by youth from high crime neighborhoods is that they must concern themselves with their reputation upon release. These youth often find themselves struggling to change their lives and maintaining their reputation in their neighborhood. In another study conducted in the San Francisco Bay area, girls reported they were violent with one another in an attempt to look tough as a form of self-protection (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). Thus, communities must increase the availability and access of positive prosocial activities for juvenile offenders in order to provide an alternative to negative peer associations.

In addition to concerns of reputation, another risk associated with juvenile offending is exposure to community violence. Youth who had witnessed high levels of violence in their neighborhoods, were more likely to self-report carrying weapons and perpetrating to assault others (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Studies demonstrating that youth's aggressive and antisocial behaviors tend to increase with the level of exposure to violence, is consistent with studies that have used samples of adult offenders (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010).

Research has associated vacant housing with increased rates of assaults among youth and adults, but vacant housing are likely to be found in areas with increased levels of disorganization (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010). Nevertheless, a neighborhood's limited social capital makes it difficult to respond to social problems. Low levels of social control often result in increased illegal activities such as drug sales to penetrate the neighborhood.

### **Policy and Labor Market Barriers**

Current social welfare policies restrict options for offenders, which in turn become barriers to their successful reentry. For example, offenders may encounter restrictions in gaining access to jobs and to reentry services due to funding limitations (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). Additionally, several legal barriers make it difficult to obtain employment for ex-offenders. For example, employment that involves children, healthcare, and security services often has legal restrictions preventing offenders from obtaining employment. According to Spjeldnes and Goodkind (2009), forty-five states allow employers full rights to deny employment to applicants who have a criminal

record. In addition, forty-four states do not allow offenders to gain professional licenses that are required for them to gain employment, including licensing for hair stylists or bus drivers. Such license restriction is placed regardless of whether the conviction was related to the job (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). Employer discrimination is another barrier to obtaining employment for offenders. This discrimination can stem from their racial minority status, criminal record, or a combination of both factors (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

A review of the literature indicates that there is large body of research addressing the individual and social/environmental factors that place young offenders who are reentering their communities at an elevated risk for repeated juvenile justice involvement. Although ample evidence has identified the risk factors that youth encounter upon reentry, additional research needs to be conducted regarding the interactions of neighborhood risks and resources with youth returning to their neighborhoods following incarceration. Juvenile offenders have several social issues such as worsening family and opportunity structures, drug addiction, inadequate housing and poverty, teen pregnancy, inadequate education, racism, child abuse, and alcoholism. There appears to be a gap in the literature regarding what are the neighborhood conditions in Massachusetts where reentry youth reside, in assessing how neighborhood conditions facilitate or deter opportunities for reentry youth, and how these resources may work as a deterrent from involvement in risky behaviors and criminal activity. The research method to determine the associations between neighborhood risks and resources for rates of juvenile reentry

were discussed further in the next chapter, which included the data collection and data analysis process.

Chapter 3 provided a discussion on the methodology considered for this study. This chapter included a discussion on the appropriateness of the research design. This chapter included the data collection and data analysis procedures that were used to answer the research questions.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional correlational study was to add to the current knowledge on youth reentry by examining the relationship of the level of neighborhood risks and availability of resources such as jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities with rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration in Massachusetts. Statewide data from Massachusetts were used to measure the constructs considered in this study. The unit of analysis was based on the zip codes to represent the area in Massachusetts. Each zip code was considered as one sample. Secondary data were used to measure the rates of reoffending among youth as well as the level of neighborhood risks and the resources available in each area.

In this chapter, I provide a detailed discussion of the methods that were used to conduct this study. The research method and design are discussed first followed by the participants and sample size. Instrumentation is then presented along with the data collection methods, validity and reliability, the operational definition of the variables, data analysis methods, and ethical assurances.

#### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study evaluated the following research questions and their corresponding hypotheses:

RQ1: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration?

*H*<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.

*H*<sub>a1</sub>: There is relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.

RQ2: To what extent, if any, do relationships exist between availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community?

*H*<sub>02a</sub>: There is no relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H*<sub>a2a</sub>: There is a relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H*<sub>02b</sub>: There is no relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H*<sub>a2b</sub>: There is a relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H*<sub>02c</sub>: There is no relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

*H*<sub>a2c</sub>: There is a relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

### **Research Design**

A quantitative correlational research design was used to examine the relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated

youth in Massachusetts. In this quantitative study, I also sought to assess the relationship between neighborhood resources available in terms of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth in Massachusetts. A nonexperimental, cross-sectional quantitative correlational research design was deemed to be appropriate for the study because the focus was on identifying potential relationships between identified variables (Babbie, 2012). Therefore, the study was not concerned with cause-effect relationships between variables. Instead, the focus was on investigating linear relationships between two or more variables (Babbie, 2012).

A quantitative research design as opposed to a qualitative research design was considered to have an objective measure of the constructs identified in this study. The quantitative research design considers the use of numerical variables in identifying potential relationships between variables. The variables in this study were either continuous or dichotomous in nature. Continuous variables include numerical outputs such that the values can take on any number between a given range (Bernard, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the level of neighborhood risks as well as the rate of reoffending were considered as dichotomous variables. On the other hand, categorical variables, such as race or gender, are variables where the output is not a number or where the number used in the analysis does not align with a value of the variables. The availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities were also considered as categorical variables.

Secondary data from the state of Massachusetts were used to measure the rate of reoffending of incarcerated youth that were released from custody in 2008. In addition,

secondary data of crime rates and risks were used to measure the level of neighborhood risks and the availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities (Marshall & Rossman, 2008). Because the focus of this study was to examine the relationship between the independent variables of the level of neighborhood risks and resources and the dependent variable of rate of reoffending, a correlational research design was most appropriate (Bryman, 2012).

### **Target Population and Sampling**

The unit of analysis in this study was the zip codes within the state of Massachusetts. Secondary data were used to measure the rates of reoffending among incarcerated youth in each of the areas as identified through publicly available data for each zip code. Secondary data were also used to measure the level of neighborhood risks and the resources available in each of the area using crime rates and risks data. Therefore, it was necessary to obtain data from each of the zip codes within the state of Massachusetts that was considered in this study.

This research study used correlation analysis and independent samples *t* tests (Babbie, 2012). Correlation analysis was used for research questions that considered the level of neighborhood risks as the independent variable because both the dependent and the independent variables were continuous in nature (Cozby, 2009). On the other hand, independent samples *t* tests were used for research questions focused on the resources available in each area because the independent variable involves two independent groups (Cozby, 2009). The minimum sample size is determined through several factors. The first factor is the effect size. The effect size provides a measure on the strength of the



relationship between variables. For the purpose of this study, a medium effect size was used to ensure that the assessment was not too strict or too lenient (Cozby, 2009).

Another factor considered in the identification of the minimum sample size is the power of the analysis, a standard of 80% power is used for statistical analyses. Moreover, a significance of .05 was used in this study. Considering a medium effect size, a power of 80%, and a significance level of .05, at least 84 participants were necessary for a correlation analysis while at least 128 samples were necessary for an independent samples *t* test. Thus, at least 128 areas within the state of Massachusetts were considered in this study.

The rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth was collected from the annual report of the state of Massachusetts. This was considered a continuous variable that was analyzed through correlation analysis and independent samples *t* test. On the other hand, the level of neighborhood risks and resources available within each area was measured through the crime rates and risks reports for Massachusetts.

### **Instrumentation**

The data source that was used in this study was publicly available data from the state of Massachusetts. The archival data were used to identify the rate of reoffending incarcerated youth. The rate of reoffending incarcerated youth was used as a means to measure the success of reintegration of incarcerated youth. The rate obtained from archival data was used as the dependent variable in this study. For the independent variables considered in this study, secondary data through public reports on crime rates and risks were used to measure the level of neighborhood risks and the availability of

resources such as jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities for incarcerated youth within the area.

### **Operational Definition of Variables**

The variables considered in this study were operationalized based on the following:

Rates of reoffending among youth was identified as the dependent variable in this study. This was operationalized based on publicly available data in Massachusetts considering the number of youth who are reconvicted following post 1 year of release. This variable was identified as a continuous variable.

Level of neighborhood risks was identified as one of the independent variables in this study. This was operationalized as the crime risk ratings by crime type for the state of Massachusetts. This variable was identified as a continuous variable.

Availability of jobs was identified as a continuous independent variable that determined the number of available jobs in the state of Massachusetts.

Availability of schooling was identified as a continuous independent variable that determined the number of available schools in the state of Massachusetts.

Availability of prosocial activities was identified as a continuous independent variable that determined the number of pro-social activities in the state of Massachusetts.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The initial priority was to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB 05-05-14-0262233). After obtaining approval from the IRB, a letter of intent to conduct the study was sent to the archival office of the state of Massachusetts. Data

were obtained through electronically transmitted data from the archival office of the state of Massachusetts. Data were protected through a password-protected computer.

Moreover, data was obtained for the level of neighborhood risks and resources available from Location Inc., an organization that generates a report on the crime rates and risks within an area. The letter of intent included a brief background of the study as well as the purpose of the study. Data specifically on zip codes from the state of Massachusetts were also electronically transmitted. The data were saved in a password-protected computer to ensure the confidentiality. The data from archival records were matched based on zip codes. All data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data collected from participants was entered into SPSS 19.0. The data gathered were examined through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Categorical data were coded using numerical representations to ensure that these could be analyzed through statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the area in Massachusetts that was considered in this study. Descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency were also used to describe the data gathered for this study. Frequency and percentages were used to describe categorical data while measures of central tendencies such as the mean, standard deviation, and range were used to describe continuous variables such as the rate of reoffending of incarcerated youth and the level of risks and available resources within the area. After which, inferential statistics such as the correlational analysis and independent samples *t* tests were conducted to assess the

relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth as well as between the availability of resources such as jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth. The independent variables included the level of neighborhood risks and the availability of resources while the dependent variables included the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth.

To address the first research question, a correlation analysis was considered because both the independent and the dependent variables are continuous variables (Cozby, 2009). If a significant correlation existed, considering a significance level of .05, then it could be concluded that there is sufficient evidence to reject the first null hypothesis that was posed in this study. Therefore, there was a relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth.

For the second research question, independent samples *t* tests were conducted to assess whether the independent variables of availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities could significantly relate to the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth. The independent samples *t* tests determined whether there was a significant difference between the rates of reoffending among incarcerated youth based on the availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities. A significance level of .05 was used for all statistical analyses.

### **Summary**

A quantitative correlational research study was conducted to achieve the purpose of the study, which is to examine the relationship of the level of neighborhood risks and

availability of resources such as jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities with rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration in Massachusetts. Statewide data from Massachusetts were used to measure the constructs considered in this study. The unit of analysis was based on the zip codes to represent the area in Massachusetts. Correlation analysis and independent samples *t* tests were conducted to assess the relationships between variables considered. A significance level of .05 was used for all statistical analyses. In Chapter 4, I discuss the results and analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

The objective of this quantitative research study was to examine the relationships between the level of neighborhood risks and rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration and to assess the relationship between neighborhood resources available in terms of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth in Massachusetts. The sample in the study consisted of youth returning from detention centers specifically in Massachusetts where 399 Department of Youth Services were discharged during the year 2009 (Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, 2012). In line with this, the following research questions and hypothesis guided the analysis:

*RQ1:* To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration?

*H<sub>01</sub>:* There is no relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.

*H<sub>a1</sub>:* There is relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration.

*RQ2:* To what extent, if any, do relationships exist between availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community?

*H<sub>02a</sub>:* There is no relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

$H_{a_{2a}}$ : There is a relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

$H_{o_{2b}}$ : There is no relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

$H_{a_{2b}}$ : There is a relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

$H_{o_{2c}}$ : There is no relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

$H_{a_{2c}}$ : There is a relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community.

In this chapter, I begin with the summary of the demographic information of the sample. This is followed by the descriptive statistics of the study variables. Then, logistic regression is presented to determine if the independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, availability of schooling, and availability of prosocial activities were significantly related with the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the results of all statistical tests.

### **Summary of Demographic Information of the Sample**

The sample of the study consisted of 347 youth returning from detention centers in the state of Massachusetts. The demographic information, which was measured using categorical data, has been summarized using frequency and percentages statistics. The summaries of the demographic information of gender, race, and reconviction rate are

shown in Table 1. Table 1 illustrates that most of the 347 youth in the sample were male (325, or 93.7%). Regarding race, almost half or 160 (46.1%) were Race 1 (Caucasian), 86 (24.8%) were Race 2 (African American), and 85 (24.5%) were Race 3 (Hispanic). In terms of reconviction or reoffending among youth returning to the community, only 143 (41.2%) of the 347 youth were reconvicted. The 347 youth came from a total of 101 cities wherein 41 (11.8%) were from Boston, 38 (11%) from Springfield, and another 38 (11%) from Worcester, 18 (5.2%) from New Bedford, 14 (4%) from Fall River, and 12 (3.5%) from Brockton. Other demographic information such as educational background, household income, and the like were not provided in the archival data.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentage Summaries of Demographic Information of Gender, Race and Reconviction Rate*

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
F	22	6.3
M	325	93.7
Race		
1	160	46.1
2	86	24.8
3	85	24.5
4	7	2
5	9	2.6
Reconviction		
No reconviction	204	58.8
Reconviction	143	41.2

The cities where the detention centers of the 347 returning youths are located are provided in Table 2. The 347 youth came from a total of 101 cities from Boston, 38



(11%) from Springfield, 38 (11%) from Worcester, 18 (5.2%) from New Bedford, 14 (4%) from Fall River, and 12 (3.5%) from Brockton.

Table 2

*Frequency and Percentage Summaries of Demographic Information of Cities*

City*	Frequency	Percent	City*	Frequency	Percent
Amherst	3	0.9	Holden	1	0.3
Arlington	1	0.3	Holyoke	7	2
Ashburnham	1	0.3	Huntington	1	0.3
Attleboro	4	1.2	Hyannis	3	0.9
Auburn	1	0.3	Ipswich	1	0.3
Belmont	2	0.6	Kingston	1	0.3
Beverly	1	0.3	Lakeville	1	0.3
Boston	41	11.8	Lawrence	1	0.3
Brewster	1	0.3	Leicester	2	0.6
Brockton	12	3.5	Leominster	2	0.6
Brookfield	1	0.3	Lexington	2	0.6
Cambridge	3	0.9	Lowell	7	2
Canton	1	0.3	Ludlow	1	0.3
Charlton	1	0.3	Lynn	8	2.3
Chelmsford	1	0.3	Malden	1	0.3
Chelsea	1	0.3	Medford	1	0.3
Chicopee	4	1.2	Methuen	3	0.9
Clinton	1	0.3	Middleboro	1	0.3
Danvers	1	0.3	Millbury	1	0.3
Dedham	2	0.6	Milton	1	0.3
Dennis	1	0.3	New Bedford	18	5.2
East Hampton	1	0.3	North Andover	1	0.3
Fairhaven	1	0.3	North Attleboro	4	1.2
Fall River	14	4	North Hampton	2	0.6
Fall Mouth	1	0.3	Norton	1	0.3
Fitchburg	6	1.7	Norwood	1	0.3
Foxboro	1	0.3	Oak ham	1	0.3
Framingham	2	0.6	Orange	1	0.3
Franklin	1	0.3	Oxford	1	0.3
Gardner	3	0.9	Peabody	2	0.6
Gloucester	1	0.3	Pepperell	1	0.3
Grafton	1	0.3	Pittsfield	8	2.3
Hadley	1	0.3	Quincy	5	1.4
Hanson	1	0.3	Randolph	6	1.7
Harwich	1	0.3	Raynham	1	0.3
Haverhill	6	1.7	Revere	2	0.6
Holbrook	2	0.6	Richmond	1	0.3

(Table continues)

City*	Frequency	Percent
Rochester	1	0.3
Salem	1	0.3
Salisbury	1	0.3
Sandwich	2	0.6
Saugus	1	0.3
Shelburne	1	0.3
Somerville	3	0.9
Southbridge	2	0.6
Spencer	1	0.3
Springfield	38	11
Stoughton	2	0.6
Sturbridge	1	0.3
Swampscott	1	0.3
Swansea	1	0.3
Taunton	7	2
Uxbridge	1	0.3
Walpole	1	0.3
Wareham	3	0.9
Webster	1	0.3
West Springfield	4	1.2
Westfield	1	0.3
Westwood	1	0.3
Weymouth	1	0.3
Williamstown	1	0.3
Woburn	1	0.3
Worcester	38	11
Yarmouth	2	0.6

*Note.* \* A detailed description of each city may be found at Community Profiles page of the Official Website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (<http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/community-profiles-dhcd/>).

### Descriptive Statistics Analysis of Study Variables

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the continuous measured independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, availability of schooling, and availability of prosocial activities. The descriptive statistics include the measures of central tendency of mean and standard deviations.

I measured the level of neighborhood risk using the total crime index. The total crime index obtains the ratio between the total number of both violent and property crimes per 100,000 with higher values meaning more crimes are committed in a neighborhood. The mean level of neighborhood risk was 27.53, with the lowest level of neighborhood risk among the cities the youth were from was 3.29 while the highest level was 74.32. In terms of the available resources within the area, the mean values showed that there were more availability of prosocial activities ( $M = 14.89$ ) as compared to availability of schooling ( $M = 11.43$ ) and availability of jobs ( $M = 6.64$ ). The least resource availability was the number of jobs ( $M = 6.64$ ).

Table 3

#### *Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables*

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Level of neighborhood risk (Total crime index)	347	3.29	74.32	27.53	17.58
Availability of jobs	347	1.00	21.00	6.64	6.07
Availability of schooling	347	1.00	26.00	11.43	7.73
Availability of prosocial activities	347	2.00	37.00	14.89	9.48

### Logistic Regression Results and Analysis

A logistical regression model was created to determine the relationships of the independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, schooling, and

prosocial activities, and the dichotomous dependent variable of rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth in Massachusetts. The logistic regression was used since the dependent variable of rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration is a binary variable coded as no reconviction (0) and reconviction (1). The analysis sought to determine whether the independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities predicted whether a youth reoffends following reentry back into the community following a period of incarceration. A level of significance of 0.05 was used in the hypothesis testing. Independent variables have significant influence if the  $p$  values were equal or less than the level of significance value of 0.05.

First, the ratio of the valid cases to independent variables for logistic regression was investigated. The minimum ratio of valid cases ( $n$ ) to independent variables for logistic regression should be 10 to 1, and the preferred ratio should be 20 to 1. The generated logistic regression model had 347 valid cases and four predictor variables (four independent variables). The ratio of cases to the predictor variables was 86.75 to 1. The ratio satisfied the minimum requirement while also satisfying the preferred ratio of 20 to 1. Therefore, the logistic regression can be conducted since the minimum ratio of valid cases was satisfied.

The first model generated was a null model that did not include independent variables in the model. This model was generated to provide a baseline to compare predictor models. Table 4 summarizes the statistics for the equations of the variables not included in the null model. These were the independent variables of level of

neighborhood risk (Score [1] = 0.07,  $p = 0.79$ ), availability of jobs (Score [1] = 0.14,  $p = 0.71$ ), availability of schooling (Score [1] = 1.25,  $p = 0.27$ ), and availability of prosocial activities (Score [1] = 0.02,  $p = 0.88$ ). The probability value of the overall statistics of the regression model, not including the four independent variable was insignificant (Score [4]= 6.66,  $p = 0.16$ ), implying that each of the four independent variables does not have any significant effect to the dependent variable when they were included in the null model.

Table 4

*Variables Not in the Equation for Null Model*

			Score	df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables	Level of neighborhood risk	0.07	1	0.79
		Availability of jobs	0.14	1	0.71
		Availability of schooling	1.25	1	0.27
		Availability of prosocial activities	0.02	1	0.88
	Overall statistics		6.66	4	0.16

The second model generated was the Block 1 logistic regression model and included the entry of the four independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities. The purpose of the second model was to determine which among the four independent variables significantly influenced the dependent variable of rates of reoffending when included in the model. The results of the overall test for the second model including the control variables are summarized in Table 5. The chi-square test was conducted to test the model to determine the existence of a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The probability value of the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 [4] = 6.72$ ,  $p = 0.15$ ) was greater

than 0.05, indicating that the model is insignificant. The results suggested that the overall effect of the four independent variable to the dependent variable were insignificant. That is, results failed to support any effect of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

Table 5

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients for Logistic Regression with Independent Variables*

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	6.72	4	0.15
	Block	6.72	4	0.15
	Model	6.72	4	0.15

Table 6 summarizes the accuracy rate for the controlled logistic regression involving the independent variables. The accuracy rate computed by SPSS was 58.5%. This means that only 58.5% of the influences of the independent variables to the dependent variable were captured in the model.

Table 6

*Classification Accuracy Rate for Controlled Logistic Regression with Independent Variables*

	Observed		Predicted		Percentage correct
			No Reconviction	reconviction	
Step 1	Reconviction	No reconviction	182	22	89.2
		Reconviction	122	21	14.7
Overall percentage					58.5

*Note.* The cut value is .500.

Table 7 summarizes the results of the significance of the logistic regression and the coefficients of the variables in the equation of the logistic regression. The analysis of this statistic determined the influence of the independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities to the dependent variable of rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration. The coefficients, standard errors, the Wald test statistic with associated degrees of freedom,  $p$  values as well as the exponentiated coefficient (also known as an odds ratio) are enumerated in Table 7. The relationship between the independent and the dependent variables is stronger when the deviation of the odds is farther from one (Frank & Osius, 2013). A level of significance of 0.05 was used in the statistical testing. Statistical significance of the statistics would mean the rejection of the Null Hypotheses 1 that there is no relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration; Null Hypothesis 2a that there is no relationship between availability of jobs and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community; Null Hypothesis 2b that there is no relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community; and Null Hypothesis 2c that there is no relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community. This would then suggest that there was a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable.

The results showed that the Wald statistic for the two independent variables of availability of schooling (Wald [1] = 5.35,  $p = 0.02$ ) and availability of prosocial

activities (Wald [1] = 4.70,  $p = 0.03$ ) were significant. The results suggested that the availability of schooling and prosocial activities significantly influenced the dependent variable of rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration, as the p-value was less than the level of significance value of 0.05. The results supported the rejection of null hypothesis 2b that there is no relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community and null hypothesis 2c that there is no relationship between availability of prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community. On the other hand, the independent variable of level of neighborhood risk (Wald [1] = 5.35,  $p = 0.02$ ) was not significantly related with the rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community. With this result, the null hypothesis for research question one, there is no relationship between the level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration, was not rejected. In addition, null hypotheses 2a, there is no relationship between availability of schooling and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community, was also not rejected.

The coefficient of the odd ratio statistic of Exp(B) of the significant independent variables of availability of schooling and prosocial activities were investigated to determine change in the log odds of the dependent variable for a one unit increases in the availability of schooling and prosocial activities. The Exp(B) coefficient for availability of schooling was 1.07 which implies that a one unit increase in availability of schooling increased the odds for the youth to being reconvicted (versus not being reconvicted) by 0.01 or 1.0%. The Exp(B) coefficient for availability of prosocial activities was 0.93



which implies that a one unit increase in availability of schooling decreased the odds for the youth to being reconvicted (versus not being reconvicted) by 0.07 or 7.0%. The significant finding meant that the youth had higher probability of being reconvicted if there was higher availability of schooling since the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  coefficient was a positive value and lesser availability of prosocial activities since the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  coefficient was a negative value.

Table 7

*Variables in the Equation for Controlled Logistic Regression with Independent Variables*

		B	SE	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Level of neighborhood risk	0.01	0.01	0.42	1	0.52	1.01
	Availability of jobs	0.02	0.04	0.34	1	0.56	1.02
	Availability of schooling	0.07	0.03	5.35	1	0.02*	1.07
	Availability of prosocialsocial activities	-0.07	0.03	4.70	1	0.03*	0.93
	Constant	-0.45	0.27	2.87	1	0.09	0.64

*Note.* Variable(s) entered on Step 1: Level of Neighborhood Risk, Availability of Jobs, Availability of Schooling, Availability of Prosocial Activities

\*Significant at level of significance of 0.05

### Summary

The objective of this quantitative research study was to examine the relationships between the level of neighborhood risks and rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration and to assess the relationship between neighborhood resources available in terms of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and the rate of reoffending among incarcerated youth in Massachusetts. The results of the analysis showed that only neighborhood resources available in terms of schooling and prosocial activities were significantly related with the rates of reoffending among youth

reentering the community following incarceration. The level of neighborhood risks and availability of the resource of jobs was not significantly related with rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration. The implications of the findings will be found in Chapter 5. It will also include the conclusion of the study, limitations and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

In the final chapter, I summarize the dissertation and evaluate the results to better understand the factors that may contribute to reoffending for youth entering the community following a period of incarceration. Current literature has not adequately examined the neighborhood that juvenile delinquents return to and its influence for reoffending. I begin the chapter by presenting an overview of the study and then restate the purpose and significance of the topic. Next, I enumerate the two research questions and their corresponding null and alternate hypotheses. Then, the results of the logistic regressions are discussed together with its relation to current research. Afterwards, I expound on the interpretations of the results in relation to current literature. Next, I state how the limitations presented during Chapter 1 were addressed together with providing recommendations to expand the current study or generalize the results of future studies. The implications of the study and the results on juvenile offenders, educators, legislators as well as for positive social change are revealed before finally stating a conclusion.

Incarceration rates for juveniles in the United States have experienced a significant increase as compared to adults over the last 20 years (Aizer & Doyle, 2013), and over a million delinquency cases have been handled by U.S. juvenile courts since 1974 (Knoll & Sickmund, 2010). The government spends approximately approximately \$6 billion per year on juveniles (Mendel, 2011). Youth delinquency negatively affects families and the society since it rattles the perception of safety in the neighborhood. Additionally, taxpayers bear the burden of imprisoning and rehabilitating youths. With nearly 200,000

youths transitioning back to their respective neighborhoods each year (Abram & Freisthler, 2010), the reintegration of youth offenders to the community continues to be a challenge. Youths have been incarcerated for a variety of crimes and for different periods of time. One measure to determine the success of juveniles following detention is the recidivism rate. Hartwell (2010) defined recidivism as having no repeat contact with the criminal justice system after a state juvenile justice system. However, the youth face several challenges that may play a significant role in committing an offense after reintegration such as the return to the situation that contributed to the delinquent behavior (Harder et al., 2011), improper school documentation, or facing discrimination within the community (Feierman et al., 2009).

In this study, I aimed to broaden the knowledge on the role of the resources available to the neighborhood in influencing the youth. The results may be used to develop policies and programs that focus on the resources that would improve the chances that the youth will properly integrate with the community. Existing studies such as Abrams and Freisthler (2010) and Anthony et al. (2010) have explored individual risk factors, problem behaviors, and negative peer associations to determine the barriers that block a successful integration back to the community. However, little research has been conducted on the risk features of the neighborhood that the juvenile reenters into and their contribution to delinquent behavior and patterns of criminal activity. I sought to address this gap by exploring the neighborhood's access to resources in mitigating neighborhood risks for reentry youth. Two research questions were formulated to achieve the purpose of this study: (a) To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between the

level of neighborhood risks and the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration?, and (b) To what extent, if any, do relationships exist between availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities and rates of reoffending among youth returning to the community? The null hypotheses of each research question stated no significant difference existed between the reoffending rates and the level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities while the alternate hypotheses stated otherwise.

The study was grounded on the collective efficacy theoretical framework. The collective efficacy theory maintained that the quality, quantity, and diversity of institutions in the community address the needs of the individuals. Communities that have higher levels of social cohesion and assets are more likely to contain individual risks for delinquency and violence (Abram & Snyder, 2010). It is hypothesized that neighborhood factors play a significant role in social cohesion and social control that may predict delinquent behavior.

The sample data consisted of 347 youth returning to the community after being incarcerated. The majority of the population were male (93.7%), belonged to Race 1 (46.1%), had no reconvictions (58.8%), and were from Boston (11.8%). The level of neighborhood risk, as measured by the total crime index, was 27.53. More resources are available in terms of prosocial activities ( $M = 14.89$ ) as compared to availability of schooling ( $M = 11.43$ ) and availability of jobs ( $M = 6.64$ ). The least resource availability was the number of jobs ( $M = 6.64$ ). All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS and had to meet a significance level of 5%. I assumed that all the data in relation to the

juvenile offender were correct and current. This ensured the credibility of the statistical results and lessened the likelihood of an erroneous analysis.

A logistic regression model examined the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The data exhibited a total number of 347 valid cases and four predictor variables meaning a ratio of 86.75 to 1, signaling that the minimum ratio of valid cases for a logistic regression was satisfied. A null model was generated to provide a baseline to compare predictor models. However, the probability value of the overall regression model, not including the four independent variables, was insignificant (Score [4]= 6.66,  $p = 0.16$ ), implying that the reoffending rate is not affected by any of the included independent variables. The second model included all four independent variables of level of neighborhood risks, availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities. The probability value of the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 [4] = 6.72, p = 0.15$ ) showed that the model was insignificant, suggesting that the overall effect of the four independent variable to the dependent variable was insignificant.

SPSS computed the accuracy rate for the controlled logistic regression with independent variables as 58.5%. The third model tested the significance of the logistic regression and the coefficients of the variables in the equation of the logistic regression. Based on the Wald's statistic, availability of schooling (Wald [1] = 5.35,  $p = 0.02$ ) and availability of prosocial activities (Wald [1] = 4.70,  $p = 0.03$ ) were significant, meaning that both influenced the reoffending rate among youth entering the community after incarceration. However, the Wald's statistic failed to reject the null hypothesis of Research Question 1, or the level of neighborhood risk (Wald [1] = 5.35,  $p = 0.02$ ) and a

null hypothesis for Research Question 2 was also not rejected nor was the influence of availability of jobs on reoffending rates. Therefore, the level of neighborhood risk and the availability of jobs do not influence reoffending rates.

The coefficient of the odd ratio statistic of  $\text{Exp}(B)$  of the significant independent variables of availability of schooling (1.07) and prosocial activities (0.93) implied that a one unit increase in availability of schooling increased the odds for the youth to being reconvicted (versus not being reconvicted) by 0.01 or 1.0%, while a one unit increase in availability of prosocial activities decreased the odds for the youth to being reconvicted (versus not being reconvicted) by 0.07 or 7.0%. The significant finding meant that the youth have higher probability of being reconvicted if there is higher availability of schooling due to a positive  $\text{Exp}(B)$  coefficient and lesser availability of prosocial activities due to a negative  $\text{Exp}(B)$  coefficient.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of the study provided empirical evidence on how neighborhood risks and the availability of resources such as jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities influenced the rate of reoffending by incarcerated youth in Massachusetts. The results showed that level of neighborhood risks do not impact the recidivism, contrary to the findings of Anthony et al. (2010) that youth returning to an urban neighborhood face higher recidivism rates due to increased crime rates. Meanwhile, the availability of jobs do not have a significant effect on reoffending rates, which is consistent with the general observation that saw employment as not being a factor in recidivism. On the other hand, the availability of schooling increases the likelihood that juveniles would commit a crime

during the integration period. Conversely, the presence of prosocial activities decreased the chances that juveniles would reoffend. These results reveal the stark reality that the kind of community that the juvenile is sought to be reintegrated with affects whether the juvenile will be reconvicted, similar to theories and studies in current literature (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010; Abrams & Snyder; 2010). Decreasing the recidivism rate benefits the youth because young people who have been sentenced to adult correctional facilities face a higher chance of physical and sexual assault while in prison while also increasing recidivism rates (Carmichael, 2011).

Reintegrating juvenile delinquents back into educational institutions poses numerous problems as collected by current research. Some of these problems may help explain the inverse relationship between the presence of schooling and the chances of reoffending. Sedlak and Bruce (2010) and Abrams and Snyder (2010) blamed educational neglect, learning disabilities, and poor school records as the culprits for an unsuccessful reintegration. The 1992 Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act mandated that detained juveniles should receive proper educational opportunities, but 75% of facilities housing juveniles violated regulations that provide educational opportunities to these individuals (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Painter, 2008). One such program was the IEP that sought to address youth academic needs while incarcerated, but it was argued that the proper transfer process may not have been communicated to the juvenile upon release. It was possible that at the onset, the juveniles did receive adequate education to enable them to keep up with their peers who were not incarcerated. However, the juveniles may not have received the appropriate support during their incarceration, making it difficult for



them to transition back into the educational system. It was also possible that the juveniles did receive education, but it was not on par with the quality of education provided to their peers. The confines of the prison cell would also make it difficult for these juveniles to grow maturely without proper guidance, thus making it hard for them to have the emotional stability to deal with the challenges of the educational system outside the cell. In fact, Hatcher et al. (2008) discovered that youths with serious emotional disturbance represent around 5% of a school population, making it difficult for the educational system to coordinate educational services with youth involved with the juvenile justice system. The juveniles may also be discriminated against when trying to reintegrate with schools. Previously incarcerated youth would bear the stigma of having the potential to be a criminal and are thought to be more educationally deficient than other youth. This educational deficiency among detained youth may significantly affect delinquent behavior. Bailey (2009) offered a recommendation on how to address this concern through better scrutinizing special education services offered to juvenile detention facilities.

Another challenge that these youth face in reintegration with the educational system is from the school itself. As explained by Goldkind (2011), since these youth are generally put back to the same educational institution as prior to incarceration, the school may be apprehensive in reenrolling students who have returned from mandated placements. However, there is some merit to why schools may not consider the reenrollment of these students: Negative experiences from reenrolling students, ensuring the safety of current students, the educational gap between the two groups may negatively

hurt the school's performance (Goldkind, 2011). Given this analysis, current educational leadership should evaluate the kind of school environment that juvenile delinquents are put back into. Since the results of this study show that going back to school increases the likelihood that a youth will reoffend, the school environment may not be conducive to helping previously incarcerated youth to get back on the right track. Therefore, it is up to educational leadership to help create a school environment that is both accepting and supportive of these youth to bridge the educational gap and to aid these students in maturing as proper individuals. These environments are extremely important for juveniles who have been diagnosed with mental health illnesses. The literature explained that a majority of youth in detention centers have mental health issues (Grande et al., 2012). Hence, providing mental health treatments to these juveniles would increase the chances of a smoother transition back to the educational system.

An offshoot of the hardships in integrating back into the educational system is that roughly 20% of youth who have been detained do not earn their GED or high school diploma (Osgood et al., 2010). The lack of this arguably basic requirement for employment makes the job opportunities available for these individuals very dim. In theory, less job prospects may increase the likelihood of committing crime in order to meet basic cost of living. Despite this understanding, the availability of jobs did not have a significant impact on the recidivism rates of these youth. This is particularly interesting because the finding goes against the argument that unemployment would push people to a life of crime. A possible explanation is that having a job is not one of the goals of these youth since they know that they need to get back on track in terms of their education first

before even thinking about getting a job, or perhaps they do not bother to look for a job because the majority of employers hire more skillful and learned peers. Abrams and Snyder (2010) explained that youth have minimal work skills and little prior work history that make it difficult to obtain employment. Additionally and similar to the dilemma that schools face in reenrolling delinquents, employers may be apprehensive in hiring previously detained youth, which could add to the apathy of previously detained youth regarding employment. Legal barriers are also present that prohibit the employment of ex-offenders. For example, majority of U.S. states also allow employers the full right to deny employment to applicants who have a criminal record (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). This scenario poses a challenge for educators to put more focus on employment alongside education and social support services as mentioned by Harder et al. (2011). Furthermore, the youth experience a more successful transition when education is linked with community-based social service agencies other than mental health or parole (Harder et al., 2011).

Prosocial activities were shown to decrease the likelihood of reoffending youth. This finding is similar to current studies that argue that programs are successful when they prevent the youth from engaging in delinquent behavior (Greenwood, 2008). These examples include community based programs, school based programs, and home visiting programs that focus on engagement, establishment, and maintenance of new patterns of family behavior, treatment of youth with serious clinical problems, collaborative planning, and problem solving. These types of programs engage the youth with the community that they are trying to integrate with and make them feel as a part of the

community. Programs such as FFT, MST, and Preventive School have been found to be successful in decreasing criminal behavior by improving the family functioning and decreasing the association with deviant peers to create positive outcomes for juvenile offenders (Greenwood, 2008; Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011). These programs may also be applied to these juveniles from Massachusetts. However, it should be noted that programs that focused on the individual offender have not been successful (Greenwood, 2008) perhaps because they do not provide the necessary social stimulation for the youth to interact with individuals from their neighborhood.

In relation to the theoretical construct, the findings support the idea of Abram and Snyder (2010) that neighborhoods with high levels of cohesion and community assets can decrease individual risks with regards to delinquency and youth violence. This study only investigated the effects of availability of jobs, schooling, and prosocial activities as neighborhood risks. However, these factors are far from the only ones that should be considered when assessing the quality of the neighborhood that a juvenile should be introduced to after incarceration. Such factors in literature include density of off-premise alcohol outlets and level of community violence (Abrams & Freisthler, 2010; Anthony et al., 2010).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Chapter 1 presented four limitations of the study that were considered during the entire study process. The first limitation was on the applicability of the results. Since the study only considered data from Massachusetts, results cannot be generalized to a greater population especially for those with different racial or ethnic compositions. The

results of the study will only be generalizable to the population group of incarcerated youths within the state of Massachusetts. Ways to increase the changes of generalized results are discussed during the next section. The second limitation was on the accuracy of zip codes in identifying the immediate neighborhood of the offender. It was possible that the participants have already transferred to another zip code without even knowing and identifying the proper authorities of the transfer. It is assumed that all data received were accurate since the researcher was not the one who collected the data personally from the samples, but the data were obtained using secondary data collection. Using a cross-sectional design also presented a limitation for the study. The understanding on how reentry rates affect service availability and how service influences the rates of offending shall be bounded to a sole time period. Cross-sectional research is commonly used to collect self-reported data from a particular group or population at the same time or within close proximity (Lavrakas, 2008). The third limitation was on the amount of available resources. Since the data obtained shall be from the social service directory for each study area, the data might not capture all the available resources for the area. It is assumed that all data obtained from the social service directory were complete and accurate given that the researcher was not the one who originally collected the data. Also this study only considered youth who had been reconvicted of new crimes rather than those youth that returned to detention centers for technical violations causing the actual recidivism rate to be lower and thus limiting the applicability of this study's results. Similarly, the usual criteria for a recidivism study is a minimum of two years post release and since this study only looked at one year post release this might affect the

reliability of the results. Lastly, the reconviction rate found in this study is likely lower due to some youth aging out of the DYS system and therefore not being accounted during the year of follow up.

### **Recommendations**

The scope and limitations of the study have been focused on youth returning to their neighborhoods following incarceration in Massachusetts. It would be insightful for future researchers to widen the scope of the study, analyze individuals from other states, or change the composition of the participants to contribute to knowledge on the factors that influences the youth to become re-offenders. Hence, the researcher would like to recommend the following extensions or topics:

Examine a different set of juveniles on multiple geographic locations. The results of this study may only be applicable to delinquents in Massachusetts. Building on the theoretical construct of this study, it would be important to understand the neighborhoods of juveniles in other states since it is highly likely that significant differences are present between the various state environments. The analysis may also be extended to include how demographics coupled with neighborhood resources play a role in discouraging reoffending. This would allow a better allocation of resources towards programs that would suit a juvenile in a specific kind of neighborhood.

Gather first hand information from re-offenders on the factors that led them to incarceration after being reintroduced to their communities. This study would provide excellent insights into why juveniles are led to re-offend. Particular focus should be given

on the quality of the neighborhood that the juvenile is put into in order to further solidify or go against the results of the present study.

Consider analyzing other factors related to neighborhood risks and its influence on the likelihood to re-offend. The study provided supplementary empirical research on the introductory understanding of neighborhood risks and juvenile delinquent reintegration. The seminal work done by Abrams & Freisthler (2010) already provided several examples of other possible factors. Further research is suggested to determine other neighborhood risks that may derail a successful reintegration process.

Determine the likelihood to re-offend for Dual Status Youth based on neighborhood risk factors. As explained in the literature review, Dual Status Youth pertains to individuals that were involved in both child welfare and the juvenile justice systems (Abrams, et al., 2008). It would be interesting for this population to receive special research attention due to their unique experience. Although research has shown that children under foster care are more likely to enter the juvenile system (Doyle, 2008), neighborhood risk factors are yet to be introduced into the understanding.

Conduct a follow up study with a two year post release period to allow for further assessments of juveniles post release and explore the possibility of linking to adult conviction data. Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011 notes that programs that have been found to be effective at reducing reoffending amongst juveniles are those that focus on key risk factors. One such risk factor is neighborhoods, particularly the availability of prosocial activities. For example, the YouthBuild Program in Massachusetts offers prosocial activities to youth who have exited detention centers. YouthBuild is a program

that works with low-income young people 16 to 24 for six to 24 months toward their high school equivalency or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people in their communities. Along with this YouthBuild provides leadership development, life skills, case management and mentoring services to young people (YouthBuild, 2015). Thus, further analysis of programs such as YouthBuild that provide prosocial activities in neighborhoods in Massachusetts could lead to the replication of these activities in other neighborhoods that showed a low ranking in prosocial activities.

### **Implications**

The results of study provided various opportunities for educators, detention cell personnel and legislators to influence the reoffending rate of juveniles that have been released from incarceration. For educators, it is suggested for them to revisit the quality of the schools that the juveniles are put into. This addresses the problem of increasing reoffending rates due to availability of schooling. It may be inferred that the traditional schooling system may not be the right kind of environment that juvenile delinquents should be reintegrated into after their release. Perhaps it would be worthwhile for educators and law enforcers to consider placing these students in a special learning community that educates, guides, and supports these students without the confines of a detention center. This would allow a more personalized and collaborative exchange between the youth and the teacher, amplifying the likelihood that youth would relate to a positive role model. To facilitate a better transition process, educators should endeavor to



have better exchange of information and communication between schools and detention centers. This would alleviate the problem of processing the academic records of the juvenile delinquent. An example would be a dedicated cell-to-classroom coordinator (CCC) that focuses on seamless handling of educational system reintroductions. The CCC would be tasked of gathering educational data about the youth and matching the youth's skills and competence to the right grade level.

If a given community is not suitable to the child even after incarceration, social services should talk to the parent or guardian of the child and offer relocation to another area that would be more suitable to the growth of the child. Although social services may not be expected to pay for the transfer, the best it could do is to explain to the parents or guardians why they should consider relocation. It may also offer suggested communities that have good schools and numerous prosocial activities to help them and the juvenile get back on track. At the end, what is important is that the child is given all the necessary support, encouragement, and good influences to lead them to a life away from crime. Since the juveniles are effectively still under the protection of the state, it is up to the state and the child's parents or guardians to secure the child's future.

Since legislation puts previous criminals at a disadvantage in terms of employment, it is recommended to relax its sanctions on juvenile youths by allowing a merit based assessment of reintegration that allows individuals to have tiered employment rights. Although this may be perceived as discriminatory, the suggestion is an improvement from the total denial of the right to non-discriminatory employment practices. This would

be an added benefit to the youth to get serious about reintegrating into the community because of a promise of a job and a better quality of life.

Lower recidivism rates benefits society because of the increased perception of safety in the neighborhood. Previously incarcerated individuals are envisioned to fully integrate into the new community in order to become active and productive members of society. Better employment opportunities improve the quality of life of these previous delinquents and would eventually translate to more taxes for the local government. Decreasing the chances of reoffending also decreases the burden for taxpayers to spend on the detention and reengagement of these individuals into their community. Overall, it would help society become more inclusive and accepting of every individual in the neighborhood. Since the results of the analysis showed that neighborhood resources available in terms of schooling and prosocial activities were significantly related with the rates of reoffending among youth reentering the community following incarceration. Policies should be developed towards increasing the number of available schools and the number of prosocial activities in the state of Massachusetts in order to decrease the rates of reoffending among youth reentering. Thus, youth should be encourage to go to school and involved in prosocial activities in order for them not to become incarcerated.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results of the study found out that juvenile delinquents that have been released from incarceration in Massachusetts are more likely to reoffend due to availability of schooling and less likely to reoffend due to availability of prosocial activities. It provided supplementary research on the introductory literature on the

influence of neighborhood risks on juveniles post-incarceration. These findings are a testament that specific neighborhood risks are vital to the understanding of youth recidivism rates. Additionally, it poses challenges for educators, detention cell officers, and legislators due to the inverse relationship between reoffending and schooling as well as the lack of presence of a relationship between reoffending and availability of jobs. The ideal would be for both the availability of these resources to decrease the chances of reoffending. A successful reintegration of youths poses numerous benefits to the individual and to society. Therefore, people with positions of influence over juvenile delinquents should make it a priority to provide the appropriate environment to aid in a smoother transition process. These include policies on school development and also increase number of prosocial activities in the community in the states of Massachusetts where the youth can be involved in. Future research is recommended to examine a larger group within different geographic boundaries, include qualitative data analysis, consider studying other neighborhood risk factors, and delve into the unique experiences of Dual Status Youth.

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## Appendix: A Social Service Directory

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
02421	3.29	11	23	17
02421	3.29	11	23	17
02038	3.43	5	17	13
01938	3.43	5	11	2
01930	4.21	3	5	6
01050	4.54	7	10	6
01519	5.26	5	7	15
02081	5.69	4	18	13
01463	6.2	7	7	6
02474	6.21	4	23	19
01520	6.28	5	6	14
01085	6.39	1	5	8
02760	6.58	3	11	7
02760	6.58	3	11	7
02760	6.58	3	11	7
02760	6.58	3	11	7
02062	6.7	4	17	13
02090	6.72	4	17	13
02035	6.83	4	18	12
01915	6.89	2	15	19
01915	6.89	2	15	19
01510	6.98	4	8	16
01701	7.16	11	21	21
01701	7.16	11	21	21
01835	7.21	4	9	7
01801	7.22	4	21	18
01824	7.29	12	18	17
01506	7.6	1	5	13
01068	7.66	4	6	14
02364	7.85	1	7	11
01569	8.08	3	4	13
01267	8.17	1	4	9
01370	8.33	1	2	4
01430	8.56	1	2	2
02347	8.78	2	10	7
01254	9.01	1	5	9
02770	9.04	3	7	7
02341	9.13	2	14	9
01923	9.31	5	16	18
02021	9.49	4	18	13
02777	9.51	2	9	14
01524	9.53	5	5	13

(Table Continues)

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
01524	9.53	5	5	13
01566	9.77	1	4	11
01027	9.9	10	6	5
01056	9.91	9	5	8
02703	9.92	2	6	5
02703	9.92	2	6	5
02703	9.92	2	6	5
02703	9.92	2	6	5
02478	9.92	4	22	18
02478	9.92	4	22	18
02703	9.92	2	6	5
02346	10.12	2	11	8
02631	10.25	1	1	2
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
02780	10.32	2	15	15
01562	10.42	3	5	13
01507	10.6	3	4	13
02563	10.72	3	2	3
02563	10.72	3	2	3
02767	10.88	2	15	16
01960	10.95	5	17	18
01960	10.95	5	17	18
01702	11.01	11	21	21
02072	11.06	3	16	12
02072	11.06	3	16	12
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01201	11.25	1	5	10
01527	11.54	4	5	13
01002	12.03	1	6	5
01002	12.03	1	6	5
01002	12.03	1	6	5
02155	12.32	11	22	19
01550	12.33	1	4	12
01550	12.33	1	4	12

(Table continues)

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
01906	12.48	10	19	19
02638	12.57	1	2	2
02368	12.67	9	17	13
02368	12.67	9	17	13
02368	12.67	9	17	13
02368	12.67	9	17	13
02368	12.67	9	17	13
02368	12.67	9	17	13
01364	13.13	2	2	3
02645	13.14	1	1	2
01440	13.68	4	3	13
01440	13.68	4	3	13
01440	13.68	4	3	13
02169	13.78	9	16	14
02169	13.78	9	16	14
02169	13.78	9	16	14
02169	13.78	9	16	14
02169	13.78	9	16	14
01570	14.17	1	4	13
01570	14.17	1	4	13
02188	14.23	3	16	12
02343	14.31	3	16	12
02343	14.31	3	16	12
02026	14.42	4	17	13
02026	14.42	4	17	13
01907	14.51	2	18	18
01952	14.64	1	7	6
01845	14.8	5	16	17
01062	15.51	2	3	2
01062	15.51	2	3	2
02145	15.68	11	22	19
02145	15.68	11	22	19
01035	15.93	8	6	5
02148	15.96	11	22	19
02719	16.25	9	9	12
02143	16.71	11	22	19
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01040	16.77	9	5	8
01851	16.97	11	18	17
01851	16.97	11	18	17

(Table Continues)

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
02138	17.08	12	21	19
01453	17.15	4	6	7
01453	17.15	4	6	7
02675	17.47	1	2	2
01420	18.08	3	6	13
01420	18.08	3	6	13
01420	18.08	3	6	13
01420	18.08	3	6	13
01420	18.08	3	6	13
01830	18.13	4	9	7
01830	18.13	4	9	7
01830	18.13	4	9	7
01830	18.13	4	9	7
01844	18.14	5	10	12
01844	18.14	5	10	12
01844	18.14	5	10	12
01844	18.14	5	10	12
02186	19.05	4	16	13
01850	19.33	11	18	17
01854	19.33	11	18	17
01850	19.33	11	18	17
01854	19.33	11	18	17
01501	19.48	3	5	13
02540	20.78	4	2	3
01904	21.08	5	18	19
01904	21.08	5	18	19
02139	21.28	12	21	19
02139	21.28	12	21	19
01609	21.75	3	5	13
01609	21.75	3	5	13
01852	22.28	11	18	17
02116	23.33	21	26	37
01118	23.46	3	5	8
01602	23.92	3	5	13
01602	23.92	3	5	13
01602	23.92	3	5	13
01020	24.18	9	5	8
01020	24.18	9	5	8
01020	24.18	9	5	8
01089	24.67	3	5	8
01089	24.67	3	5	8
01089	24.67	3	5	8
01089	24.67	3	5	8
01606	25.08	3	5	13

(Table continues)

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
02151	25.19	10	26	37
02151	25.19	10	26	37
02601	26.06	3	2	2
02601	26.06	3	2	2
02601	26.06	3	2	2
02601	26.06	3	2	2
02302	26.68	2	15	12
01605	26.78	3	5	13
01605	26.78	3	5	13
01605	26.78	3	5	13
01605	26.78	3	5	13
01605	26.78	3	5	13
01605	26.78	3	5	13
01605	26.78	3	5	13
02571	27.29	3	5	4
02571	27.29	3	5	4
02571	27.29	3	5	4
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
02301	27.32	2	15	12
01905	27.58	5	18	19
01905	27.58	5	18	19
01902	29.78	5	18	19
01902	29.78	5	18	19
01902	29.78	5	18	19
01902	29.78	5	18	19
01603	30.59	3	5	13
01603	30.59	3	5	13
01603	30.59	3	5	13
01603	30.59	3	5	13
01607	31.41	3	5	13
01607	31.41	3	5	13
02128	31.68	21	26	37
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19

(Table continues)

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02740	32.11	9	11	19
02150	34.35	21	26	37
02120	34.53	21	26	37
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
01604	35.19	3	5	13
02746	35.59	9	11	19
02746	35.59	9	11	19
02746	35.59	9	11	19
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
02720	35.92	8	8	12
01013	36.17	9	5	8
02118	36.86	21	26	37
02118	36.86	21	26	37
01901	37.42	5	18	19
02744	38.37	9	11	19
02724	39.82	8	8	12
02724	39.82	8	8	12
02721	39.86	8	8	12
02721	39.86	8	8	12
02721	39.86	8	8	12
01108	40.14	3	5	8
01108	40.14	3	5	8
01108	40.14	3	5	8

(Table continues)



CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
01108	40.14	3	5	8
01108	40.14	3	5	8
01108	40.14	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01104	43.75	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01109	44.2	3	5	8
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
01610	44.81	3	5	13
02127	49.97	21	26	37
01608	51.97	3	5	13
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02124	53.19	21	26	37
02122	53.29	21	26	37
02122	53.29	21	26	37

(Table continues)

CLNT_ZIP	Neighborhood Risk (Total Crime Index)	Availability of Jobs	Availability of Schooling	Availability of Prosocial Activities
01107	54.78	3	5	8
01107	54.78	3	5	8
01107	54.78	3	5	8
01107	54.78	3	5	8
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02119	59.03	21	26	37
02125	60.06	21	26	37
02125	60.06	21	26	37
02125	60.06	21	26	37
02125	60.06	21	26	37
02125	60.06	21	26	37
02121	65	21	26	37
02121	65	21	26	37
02121	65	21	26	37
02121	65	21	26	37
02121	65	21	26	37
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01105	68.68	3	5	8
01103	74.32	3	5	8
01103	74.32	3	5	8
01103	74.32	3	5	8



Curriculum Vitae

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**Objective:** To obtain a position that offers growth and opportunity.

### **Leadership Experience**

**Community Teamwork Inc.: *YouthBuild Program Director*      **June 2012 to Present****

**Program Planner:** Prepared, executed and monitored an annual program budget of \$1million.

**Management Process:** Team leadership, Agency policies and procedures, Supervision format and annual reviews.

**Philanthropy:** Advocacy Coordination, Fundraising, Recruitment, and Marketing efforts.

**Charge of Grants:** Federal, State, Municipal applications and proposals in accordance with applicable standards.

**Partnership Initiatives:** Engaging community organs targeting at risk youth & family for educational support programs.

**Achievement:** Led a successful program through a period of substantial growth; transitioned a development partnership with Lowell Public Schools.

**Youth Villages: *Clinical Supervisor***

**June 2010 to June 2012**

Led the development and implantation of the first Youth Villages in New Hampshire.

Oversaw the hiring, training of the NH clinical services team.

Cultivated and maintained new partnerships with external agencies.

Presented Youth Villages materials at various community meetings and conferences.

Established a system to track and maintain consistent program referrals.

**Family Counselor**

**Jan 2010 to June 2010**

**Duties:** Community in home family therapy; Family crisis management and 24 hour on call services to children and families.

Consistently maintained a caseload of five families.

**City of New York Bronx District Attorney's Office**

**June 2007 to Aug 2008**

**Child Abuse and Sex Crimes Bureau**

**Case Manager/Administrative Supervisor**

**Exhibited competence to investigate cases**

Developed internal system for tracking timeliness of investigations which resulted in shorter turnaround times for cases,

Implemented individual supervision, for investigative aids resulting in increased quality and timeliness of reports.

Initiated weekly staff meetings to share best practices resulting in increased group cohesiveness.

Oversaw the hiring and management of all investigative and administrative staff.

**Education**

**Walden University**

**Feb 2015**

Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration

Specialization: Law and Public Policy

(PHD Candidate)

**John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, NY**

**Jun 2008**

**Master of Arts: Criminal Justice,**

**York University, Toronto, Canada**

**Jun 2006**

Bachelor of Arts, Women's Studies/Law and society

**Boston University School of Management, Boston, MA** **April 2014**

**Professional Development**

Institute for Nonprofit Management and Leadership  
Core Certificate Program

**Membership/Associations**

Massachusetts YouthBuild Coalition

**Jun 2012 to Present**

Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board Youth Council **Mar 2014 to Present**