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To Resist or Persist? An Examination of Interpersonal Relationships Formed in Prison

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Kamecia S. S. Blake

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2023

MSc, University of the West Indies, 2017

MSc, University of Portsmouth, 2009

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Criminal Justice

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Abstract

Prison is an important component of the criminal justice system. The structure and functionality of prison is tailored towards incapacitation, rehabilitation, and deterrence, which are goals of punishment. However, prison can have unintended consequences which increase the criminogenic risk of offenders causing inmates to become career criminals. This study examined the role of prison socialization, particularly the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on recidivistic behavior. It is important to investigate interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated so that prison administrators can better realize its goal to rehabilitate offenders and prepare them for reintegration into society. The study was grounded in Sutherland's differential association theory, which claimed that criminal behavior is learned through the association with other criminals. The qualitative design captured the prison experiences of eight ex-offenders from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility. Interviews were conducted and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Five themes were identified from the data: (a) cellmates imparted good knowledge; (b) cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime; (c) experiences in prison motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives; (d) friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration; and (e) reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society. The results can lead to positive social change by assisting prison administrators with policy and practice on prison socialization, categorization, and cellmate selection so that the criminogenic consequences of prison are reduced, and inmates' chances of successful rehabilitation and reintegration are increased.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Pamela Knights. Her constant support in life's journey is unwavering. The reminders to be my best version of myself, to better the version of yesterday, not living for today and hoping for the best in tomorrow. Thank you, mommy, for being that pillar, motivator and biggest cheerleader.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The economic approach to crime and punishment has emphasized that deterrence and incapacitation are incarceration's two most fundamental roles (Levitt & Miles, 2002). While the structure and functionality of the prison system may satisfy these roles, the unintended consequences of incarceration sometimes negate the impact that prisons have as it relates to controlling crime. Incapacitation, at its very best, is bounded by time until the imprisoned individuals are released, either highly motivated to exercise their newly learned skills or conformed to a new label of a law-abiding citizen. In some instances, they are not deterred from committing crime further or deterring others that the life of crime is not a worthwhile experience.

Walter's (2002) criminal lifestyle theory purported that criminal behavior is the product of an interface with developmental experience, choice, the environment, and a criminogenic belief system that rationalizes anti-social behaviors. Therefore, if such interplay reveals any commendation on criminal behavior, the influence of the prison to cause an offender to resist or persist in criminal activity cannot be undervalued. This attempt to understand the incarceration experience and how it may influence an offender regarding their ability to persist or resist crime is the purpose of this qualitative study. To achieve this goal, the Belle Isle Correctional Facility found on the Caribbean Island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was utilized.

The Belle Isle Correctional Facility is the state correctional facility located in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In 2009, the facility was opened at a cost of US\$ 8 million as an alternate correctional facility to the cramped and dilapidated His Majesty's Prison

in the city of Kingstown. With a capacity of 288 inmates, this facility is used to house penal (sentenced) prisoners on the southern part of the island (Nanton, 2009). The records for 2020 suggest a recidivism rate at Belle Isle Correctional Facility of 63%, with a mean population age of 25 to 35 (Hazelwood, 2020). The rehabilitation framework of the prison is comprised of vocational training in the areas of baking, farming, electrical, welding, and tailoring. The prison is maintained at an annual budget of US\$ 1,000,000.00 (Hazelwood, 2020). There is no doubt that incarcerating offenders has financial implications. The significant cost associated with incapacitating criminals heightens the need to ensure that the goals of the prisons are achieved and the unintended consequences are mitigated since criminological literature has highlighted that incarcerating individuals who violate the law can create career criminals rather than rehabilitated offenders (Boylan & Mocan, 2014).

Furthermore, research in criminal psychology has established that criminal thinking and attitudes are internalized concepts that are oriented through exposure to criminal behavior, which puts individuals at greater risk of engaging in that criminal behavior (Newberry & Birtchnell, 2011). Therefore, incarceration has a role in facilitating this exposure and the possibility of internalizing criminal concepts. Thus, this study was conducted to understand how time spent in prison and friendships formed while incarcerated can increase the propensity of further criminal offending for first-time incarcerated offenders.

Background of the Problem

Social psychology literature has referenced the importance of the social environment and the interrelatedness of social norms on an individual's thinking and behavior (Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969). Social learning theories suggest that criminality is a function of individual socialization, by which criminal behavior is influenced by individual experiences or relationships with family, peers, and other socializing agents (Boduszek et al., 2012). Considering this social influence on an individual's criminal behavior is an important theme in criminological research, especially when recidivism is considered since reduction in recidivism rates is a social and bureaucratic goal (Corbett, 2014; Miller & Spillane, 2012). The success or failure of the correctional system is measured by the system's ability to rehabilitate and decriminalize inmates; as such, recidivism represents a wastage or adequacy of financial and other resources invested into the transformational capabilities of the correctional system (Fazel & Wolf, 2015). For these reasons, prison administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders emphasize understanding and reducing recidivism rates (Fazel & Wolf, 2015).

The economic approach of crime and punishment has purported that the main functions of incarceration are not only to incapacitate, retribute, and deter but also to rehabilitate alongside punitive functions in the hopes that, upon release, an inmate can have the best chances of reintegration (Goodman, 2014; Levitt & Miles, 2007). The cliché "prison is a school of crime" adds relevance to the need to explore the effects of a prisoner's experience while incarcerated, particularly their interpersonal relationships, on their criminogenic thinking, attitude, and behavior. Rhodes (1979) concluded that

inmates with a low level of criminal attitudes usually acquire more deviant attitudes while incarcerated, given the persistent contact with other criminals. This is further unraveled by Mandracchia et al. (2015) by fusing thinking errors such as cognitive distortions and irrational beliefs associated with criminal and other maladaptive behavior and found that they reflected maladaptive thought processes and content associated with problematic behavior. The presumptions that social interactions between inmates create more cultured criminals than prosocial citizens have been present since the beginning of criminological inquiry into prison effects (Bentham, 1830). McGloin's (2009) balance theory applied in an adult prison environment suggests that prisoners in dyadic cellmate associations will gravitate toward each other because of their criminal behavior.

Clemmer (1950) purported that placing an inmate with a more experienced criminal will create a domino effect whereby the inmate is initiated into the prison environment through his cellmate and his cellmate's social contacts in prison, thus developing a well-established finding of peer similarity across multiple dimensions, including criminality. Moreover, Glueck and Glueck (1950) argued that there is a high probability that an experienced criminal inmate will associate with other experienced criminal inmates, which exposes that inmate to other inmates or associations whose criminality is more likely to exceed theirs and then augment theirs through "relational mechanisms" (Kreager et al., 2016). From these early short-lived cellmate social ties, inmates become acclimatized to the prison environment through relationships and cellmate associations that can develop and mature for an extended period (Dishion et al., 2010), thereby creating the school of crime hypothesis that cellmates with more criminal

experience promote criminogenic effects causing other inmates to learn the undesired behavior while cellmates with lesser criminal experience promoting deterrent effects of prison, thus suggesting that all not all relationships formed in prison have criminogenic outcomes, the extent is to be realized (Boduszek et al., 2012). Therefore, if relationships formed while incarcerated can be criminogenic, it is important to understand the risk factors to these relationships so that the socialization and cellmate association practices and policies of the prison can be amended, thereby increasing an inmate positive outcome on release, which can reduce the recidivism rate and advertently the crime rate.

Problem Statement

St. Vincent and the Grenadines have alarmingly high recidivism rates, likened to those in the United States. Alpher et al. (2018) reviewed recidivism rates for prisoners in 30 states between 2005 and 2014 and found that 68% of released prisoners were rearrested within 3 years, 79% in 6 years, and 83% in 9 years. Unlike the United States, St. Vincent and the Grenadines have a small population of 110,000, a small economy, and high crime rates, which can affect the tourism industry, foreign investment, and citizen security.

More importantly, an increase in crime rates also increases the number of prisoners, repeating the revolving door of the police, the court, and the prison system. Thus, these three components of the criminal justice system significantly reduce crime and recidivism rates to ensure the island's economic stability. Apart from holding and treating prisoners, the problem is that prison may have a criminogenic effect on prisoners that contributes to high recidivism rates, which adversely affect the crime rate. Each year,

a total of 500 inmates enter the Belle Isle Correctional Facility (Hazelwood, 2020). The large number of persons transiting this facility may be problematic since empirical evidence suggests that prior criminal association results in criminal thinking and behavior, which is a reason for incarceration in the first place (Holsinger, 1999; Losel, 2003) and exposing inmates to further cultured criminals can extend the criminal career of embryonic criminals (Boduszek et al., 2013). Despite the substantial resources invested in the prison to reform offenders and protect society, the prison seemingly has unintended consequences when recidivism rates are considered. A growing consensus indicated that prison tends to have either null or criminogenic effects rather than a deterrent effect (Nagin et al. 2009). Furthermore, Nieuwbeerta et al. (2009) found an increase in criminal activity after incarceration for first-time offenders. Bales and Piquero (2012) revealed that criminal capital was higher with imprisoned offenders than non-custodial sanctions. While previous studies such as those by Mowen et al. (2018) and Whited et al. (2015) have focused on criminal friends before incarceration and the negative influences of such relationships on criminal behavior, the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on further criminal behavior is empirically deficient.

The variance of scientific evidence to support these estimations in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is irresolute. Therefore, more attention is required to examine the possible criminogenic or deterrent effects of prison factors such as prison socialization and interpersonal relationships formed and the empirical estimations of this phenomenon on reintegration and recidivism. This study fills a gap in the research by focusing

specifically on the influence of interpersonal relationships while incarcerated and not prior incarceration on future recidivistic behavior in a Caribbean sample of ex-offenders so that the results of this study can influence policy and practice at the Belle Isle Correctional Facility as it relates to prison categorization, socialization, and their impact on reintegration.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of first-time offenders who were sentenced to prison. While previous studies have focused on friendships formed prior to incarceration, this study focused on friendships formed while incarcerated. The concept of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated should be examined to determine the influence of cellmate associations on rehabilitating offenders, which is a fundamental goal of the prison. Furthermore, the prison's criminogenic nature and impact on crime are important in understanding its social environment and reintegration. The data were collected through interviews from a convenient purposive sample of ex-offenders from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I then conducted a thematic network analysis of the interview data. Results from the study can potentially enlighten prison administrators on prison characteristics that can exacerbate recidivism rates. The results can also drive the implementation of reintegration policies, policies, and practices relating to prisoner categorization, socialization, and management. This study will add to the emerging Caribbean criminological literature since it uses a Caribbean sample of ex-offenders to

examine prisons' possible criminogenic effects by examining prison socialization and the emergence of interpersonal relationships.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative study: How do interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated influence a first-time prisoner's recidivistic behavior?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory and Akers (1998, 2000) social learning theory. Differential association theory explains the social learning of crime and the factors crucial in learning criminal behavior. The theory explains the possible interactions with cellmates and how negative or positive cognitions are realized through interactions with those with criminogenic thinking styles and attitudes (Sutherland et al., 1992).

Sutherland (1947) argued that learning criminal behavior includes learning techniques for committing the crime and the motivation and rationalizations for committing that crime. Sutherland further explained that deviant behavior is consistent with social interactions and relationships with other deviant individuals, thereby leading to the emergence of criminal thinking and attitudes in an individual who socialized with established criminals.

Further, social learning theory indicates that beliefs, values, and attitudes about the morality and behaviors involved in committing crime are acquired through association with others. Therefore, individuals imitate modeled antisocial and deviant

behaviors and pro-offending definitions from criminal associates. The urge to replicate this behavior is more significant if the perceived rewards outweigh the costs. Thus, individuals with criminal peers are likely to have crime-promoting and indulging belief systems and engage in criminal behavior (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978).

Nature of the Study

The research utilized a qualitative design employing a phenomenological approach. This design was chosen because qualitative research involves the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in their natural settings (Teherani et al., 2015) while providing an in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Moreover, a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to examine the meaning of human experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Moustakas (1994) postulated that phenomenological research captures the entire experience to understand the phenomenon, as knowledge and behavior are integrated. Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to capture those experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2019), which facilitates understanding the former inmates' thought processes, behavior and the value they place on interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on their present ability to resist or persist in criminal activities.

The participants were both male and female ex-offenders from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility. I recruited the participants using a purposive sample of ex-offenders, who had no previous convictions or prison sentence and no pending matters before the court. This sampling strategy allowed me to identify participants who

experienced prison for the first time, so that their experiences can be captured to answer the research question.

Participants were recruited by social media platforms and flyers posted around the capital city of Kingstown. Eight persons participated in the study, which had a semistructured interview format. They were asked questions about their prison experience, cellmate associations, interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated and reintegration on release. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify patterns and themes from the data.

Definitions

Interpersonal relationship: Interpersonal relationships establish social relations and connections between individuals. This subjective experience of an individual's interaction or connection with another person can be with a colleague or superior (Poljašević, 2021). Davis et. (1999) posited that interpersonal relationships are critical in developing character, a sense of self, and well-being.

Recidivism: Recidivism is reengaging in criminal behavior after receiving a conviction and punishment for previous criminal behavior (King & Elderbroom, 2014). Recidivism is calculated as a rate or percentage of prisoners who have received a new conviction in some instances within a defined time.

Penal prisoner: The Belle Isle Correctional Facility refers to penal prisoners as those inmates who are sentenced to prison after a conviction.

Remand prisoner: The Belle Correctional Facility refers to remand prisoners as inmates who are awaiting trial but were denied bail.

Assumptions

This study assumed that participants answered the questions truthfully so that the data collected can adequately answer the research question. Another assumption is that respondents would have formed interpersonal relationships while incarcerated, irrespective of the sentence length and that the friendships would have had a positive or negative impact on their life.

Limitations

The limitation of the study was the time-consuming, labor-intensive nature inherent to qualitative research. Additionally, the study's participation criteria made it difficult to have a large population for sample selection. However, data saturation was considered to mitigate the small sample size.

Delimitations

The study's importance was examining relationships or socializing agents in prison on further criminal offending. Therefore, the study examined the prison's criminogenic nature, if any. Additionally, the sample of first-time prisoners was composed to nullify any intervening variables such as prior exposure to the prison and previous associations formed there. Thus, understanding a first-time inmate's experience better determined whether prison socialization inhibits or exacerbates recidivistic behavior. Additionally, using a Caribbean sample, though limited in scientific research, provides an opportunity to understand the cultural perspective of the phenomena under investigation while adding to criminological research in the Caribbean region.

Significance of the Study

This research will add a multicultural characteristic to the criminological literature in understanding prisons' criminogenic nature across populations and cultures. The results of this study can influence practice and policy. It can affect a prison's operational procedures, such as prison categorization, selection of cell inmates, and social dynamics. The results can also influence the implementation of policies relating to rehabilitation, risk-need assessment, reintegration, and alternative sentencing to improve the criminal justice system's overall efficiency.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the main categorization in the prison system is penal and remand, which determines which facility the prisoners will occupy. It is therefore hoped that a study of this nature will stimulate conversations on the need to implement a proper classification system, where prisoners are not only classified by their prison status but by their risk, need, and areas for treatment, thus making their prison experience more meaningful and contributing to their possible rehabilitation and reintegration upon release. Further, the prison operations must go beyond its motto to "To hold and treat" because the procedures and method of holding a prisoner can significantly affect the outcome of treating that prisoner.

Additionally, the study's results are positioned to influence social change, as understanding the criminogenic effects of prison can be mitigated. Hence, prisoners have the best rehabilitation prospects and increase their chances of successful reintegration into society upon release. Consequently, the domino effect of more prisoners who are

reintegrated includes less crime committed, fewer persons going to prison, a lower financial budget for the prison, and a greater sense of security for citizens.

Summary

Chapter 1 sets the foundation of the study by outlining the background, problem, and purpose. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of first-time offenders who were sentenced to prison. While previous studies have focused on criminal friends before incarceration, the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on further criminal behavior is empirically deficient and should be examined if rehabilitating offenders is a fundamental goal of the prison. It also highlighted the need for a study of this nature to assist prison administrators in understanding prison socialization and its effect on rehabilitation and reintegration. In summary, the results of this study can influence practice and policy. It can affect a prison's operational procedures, such as prison categorization, selection of cell inmates, and social dynamics. The chapter also offered the genesis of criminal association and criminal behavior and its connection to the differential association theory. Chapter 2 will present a literature synthesis on cellmate association, prison socialization, recidivism, and the theoretical underpinnings in understanding the variables under investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The criminal justice system, particularly the prison system, has a significant role in reducing the crime rate and ultimately recidivism rates to ensure economic stability. Apart from holding and treating prisoners, the problem is that prison may have a criminogenic effect on prisoners that contributes to high recidivism rates, which adversely affects the crime rate. Each year 500 inmates transit the Belle Isle Correctional Facility (Hazelwood, 2020). The large number of persons entering the prison may be problematic since empirical evidence suggests that prior criminal association results in criminal thinking and behavior, which is a reason for incarceration in the first place (Holsinger, 1999; Losel, 2003) and exposing inmates to further cultured criminals can extend the criminal career of embryonic criminals (Boduszek et al., 2013). Despite the substantial resources invested in the prison to reform offenders and protect society, the prison seemingly has unintended consequences when recidivism rates are considered. A growing consensus has indicated that prison tends to have either null or criminogenic effects rather than a deterrent effect (Nagin et al. 2009). Furthermore, Nieuwbeerta et al. (2009) found an increase in criminal activity subsequent incarceration for first-time offenders. Bales and Piquero (2012) revealed that criminal capital was higher with imprisoned offenders compared to offenders with non-custodial sanctions.

The variance of scientific evidence to support these estimations in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is irresolute. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the criminogenic thinking of offenders sentenced to prison for the first time. While previous studies have

focused on criminal friends before incarceration, the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on further criminal behavior is empirically deficient, which should be examined if rehabilitating offenders is a fundamental goal of the prison.

Chapter 2 will synthesize the body of literature regarding prison, criminogenic thinking, and criminal peers. The theoretical framework for this study will also be discussed.

Literature Search Strategy

The function of the prison system is to hold and rehabilitate inmates. However, the experience of time spent in prison can have either a deterrent or a criminogenic effect. This study addressed the interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated and its effect on recidivistic behavior. I examined the literature on prison socialization and consequences, and criminal friendships. Key terms were used to search databases and search engines such as Walden University Library, ProQuest, Psych Articles, Info, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar to find peer-reviewed articles. Keywords and phrases used in the searches included *criminogenic effect of prison*, *criminogenic thinking*, *criminal peers*, *recidivism*, *prison socialization*, *prison interpersonal relationships*, *social learning theory*, and *differential association theory*.

Theoretical Framework

Social psychology literature has long advanced the importance of an individual's social environment in shaping one's thoughts and behavior (Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969). As a result, criminologists have created the linkage between criminal associates as a central precipitant of criminal behavior. Sutherland's (1947) differential association

theory, the predecessor to Burgess and Akers's (1966) differential association–reinforcement theory of criminal behavior theory, was developed to help understand the positive and negative influences of peers. The theory seeks to explain how peer association causes or inhibits an individual's involvement in crime. Both theories postulate that criminal behavior and attitudes are learned within the individual's social environment.

The differential association theory is linked to the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model and the philosophies that cause crime. The RNR model suggests that the treatment should match the level of the service to the offender's risk to re-offend. The risk principle indicates that low- and high-risk prisoners should be separated to avoid interference and association. The need principle assesses the criminogenic needs for treatment. Criminogenic needs are characteristics or circumstances of the offender that are favorable to criminal activity, such as criminal associates, antisocial cognitions and substance abuse. Responsivity increases the offender's ability to learn from a rehabilitative intervention that complements the offender's learning style, motivation, strengths and abilities (Andrews et al., 1990). Further, Sutherland's construct is highly diverse and can accommodate having peers as both a destabilizing criminogenic need through peer criminality and a stabilizing response to that need through peer support.

Differential association theory explains the social learning of crime and the factors crucial in learning criminal behavior. The theory explains the possible interactions with cellmates and how negative or positive cognitions are realized through interactions with those with criminogenic thinking styles and attitudes (Sutherland et al., 1992).

Sutherland (1947) purported that learning criminal behavior includes learning techniques of committing the crime and the motivation and rationalizations for committing that crime. Sutherland further explained that deviant behavior is consistent with social interactions and relationships with other deviant individuals, thereby emerging criminal thinking and attitudes in an individual who socialized with established criminals.

Social learning theory similarly proposed that values, beliefs and attitudes on the morality of committing crime are learned through associating with others with criminal values, beliefs and attitudes. Thereby causing the individual to replicate the modeled deviant behaviors which are criminal definitions from criminal friends and associates, especially when the benefits outweigh the cost. According to the social learning theory, individuals who connect with criminal peers are more likely to have crime-promoting belief systems and engage in criminal behavior (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). Losel's (2003) findings supported the theories, concluding that an individual's behavior is more consistent with the attitudes and behavior of their peers especially if the attitudes and behavior is supported by their peers. Thornberry et al. (1994) discovered that the association with delinquent peers resulted in the formation of a criminogenic belief system even if the delinquent act was not committed. It is the adoption of peers' pro-crime belief systems that alters prosocial behavioral patterns that ultimately lead to crime.

Boduszek et al. (2013) explored the role of criminal social identity as a mediator between criminal associates and antisocial attitudes in a sample of recidivistic Polish inmates. The researchers found significant correlations between previous criminal

associates and three antisocial attitudes: violence, entitlement, and intent. They also found that a strong personal bond with a criminal group and positive attitudes toward a criminal group mediated the relationship between the existence of criminal associates and antisocial attitudes. The findings suggest that association with criminal peers builds strong criminal social identities that support lawbreaking behaviors.

In summary, both the differential association and social learning theories explain how criminal behavior can be learned and the influence of peers in learning prosocial and antisocial behavior. The theories underline the concept of this research, which is to examine how interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated can influence the behavior of inmates on release and their recidivism rates.

Recidivism and Criminogenic Thinking

Time spent in prison can influence an offender's thoughts, attitudes, and behavior upon release (Gendreau et al., 1996). Therefore, it is important to understand an offender's risk of offending once the inmate leaves prison and enters the community. An offender's ability to live a crime-free life or repeated criminal behavior is used as a yardstick to conclude whether the offender is successfully reintegrated into society. It is this repeated criminal behavior that criminological literature refers to as recidivism (Bock and Hosser, 2014). Langan and Levin's (2002) and Hughes and Wilson's (2004) recidivism research suggested that recidivism rates were determined by the offense and found that recidivism rates were highest in property offenders, followed by drug offenders, public order offenders, and violent offenders. Furthermore, Roman et al. (2003) revealed that recidivism rates increased for drug offenders between a 1- to 2-year

period after release. At the same time, Langan et al. (2003) found that sex offenders recidivate within 3 years of release, with an average of 43% of 9,691.

Moreover, Durose and Mumola (2004) also found that 3 years after release, a mean of 70% of 210,886 nonviolent offenders were rearrested, and 50% had a new conviction and prison sentence. Bock and Hosser (2014) examined the role of empathy in predicting recidivism in a longitudinal design among young adult offenders. There were 748 male offenders between the ages of 15 and 28 who completed the interpersonal reactivity index (IRI). The results revealed that neither empathy nor personal distress predicted recidivism; violent offenders scored lower on the IRI scale and had higher recidivism rates than nonviolent offenders.

These studies suggested that many offenders go through the revolving door of the police, courts, and prison. While prison is the end stage of the criminal justice system, it can be the end state of the criminal behavior of inmates. Therefore, each day of a prison sentence must not be viewed as a tally of time served but rather an opportunity to rehabilitate an offender through target interventions that address their criminogenic need and risk. Thus, giving them the best prospects for successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

Recidivism is grounded in three criminological thoughts on the ability of prison to punish (Gendreau et al., 1999). Firstly, by incapacitating offenders, prison suppresses criminal behavior so that the offender is excluded from society to commit further crimes. Secondly, prison can be a “school of crime” that increases recidivism rates. The earliest criminological literature by scholars such as Bentham, Lombroso, and Shaw suggested

that prisons were the breeding grounds for crime (Lily et al., 1995). Jaman et al. (1972) found that inmates who served long sentences became more prisonized, with robust criminal tendencies and an increased probability of recidivating than inmates who had shorter sentences. Rangel (1999) indicated that prison awarded “PhDs in criminality” on completion of sentences and components of the culture increased criminality (Mason, 1998). The school of crime ideology suggests that prison psychologically destroys inmates, so repeated criminal behavior becomes inevitable. The third school of thought is the minimalist, or interaction, which suggests that, with a few exceptions, the prison had minimal to no effects (Gendreau, et al., 1996).

Christopher (2005) explained that punishment is only a deterrent if the punishment is immediate, intense, and severe, which tells the offender that there is no reward for undesirable punished behavior. However, the impossible task of satisfying the three criteria often lead to more crimes being committed (Gendreau, 1996). Additionally, punishment only conditions an individual on acceptable behavior; therefore, if the behavior is punished by prison with no targeted interventions, the replacement while incarcerated will be other antisocial skills (Gendreau et al., 1999). This notion was supported by Blackman (1995), who indicated that initiating behavioral change was a way to shape good behavior through a methodological rehabilitative structure.

Historically, in criminological literature, errors in thinking are considered a causal explanation to criminal behavior. According to Ellis & Sagarin (1973), errors in thinking create irrational beliefs that become inflexible and are used as a reference of how individuals should behave and how society should respond to such behavior. Yochelson

and Stanton (1994) were among the first to postulate that, to change criminal behavior, you must first change the thought processes of the criminal. They created a framework to understand the thought processes of criminals by purporting that neglect of responsibility creates errors in thinking that make the individual dysfunctional. Thus, this irrational belief and dysfunctional thinking led to criminal behavior, which resulted in the conceptualization of the term “criminogenic thinking.” Walters (2006) referred to criminogenic thinking as the “thought content and process conducive to the initiation and maintenance of habitual lawbreaking behavior” (p. 87) Cognitions or criminogenic thinking are patterns of thought that enable criminal behavior (Walters, 2009a). Criminogenic thinking is predictive of a spectrum of antisocial, illegal, and problematic behaviors. Moreso, criminogenic thinking is associated with poor institutional adjustment and violence, non-completion of treatment, and repeat offending (Walters, 2006, 2009b; Walters & Schlauch, 2008). It is this understanding why criminogenic thinking is the focus of cognitive-behavioral interventions to reduce recidivism.

In trying to understand criminogenic thinking or the errors in thinking that lead to criminal behavior, more recently, Tangney et al. (2007) developed the Criminal Cognitions Scale (CCS) to examine the link between moral emotions, moral cognitions, and recidivism among inmates. Moral emotions were used to identify feelings like shame and guilt, and moral cognitions were ideas and beliefs about right and wrong. The CCS has five subscales: Negative Attitudes Toward Authority, Notions of Entitlement, Failure to Accept Responsibility, Short-Term Orientation, and Insensitivity to the Impact of Crime. To test the scale’s reliability and validity, Tangney et al. (2012) administered the

scale to 552 inmates. The results revealed a positive relationship between criminal cognitions and predictors of recidivism with strong correlations for negative attitudes toward authority and failure to accept responsibility. In summary, the results show that the five subscales are positively related to shame, but guilt-free shame and community bonds are negatively correlated with criminal cognitions. In contrast, bonds with the criminal community positively correlated to scores of negative attitudes towards authority and failure to accept responsibility.

Further, the Criminal Thinking Scales (CTS) was developed by researchers at Texas Christian University (TCU) to measure criminal thinking. There are six subscales: Cold Heartedness, Justification, Personal Irresponsibility, Power Orientation, Entitlement and Criminal Rationalization (Knight et al., 2006). Dembo et al. (2007) found that the CTS scores positively linked criminal thinking to self-reports of family conflict and criminality incarcerated adolescents. Although Tangney (2012) and Knight et al. (2006) indicated that strong reliability of the scale, the validity of it was questioned. Nonetheless, these two scales aspire to help understand criminogenic thinking so that rehabilitative efforts can be targeted to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Moore and Shannon (2022) in assessing the effectiveness of the Prison Fellowship in reducing criminogenic risk among 112 male prisoners in four states, found that the rehabilitative program with the cognitive-behavioral modalities significantly reduced criminal thinking subscales of entitlement, victim-impact, rationalization, negative attitude towards authority, short-term orientation, accepting responsibility and power orientation as measured by TCS. However, the program only assessed behavior

while incarcerated, and further research is needed to examine the long-term behavior changes to deem the program effective. Moreover, the quest to understand recidivism and its risk factors was also advanced by Gendreau et al. (1996). Gendreau et al. meta-analyzed 131 studies to determine the best predictors of recidivism. The largest mean effect size for predicting recidivism were criminogenic thinking, criminal history, criminal companions, and antisocial personality.

Additionally, Tangney et al. (2012) utilized a sample of jail inmates, and Gonsalves et al. (2009) utilized a male sample of patients in a forensic mental health unit; both found, using a prison sample, that psychopathy was strongly correlated to criminogenic thinking. These findings were supported by Magyar et al. (2010), who used a sample of adult psychiatric patients. These authors utilized the PICTS and the PCL-SV and found both subtypes of psychopathy to be similarly correlated to criminogenic thinking among adult psychiatric patients.

These findings are informative as they support Walters's (2009) description of psychopathic characteristics and criminogenic thinking styles. They also suggest that problems in personality styles, such as lack of empathy, may precipitate criminogenic cognitions. Mandracchia et al. (2015) sought to clarify psychopathy and criminogenic thinking by examining the psychopathic personality traits that lead to criminogenic thinking using adult male prisoners. The consistent results suggested that psychopathy personality traits will likely create specific thinking styles leading to criminal behavior.

Additionally, Walters (2021) examined whether a change in criminal thinking or a change in perceived certainty of punishment mediates the assumed criminogenic effect of

incarceration using 1,170 male delinquents. It was revealed that prison before 19 years of age produced a negative effect on offending behavior and perceived certainty of punishment, failing to mediate incarceration's effect on future criminal behavior.

The meta-analyses conducted by Whited et al. (2015) and Gendreau et al. (1992) concluded that dynamic risk factors such as criminogenic thinking and criminal associates are more critical targets for treatment given that they are changing and predictive of reoffending than static risk factors.

Prison as Punishment

Punishment is the consequence that follows an undesirable behavior to reduce the frequency and intensity of that behavior (Lefton, 1991). Thus, the concept of punishment is to reduce the probability of undesirable behavior occurring again. Incarceration in the legal system is referred to as punishment which satisfies one of the sentencing functions (Newman, 1985). Incarceration is two-pronged in meaning as it suggests societal retribution and rehabilitative in its use (Apel & Diller, 2017). Societal retribution is based on the proverb "an eye for an eye," reflecting that the criminal must suffer as the victim did. Rehabilitation on the other hand, is the treatment of the criminal to lessen the probability of the occurrence of future criminal behavior (Apel & Diller, 2017).

There is no doubt that prison is considered severe punishment. However, its effectiveness in punishing offenders and deterring potential offenders is unresolved. The answer to this question is highly hinged on what motivated an offender to commit crime, as prison could only be a deterrent if the rational choice theory holds true, in that offenders engage in cost-benefit analysis before a decision is made on whether to commit

a crime or not (Henry, 2003). However, criminological research has shown that the motivation to commit a crime is multidimensional and ranges from biological, psychological, geographical, social, cultural, political, economic, and cognitive factors (Henry, 2003).

In the United States, convicted persons of serious crimes are usually incarcerated, causing over 2.2 million persons to be in prisons and local jails, thus, statistically suggesting that 1 for every 110 people in the country (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). Given the dramatic incarceration rates in the United States, which are higher than in any other nation (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2006), the rate of criminal behavior should be relatively low if prison is a function of operant punishment. However, the contrary is true. The statistics depict that after incarceration, ex-offenders are futile in transitioning back to public life and are likely to continue a life of crime, thus resulting in high recidivism rates (Apel & Diller, 2017). A review of the United States data from 30 states revealed that in 2005, 70% of released prisoners were rearrested for a new crime within 3 years of which 50% were incarcerated and in 5 years about 75% were rearrested for a new crime of which 55% were incarcerated (Durose et al., 2014).

Scholler (1998) exposed that short stays in prison create an environment where individuals can learn behaviors from each other that will extend their criminal career. Prison is a poor intervention for improving criminal behavior and can, in some instances, defeat prisons rehabilitative function in the first place (Apel & Diller, 2017).

Punishment Intensity

The intensity of the punishment as described by the duration of the prison sentence dominates societal discussions and expectations when the effectiveness of incarceration and the impact of the prison sentence on deterrence are considered, particularly during the war on drugs era (Scholler, 1998). The assumption has been long advanced that to control the crime rate, the Criminal Justice System must dispense longer prison sentences for violent, drug and property offenses (Bonczar, 2011). However, Dölling et al. (2009) and Nagin (2013) suggested that longer sentences are not determinant of the crime rate. After meta-analyzing of 391 studies on the effects of punishment on criminal offending, they found that the function of lengthy sentences to deter crime was only positive for offenses like tax evasion and environmental offenses but little deterrent effect on serious crimes like rape and assault (Dölling et al., 2009). Notably, Carson (2014) found that the crimes resulting from incarceration are the same crimes for which severe punishment has a weak deterrent effect, thus confirming the notion that longer sentences are ineffective solution to controlling and deterring crime (Apel & Diller, 2017).

Nevertheless, lengthy prison sentences are still administered to incapacitate criminals and advance the tough on crime philosophy (Mackenzie, 2013). In some proposals for tough-on-crime, there is a union between prison sentence and harsh prison conditions as the marriage will supposedly deter future criminal behavior. Thus, the prison experiences will have grim ramifications so much so that it is likened to a death sentence as it is usually marked with poor diet, unsanitary living conditions,

overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, and violence (Ross, 2012). Nonetheless, the verdict is still out on the effects of harsh prison conditions on recidivistic behavior. Listwan et al. (2013) found that recidivism rates were higher for prisoners who experience harsh prison conditions related to violence and a negative environment. Moreover, the death penalty is the most extreme sentence an offender can receive. Dezhbakhsh and Shepherd (2006) found that murder rates increased when the death penalty was withdrawn compared to the enforcement of such legislation, which made the researchers conclude that there was a positive correlation between criminal deterrent effect and capital punishment. However, Kovandzic et al. (2009) examined state panel data from 1977 to 2006 and found no strong impact on the crime rate and death penalty. The results suggested that the death penalty was not salient when a cost and benefit analysis is done when contemplating criminal offending. This finding was also evident in Dolling et al. (2009) meta-analysis of 52 longitudinal, cross-sectional, and panel data studies. The researchers concluded that 70% of the studies reviewed failed to support the death penalty deterrent hypothesis and that the death penalty had little or no impact on crime rates. Generally, research has found that highly intense punishment like electric shock has a better and long-lasting deterrent effect than prison sentences (Lerman & Toole, 2011).

In Trinidad and Tobago, a Caribbean Island to the north of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, has a mandatory death sentence once convicted of murder. However, Trinidad and Tobago has grappled with the label of murder of capital of the Caribbean, with a violent crime rate of 36.57 per 100 000 people, which is higher than the global average (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021). Additionally in 2022, despite the

mandatory death penalty Trinidad and Tobago there were 598 murders, just about a murder a day (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021). A study done in Trinidad and Tobago found that over a 50-year period that imprisonment, execution or death sentence had any significant relationship on the homicide rates. Further, experts have found that certainty of punishment has a greater deterrent than the severity of the punishment since 83 of 517 homicides in 2018 were detected by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, which provides a damning commentary on the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System to deter criminals specifically and generally (Amnesty International, 2023). Furthermore, in St. Kitts and Nevis, a Caribbean Island that is North of St. Vincent and the Grenadines had the number of murders increased from 23 to 27 following the year that Charles Elroy Laplace's execution in 2008 (Amnesty International, 2023). Therefore, Kleck et al. (2005) commented that although increased punishments may in fact reduce crime, this reduction can merely be attributed to incapacitation effects (large number of offenders incarcerated), not necessarily to general deterrence.

Punishment Probability

For punishment to have its intended effect, the probability must be high. The ratio of this probability is contingent on the type of crime and the chances of being arrested (Nagin, 2013). Hennessy et al. (1999) found that incarceration probability was higher for serious offenses like murder and rape and lower for robbery, motor vehicle theft and assault. Consequent to the low probability of being convicted and incarcerated, there is no deterrent effect on criminal behavior (Apel & Diller, 2017). Killias et al. (2009) and Loughran et al. (2011) found a moderate to strong negative correlation between the

certainty of incarceration and the crime rate. Therefore, prison cannot deter criminals if they do not perceive it as a certain consequence of their actions.

Nagin (2013) suggested that to mitigate the low probability of punishment, there must be an increase in the presence of police officers as police officers can deter persons who want to engage in crime, especially in hot spot areas (Shi, 2009). This deterrent can either cause crime to be displaced to another area or not occur at all; either way, police presence can increase punishment probability and crime control, increasing the chances of arrest, conviction, and incarceration.

Punishment Immediacy

Banks and Vogel-Sprott (1965) and Bun et al. (2020) found that the time between the crime and being punished for the crime determines the deterrent effect of the punishment. They also suggested that the time between arrest and sentencing must also be short so the offender can feel the punishment of the crime. Therefore, the Criminal Justice System must efficiently dispose of matters for immediate punishment and more significant consequences. Spelman and Brown (1981) also suggest that delay in police response can affect criminal behavior as response also influence the probability of being arrested and can affect a criminal's decision to engage in criminal behavior if they consider police response to be slow and lethargic.

Of the three, severity of punishment was considered as the strongest deterrent effect. The more severe the penalties for criminal behavior, the less likely an individual will commit the crime again or other motivated offenders seeing the consequence will demonstrate similar undesirable acts. However, this assumption has not been supported in

the literature (Kleck et al., 2005; Kovandzic, et al., 2004; Paternoster, 1987, 2019; Schneider & Ervin, 1990).

Consequences of Prison

Deterrence theory posited that increasing the cost of crime through incarceration serves as a deterrent to future criminal behavior specifically to the offender and generally to others (Beccaria, 1986). However, Kolstad (1996) found this may not be true for all criminals. Kolstad surveyed prison inmates and found that only 19% asserted that prison had a strong deterrent effect, 44% asserted a weak deterrent effect, and 36% asserted no deterrent effect. It was also revealed that 44% considered themselves more hostile or critical due to their prison experience, and 92% perceived prisons as universities of crime where they learn attitudes and techniques that increase their propensity and probability to further offend upon release. These findings were supported in MacKenzie et al. (2007), who found that inmates randomly assigned to spend 6 months in prison as opposed to boot camp recorded decreased self-control and anger management levels but increased criminal attitudes and behavior. These findings confirm that prison has a criminogenic effect instead of the presumed deterrent effect.

Correctional institutions place prisoners with the same risk level together, which is further reflective in the security procedures so that high risk prisoners with violent backgrounds are placed in higher-security prisons. Brennan (1987) suggested that categorization is important to prevent physical abuse, extortion, and intimidation of high-risk prisoners on low-risk prisoners. Additionally, categorization is important to assist prison officers with procedural and technological methods and constraints to prevent

violence innate in high-risk prisons. This also helps manage resources between low, medium, and high-risk prisoners, where more resources are deployed to prisoners of higher risk (Brennan, 1987).

The categorization debate has included its usefulness and whether the desired effects are achieved (Chen & Shapiro, 2007) or if there are post-release consequences to show that prisons have a criminogenic rather than rehabilitative function (Vieraitis et al. 2007). Therefore, the correctional atmosphere and classification process can inhibit or exacerbate criminal behavior (Gaes & Camp, 2009). Bushway and Smith (2007) expounded on this in their findings to suggest that the Criminal Justice System, by its nature suppresses high-risk offenders' criminality and facilitates low-risk offenders because of the copious environment in which they are imprisoned, which is evident by simple factors such as the physical features of the prison, architectural design, surveillance cameras and the level of interaction among inmates and between staff and inmates (Gaes & Camp, 2009). Criminologists have advanced the notion that future behavior is aligned to past behavior. Thus, prisoners are more likely to recidivate than an unlabeled criminal in the population since prisoners' criminal history will be a precondition to future behavior regardless of the prison classification (Gaes & Camp, 2009).

Berecochea and Gibbs (1991) simultaneously evaluated the inmate's classification score, the length of risk period, and four levels of prison security in California. They found that only maximum-security level prisons suppressed serious misconduct. They also found that low-risk inmates placed in Level III prisons exhibited the same rate of

serious misconduct as higher risk Level III inmate. However, the researchers did not determine if the same level of misconduct for low-risk inmates would have been observed if they had remained in Level IV prisons, thus confirming that socializing with higher-risk inmates resulted in serious misconduct.

Further in a double-blind study conducted by Bench and Allen (2003) where inmates were randomly assigned to medium or maximum-security prisons without their risk score being known by the inmate or prison staff, it was found that maximum-security inmates had the same level of misconduct irrespective of the level of security. The researchers drew on the labeling theory to explain that the increase of misconduct across security levels was due to the stigma or label placed on the institution causing them to display misconduct not based on their risk scores but on the knowledge of the level of security risk for the prison. Bench and Allen (2003) also concurred that a maximum-security environment suppresses misconduct by its very design to severely restrict inmates.

Similarly, Camp and Gaes (2005) examined the influence of security levels on prison misconduct by using experimental data collected by Berk et al. (2003) from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Level III security level inmates were randomly assigned to Level I and Level III institutions. It was found that there were no statistically significant differences in prison misconduct between the two groups. Berk et al. (2003) suggested that an inmate disposition as determined by their risk score had more influence on misconduct than the prison environment. However, this study had methodological challenges in that newly admitted prisoners were assigned to a prison

security level appropriate to their risk score, which caused a selection problem in that inmate risk and security level placement were confounded, making it problematic to detach the effect of security placement from the impact of inmate risk.

Lerman (2009a, 2009b) also used the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to examine the influence of security levels on inmates' criminal psychology and social networks. Lerman used a regression discontinuity design to examine how security level placement affected an inmate's criminal personality and criminal cognitions. According to Lerman, "a strong criminal personality is defined as being prone to anger and violence; and having a propensity for boredom and "getting into trouble"; a talent for manipulating others; and a tendency to self-isolate from other people (Lerman (2009a), p. 16)." The cognitions and locus of control scales were all used. It was found that inmates with security Levels II/III had higher scores for criminal personality and criminal cognitions than inmates with low prior criminal involvement. Lerman also examined data from inmates' self-reported social network in prison and found that inmates with high classification scores had significantly more criminal friends and friends involved in gangs. While this could be explained by associations external to the prison, Lerman believes this high number of criminal friends was due to networks formed while incarcerated. The data also show that inmates who had no gang involvement prior to incarceration were more likely to become affiliated with a gang in high-security prisons as there was a nexus between high-security level prisons and criminal cognitions and the adoption of antisocial norms. While Lerman's study had data limitations to include very

high-risk inmates in California, it still provides an understanding of the influence of security levels on attitudes, disposition, and social networking while incarcerated.

Research has shown that prison security levels can exacerbate or inhibit institutionalized misconduct. Understanding how prison security levels influence reintegration and, inevitably, recidivistic behavior is important. Chen and Shapiro (2007) use the Federal Bureau of Prison Inmates to examine the effects of various security levels of inmates with similar classification scores on post-release arrests. They stated that harsh environments and punishment indicate higher security level prisons and, as such, represent higher levels of punishment. They relied on the specific deterrence theory to explain that severe punishments will reduce an inmate's post-release criminal behavior. However, they purported that high-security levels facilitate the exposure and interaction among inmates who are more disposed to commit crime thus elevating the criminal human capital of each inmate and increasing the post-release criminal behavior. The researchers also found that inmates with comparable security risk scores held in different security level prisons had corresponding post-release employment success. Chen and Shapiro (2007) also found that allocation to a low-security level prison increases the post-release arrest probability. To sidestep the selection issues in the study, Chen and Shapiro (2007) though limited by sample size, used a regression discontinuity design. They tested inmates with similar security classification scores but were placed in higher security prisons. The regression discontinuity design tests affect each discontinuity level, not the average effect of security level placement.

Gaes and Camp (2009) also examined security levels on post-release criminal behavior. They found no difference in inmates' institutionalized misconduct and post-release misconduct. Therefore, the inmates who gave trouble while incarcerated were the ones who were rearrested after release. Gaes and Camp also found that Level III inmates assigned to Level III prisons were likelier to return to prison than Level III inmates randomly assigned to the Level I prisons. By separating inmates into homogeneous risk pools, prison administrators inadvertently increase the likelihood that inmates will be recommitted to prison. One limitation of this study is the failure to test whether high-security level placement has a post-release criminogenic effect.

Vieraitis et al. (2007) study on the criminogenic effect of prison concluded a solid positive relationship between the increase in prison release and the crime rate. Vieraitis et al. (2007) suggested that incarceration augmented future criminal offending. Earlier studies like Nagin et al. (2009) also concluded that the effect of imprisonment on criminal behavior was criminogenic and Weatherburn (2010) had a sample of 406 matched pairs of nonviolent offenders and found that inmates were more likely to recidivate than those who were on probation. Harding et al. (2017) also investigated the criminogenic effects of the prison by using contrasting offenders who were sentenced to prison or probation. They found that convicts sentenced to prison were significantly more likely to be arrested within 3 years of release than those sentenced to probation. Albeit the effect was limited to offenders found guilty of a technical probation or parole violation rather than those convicted of a new offence. Most recently, Caudy et al. (2018)

purported that male and female inmates were likelier to commit themselves than male and female offenders on probation, with a strong effect size for higher risk offenders.

In one of the most extensive studies that examined the criminogenic effects of incarceration, Bales and Piquero (2012) compared 79,000 felons sentenced to State prison to 65,000 offenders sentenced to community control in Florida. The results showed significantly higher recidivism rates for prison inmates, thus confirming the criminogenic effects of prison. In a follow-up study using some of the same data, Mears et al. (2016) determined that inmates with longer sentences increased recidivism at first but decreased after 1 year, and a null effect after 2 years. However, Bhati and Piquero (2007) examined the release of inmates from State prisons and found a deterrent effect more than a criminogenic one (40% vs. 4%). Notably, the deterrent effect was more consistent with minority groups. While Walters (2016b) experienced criminogenic effects in a group of medium-security federal prison inmates before, during, and after incarceration, the deterrent effect was predominant (72% vs. 28%).

Criminal Peers

Criminological studies suggest that criminal behavior is more likely to be replicated when perpetrators are likened or associated with criminals (Megens & Weerman, 2012). Henggeler and Schoenwalder (2011) suggested that institutionalization for juveniles is counterproductive to rehabilitation as such uncontrolled and delinquent socialization facilitates contact with other delinquent youth, creating a contagion effect on criminality. Whited et al. (2015) examined the correlations between criminal associated and criminal thinking through a quantitative study that used 595 male inmates

as the sample. The instruments used to gather the data were the Meta Measure of Offender Thinking Styles–Revised (MOTS-R) and the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS). The results revealed that time spent with criminal associates statistically predicted criminogenic thinking when controlling demographic variables. It was also found that criminal association, thoughts, and attitudes are risk factors for continued criminal behavior.

There is an assumption that there is a difference in the subcultures experienced by men and women while incarcerated since women create more stable interpersonal relationships. Greer (2000) interviewed 35 imprisoned women to investigate the subcultures and found that prison environment was less violent with less gang activity and does not cultivate racial tensions as seen in men's prisons. The researcher found that female interpersonal relationships were unstable and less familial with high degree of mistrust among the female inmates. There were also high reports of sexual relationships primarily motivated by economic manipulation.

In earlier studies, Bell (1976) found that women do not as readily become part of an inmate subculture and abide firmly to an inmate code. Sykes (1958) found that males adopted or assumed prison subcultures to cope with the stressors and pressure of prison related to deprivations and personal losses. Conversely, Pollock & Pollock (1998) purported that women inmates also experience pains of imprisonment such as the stigma of incarceration, claustrophobia of confinement, anxiety about their children, physical and alcohol withdrawal symptoms, and cognitive dissonance from the inability to express their feelings which often leads to affectional ties with other inmates.

The security classification of adult prisoners produces homogeneous risk sample, thus harnessing an environment in which peer influence effects on criminal behavior can occur. The security classification procedures suggest that high-risk prisoners should be placed in their high-security environment with other prisoners with likened criminal dispositions. This classification advances the notion that prison is a “school of crime” (Letkemann 1973). Therefore, the proposition by Chen and Sharpio (2007) that gain in criminal human capital is consistent, a criminal who socializes together will gain knowledge about crime and delinquency, which are sometimes reinforce or create a sense of belongingness to be deviant and commit criminal acts (Bayer et al., 2004). While Rubin (2015) agreed that the prison can promote an ethos or culture of unconformity and opposition, they stated that other institutional factors can affect the behavior of inmates such as treatment programs and environmental characteristics.

Further, Boduszek et al. (2013) explored the role of criminal social identity by examining criminal associates and antisocial attitudes. The study comprised of a sample of recidivistic Polish inmates. It was found that there were significant correlations between the existence of previous criminal associates and antisocial attitudes, particularly violence, entitlement, and intent to commit future crime. The results also revealed that criminal social identity has two components: strong personal bond with a criminal group and positive attitudes toward a criminal group, which mediate the relationship between the existence of criminal associates and antisocial attitudes. The results from this study underscore the linkage between criminal associated and criminal attitudes which are configured in violence, entitlement, and intent which result in crime as a consequence.

Sociological criminology has explained that social relationships can provide opportunity, motivation, and knowledge for criminal behavior. Wright et al. (2001) examined midlevel social relationships of education, employment, family relationships, partnerships, and delinquent peers and tested four hypotheses linking criminal propensity, social ties, and criminal behavior. The researchers analyzed data from the Dunedin Study and found support for each hypothesis. It was found that persons with the lowest self-control committed the most crime, even when controlling for the social ties. Also, social relations such as delinquent peers promoted criminal behavior, even when controlling levels of self-control. The researchers also found that persons with low self-control experienced significantly less education, partnerships, employment, and family ties but more delinquent peers. Wright et al. concluded that each change in social ties increased criminal behavior, but prosocial ties deterred crime, and antisocial ties promoted crime, especially among the low self-control individuals.

Kolstad (1996) and MacKenzie et al. (2007) studies attempted to understand the incarceration–offending relationship. The researchers found that negative peer associations and exposure to antisocial attitudes were prison features. These experiences germinate criminal thinking, supporting the assertions that delinquent peer associations are strongly connected to callous, planned and calculated criminal thinking (Walters, 2016a). Further in, Walters (2003) proactive criminal thinking was found in no previous prison sentence as opposed to inmates who had spent at least 5 years in prison.

Caspi and Moffitt (1995) also posited that delinquent peers are a form of antisocial ties that strongly promote crime since criminal propensity modifies an

individual's experience of their social environment in a form that is more conducive, supportive, and demanding of criminal behavior. This was supported by Crick and Didge (1994), who suggested that antisocial individuals explain ambiguous events through hostile rations as they anticipate hostility from others in their social environment; thus, causing them to use physical means to resolve conflict; and involve angry social exchanges. This is referred to as social amplification, an effect that is attributed to criminogenic social ties propensity to facilitate criminal tendencies.

Behaviorists have established that family and peers are important factors in understanding human behavior, and criminal behavior is no exception. The roots and history of understanding and continuance and resistance of crime are rooted in the institutions of the family and peers, supported by various theoretical underpinnings such as social control, social disorganization, and social learning theories (Mowen & Boman, 2020).

This was supported by Bonta and Andrews (2007), who stated that criminal friends were a major risk or need factor when understanding the social support of crime. They indicated that to reduce offending, the individual must sever ties with their current social network of peers that influenced offending in the first place. In a meta-analysis of 166 studies by Pratt et al. (2010), peer delinquency had the highest statistical significance when definitions, differential enforcement and imitation were examined in relation to crime.

However, on the contrary, the role of criminal peers though statistically significant in many studies, has been questioned as researchers have indicated that the

effect of peer influence on crime is only valid during the adolescent period (e.g., Giordano, 2003; Meisel et al., 2018; Warr, 2002), and reduced during the mid-20s through retirement (Warr, 2002). This conclusion is important in understanding peer influence on crime because it suggests that friends are only bad or influence crime for an approximately 10 years of life from adolescence to emerging adulthood, barring those who are considered late bloomers (Dong & Krohn, 2015) and late onset offenders who are individuals who engage in criminal activity in the later stage of their life (Farrington, Ttofi, & Coid, 2009). This explanation is endorsed by Moffitt's (1993) Life Course Theory. Additionally, for the small portion of people considered chronic offenders, peers have little to no influence after the mid-20s (Farrington, 2003). These findings therefore question why peers are negatively connoted to crime influence in criminological research.

Moreover, Visher and Travis (2003) compared the roles of peers and families after release and how they contribute to the reentry process. They expounded that peer networks in prison and friendships with substance abusers and criminal associates in the community may facilitate recidivistic behavior when compared to prosocial and conforming peers. The researchers, however, concluded that the influence of peers in the post-release may have varying effects that may cause the individual to persist, desist, or both in their criminal lifestyle.

The analysis by Visher and Travis (2003) was solid and was empirically confirmed ten years later in a meta-analysis conducted by Martinez and Abrams (2013) to investigate the good and bad influence of peers during the reentry process. The researchers explained that there was a very thin line between friends who help, hurt or

help and hurt. Taxman (2011) supported the argument that negative social constructs will have a negative influence on an individual to engage in risky, self-fulfilling negative behavior, which was a contrast to Mowen et al. (2018) who found that peer crime is significant and positively associated with levels of substance use. Peer support is not considered related to substance use. While the study adds to the literature on peer support and criminogenic peers, the sample comprised only males, disregarding the difference in interactions and influence between genders.

The empirical consensus is that families and peers can inhibit or act as agents of crime. However, the verdict is still out to determine peers' influence while incarcerated on the reentry process, whether good, bad, or both. An answer still needs to be considered when intervening variables such as the returning person's age, substance use history, living situation, family support and prospects for employment are examined. Therefore, the present study examined the role of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated and not prior incarceration on the recidivistic behavior on a Caribbean sample of ex-offenders who were sentenced to prison for the first time.

Summary

The main goal of this study was to gain insight into the social experience of first-time prisoners and its effect on their reintegration into society to lead law abiding productive lives. This research contributes valuable knowledge to prison categorization and intent. Chapter 2 presented the literature search strategy, theoretical framework, and review of the research in relation to the consequences of prison and criminal associates. A review of the extant literature suggests that prison has unintended consequences that

influence recidivistic behavior and prospects for successful reintegration. The literature also suggests that association with criminal peers increases the propensity for continued criminal behavior. There is a scarcity of research examining how an association with criminal peers is related to the development of adult offenders' criminogenic thinking, more specifically, how friendships formed while incarcerated influence further offending, this research intends to help understand this dimension.

Chapter 3 will explain the study's methodology and how data collected will be analyzed. The research design, role of the researcher, and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Understanding the effect of a first-time offender's incarcerated experience can assist with policy and practice that targets rehabilitation, recidivism, and successful reintegration upon release. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of ex-offenders who were sentenced to prison for the first time. While previous studies have focused on criminal friends before incarceration, the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on other criminal behavior is empirically deficient. It should be examined if rehabilitating offenders is a fundamental goal of the prison.

This chapter will discuss the qualitative research design adopted in this study and compare it against quantitative and mixed-method research approaches. Additionally, the population for the study will be identified and explained, as well as the procedures for data collection. Finally, the chapter will describe data analysis procedures, threats to validity, and ethical guidelines of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, I used a qualitative research design to answer the research question: How do interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated influence a first-time offender's recidivistic behavior? Qualitative research was used as opposed to quantitative and mixed method designs since this study aims to understand the human experience of first-time inmates while incarcerated (Creswell, 2015). A qualitative method, through open-ended questions, allows for more details and descriptive information to be collected to assist with understanding the attitudes and behavior of the

phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2015). Conversely, quantitative research numerically measures the significance between variables, while the mixed-method approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods. Therefore, since the goal is to understand the lived incarcerated experiences of first-time offenders and the impact on their criminogenic thinking, a qualitative design was undoubtedly the best research design. Creswell (2015) endorsed this by postulating that a qualitative approach is the best-suited research methodology to assist a researcher in understanding their subject's realities because it incorporates human experiences. This was facilitated through open-ended questions that I unbiasedly and sensitively constructed so that the participants could provide in-depth responses.

Furthermore, a phenomenological qualitative inquiry method was used as it involves obtaining descriptions of a participant's experience of an event or situation exactly as it unfolds (Patton, 2015). Moustakas (1994) postulated that phenomenological research captures the entire experience to understand the phenomenon, as knowledge and behavior are integrated. When other qualitative designs, such as case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, and narratives, were considered, phenomenology was most complementary to the intent of the research study. A case study utilizes different resources to understand actual life situations (Kiral, 2020). An ethnographic design is when the researcher is immersed in the culture of a specific population to capture their social meaning and ordinary activities (Hammersley, 2018). Grounded theory uses documents and interviews to develop concepts that lead to the conceptualization of a theory (Martin et al., 2018), and a narrative design tells a life story about the different

aspects or phases in someone's life (McAdams, 2018). Therefore, a phenomenological approach is ideal for answering the research question as it allows participants to share their lived experiences, including event details and descriptions of feelings and emotions while providing appropriate feedback (Slettebø, 2021). Although participants in this research study may have endured the same life event, their experiences while incarcerated will be unique, thus providing rich and varied data. Furthermore, understanding the lived experiences of each participant provides an understanding of the individualized impact of prison socialization and positions the research to adequately answer the research question (McSherry et al., 2019).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher included conceptualizing the study from design through its reporting of findings. A review of the extant literature presented in Chapter 2 was used to guide the design of this study. I formulated the research design in which one research question was created from the study's main objectives. I also recruited a convenient purposeful sample to be interviewed, in which all interviews were recorded and later transcribed and analyzed.

Further, a significant role of the researcher in phenomenological qualitative designs is to collect detailed information that will assist the researcher in understanding the participants within their natural environment; by doing so, the researcher can better understand the phenomenon from the participant's perspective. Therefore, my role as the researcher was to gather as many details as possible to understand the effects of friendships formed in prison on recidivistic behavior in the most ethical, valid, and

reliable manner. Researchers must adopt an approach during interviews to generate thick descriptions from the participants to generate new knowledge about the concept under investigation (Holter et al., 2019).

No personal, professional, social, or family relationships existed with any of the participants in this research study. Additionally, the participants were not offered any money or given any gift for their participation in the study but would do so of their free will. The study was advertised at in-person meetings, government offices such as the Family Services and Social Welfare that offer support to ex-offenders, churches, barber/hairdressing shops, community events, and social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram.

I conducted semistructured interviews, observed participants during the interview process, and actively listened while participants shared their stories. Before the interview, I had a casual conversation to build rapport and create a comfortable, nonjudgmental environment. I also reminded the participants that they could withdraw from the interview at any time and that any information provided would be confidential. Having sought the participants' consent, I used a digital recorder to record the interview and transcribed the responses sequentially. Additionally, I asked the participants to review their transcripts and confirm that they represented the thoughts and ideas shared in the interview, after which the data were analyzed.

Methodology

Population

In this study, I explored the experiences of first-time released offenders from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility. The participants should not have any previous incarceration experience or any matter before the Court to be adjudicated. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, once prisoners are released, they have no further contact with the criminal justice system or social services unless they recidivate. There is no probation or parole system likened to North America and Europe, which adds to the study's uniqueness, precisely the sample and prison culture. Therefore, participants were ex-offenders from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility with no previous incarceration experience.

The goal was to understand participants' interpersonal experiences with other prison inmates and the possible impact on their recidivistic behavior. There was no restriction on the time of release to be eligible for participation in the study. Both male and female prisoners were eligible for participation to increase the selection pool since the recidivism rate at the prison is 63%, which is considered high.

I informed participants that they would be interviewed at a specific location and the interview would be audio recorded. Participants could have contemporaneous notes taken if they wished not to be recorded. The invitation flyer included all the logistics of the interview.

Sample Size

From the population, the sample for this qualitative study consisted of first-time released offenders from Belle Isle Correctional Facility. Participants included both males and females. Dworkin (2012) indicated that the sample size for qualitative designs should be an average of five to 50 participants. Researchers have not agreed upon a specific number of participants required for a qualitative research study; instead, the requirement is to have sufficient participants to formulate new and textured understanding so that deep case-oriented analysis can be done (Vasileiou et al., 2018). As a result, the researchers must decide on the number of participants required for their study to achieve quality and rich data to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Vasileiou et al., 2018; Young & Casey, 2019). When data are repeated, data saturation has occurred, which signifies that the study has reached the sample size (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Therefore, I had eight participants in this study and conducted interviews until data saturation was achieved, a number that Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated can reasonably achieve data saturation.

Sample Strategy

Purposeful sampling was the most appropriate sampling technique for this study to ensure that the data collected from the participants could answer the research question. A purposive sample is a sampling technique that deliberately selects participants based on a particular characteristic outlined in the inclusion criteria (Duan et al., 2015). The study's inclusion criteria were first-time offenders released from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility, no previous incarceration experience, no prior convictions, and no

outstanding matters before the Court. There are no restrictions from the time of release to the participation of the study or gender. The exclusion criteria included recidivists at the Belle Isle Correctional Facility.

Recruitment, Participation and Data

A purposive sample ensured that all participants were first-time adult offenders recently released from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility with no previous incarceration experience, conviction, or outstanding matters before the court. Participants were recruited via an advertisement in the local newspaper, in-person meetings, and government offices such as the Family Services and Social Welfare that offer support to ex-offenders, churches, barber/hairdressing shops, and community events as social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. Once participants were willing to participate, the Prison Authority confirmed they were first-time offenders. The Prison Authority confirmed this information strictly for research purposes to students interested in studying previous inmates. This ensured that participants met the criteria and did not impact the validity or reliability of the study.

I collected the data from participants during face-to-face interviews at the Botanical Gardens. The Botanical Garden is a scenic location that creates a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. I ensured that participants were comfortable and developed rapport before the interviews began. Building rapport included getting the participants informed consent to participate in the study, assuring them about the confidentiality of the research, and ensuring their right to withdraw at any point without a penalty. There are 17 questions in the interview guide that include demographic and incarcerated experience

questions (see Appendix). These questions aligned with this research study. The questions focused primarily on their interpersonal relations while incarcerated and their interactions and socialization with other inmates. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, contingent on how soon rapport was established. I asked open-ended questions to guide the research and allowed participants to share their experiences freely. Notes were taken, and the interviews were audio recorded. For persons who objected to the audio recording, contemporaneous notes were taken. Once the interview was completed and the transcripts were generated, the participants reviewed and confirmed the transcripts to ensure that the expressions captured were accurate. No identifying information was recorded to ensure that the study remained confidential. I will keep the data collected in a locked filing cabinet in my office that is only accessible to me. On completion of the interview, the participants were thanked for their time and were allowed to discuss any pertinent matter regarding their participation or the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Thematic analysis (see Table 1) was used to identify the themes in the narrated experiences of participants. Thematic analysis is used to identify reoccurring themes and patterns within the data. This type of analysis helped fragment the data collected so that the experiences of the offenders could be better understood. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that the data collected should be coded and grouped, after which themes are identified, reviewed, and refined to give meaning to themes so that conclusions can be drawn from those themes. I employed the thematic analysis strategy that organizes

qualitative data in various formats, including text, audio, images, or video, to identify patterns and themes, thus presenting a meaningful understanding of the data collected.

I identified patterns and grouped them to identify codes and themes (see Taylor, 2021). This method of analysis assisted in identifying patterns within the data collected that are relevant to answering the research question. The research involves understanding the interpersonal relationships formed by first-time offenders while incarcerated and how such relationships influence recidivistic behavior. Understanding the incarcerated experiences of the participants was fundamental to understanding how prison socialization can be criminogenic or rehabilitative. Thus, the data collected were analyzed by looking at similarities and patterns to answer the research question. Understanding the participants' experiences is important to support, develop, or maintain prison policies that reduce recidivism and increase inmates' chances of reintegration on release.

Table 1*Phases of Thematic Analysis*

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work about the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts relating of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Note. From “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006,

Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), pp. 77–101

(<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>). Copyright 2006 by Informa UK.

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Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To secure credibility in this study, the participants were asked to respond honestly to each question, reflecting on their incarcerated experiences. It was explained that I did not intend to embarrass or ridicule the participants for the answers provided or expose their criminal history; instead, the study was an attempt to gather meaningful data that would contribute to the existing literature that was not represented on the effects of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability of the research findings to provide understanding through the participant's experiences (Lyle, 2018). Qualitative studies are exceptional and cannot be replicated within other populations (Christopher et al., 2021). The data collected provided a reference to prison administration on prison practice and policy that can define the prison as criminogenic or rehabilitative.

Dependability

A reflective journal was used to document significant occurrences throughout the data collection process and the researcher's feelings. An audit trail was also kept to guide other researchers in replicating the study. The audit trail explains the data analysis process, illuminating that the findings directly result from the participants' responses, not the researcher's biases.

Confirmability

During the interview process, member checking will be done with each participant. Member checking is the verification of the result with the participant to ensure that data recorded by the researcher is accurate, thus enhancing the credibility of the results (Birt et al., 2016). After data collection and analysis are completed, the reflective journal and audit trail will be evaluated against the findings. This will ensure that the researcher's biases are not represented in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The proposed methodology of this study is intended to meet all the requirements of the Walden University ethical standards. The American Psychological Association's ethical research guidelines were also considered to ensure that the highest ethical standard was maintained and, most importantly, no harm to the participants. The nature of the study did not place the participants at risk for harm.

Additionally, the participants' consent to participate in the study was obtained before the interview, and a signature was required on the consent form. No personal details will be recorded for the participants that can later identify them to the information they provided. Moreover, participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the interview. The participants were not enticed or forced to participate. More importantly, all questions asked in the interview were appropriate and sensitive to the participants' emotions.

The data collected will be saved on a flash drive in an encrypted format. The flash drive will be stored in a secure cabinet in my office. After 5 years, the data will be

irretrievably destroyed. An electronic reminder on my Google calendar will ensure that all producers are followed.

Summary

The methodology section of this research seeks to explain the research design in which data for this study will be collected. This qualitative study aims to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of offenders sentenced to prison for the first time. The population of the study will be first-time ex-offenders from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility. The participants should not have any previous incarceration experience or convictions. An explanation was provided on the role of the researcher, participation selection, instrumentation, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical consideration, with justifications for intended applications where necessary. Thematic analysis will be used to identify the themes in the narrated experiences of participants. Thematic analysis is used to identify reoccurring themes and patterns within the data. The section provides the methodological robustness of the research to ensure that the study maintains the highest possible standard when reliability and validity are considered in scientific inquiry.

Chapter 4: Results

The aim of this qualitative study was to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of first-time offenders who were sentenced to prison. While previous studies have focused on criminal friends before incarceration, the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on further criminal behavior is empirically deficient. It should be examined whether rehabilitating offenders is a fundamental goal of the prison. Therefore, through this research, I sought to answer the research question: How interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated influence first time offenders recidivistic behavior?

In Chapter 4, the data from eight interviews were analyzed and presented. The interviews were guided by seventeen questions on cellmate association and criminogenic thinking. This chapter describes how the data was collected, analyzed, and how themes were established to understand the data collected.

Setting

Eight participants responded to the interview questions and gave detailed data about their experiences while incarcerated and their reintegration experiences. The eight interviews took place at the Botanical Gardens, an open and extensive space that has various cabanas and benches that are more than 100 m apart from each other. The cabanas are secluded and allow for privacy and confidentiality. No one in the garden could overhear the participants' responses because of the cabanas' design and location.

All interviews were conducted face to face. The interviews were recorded and saved on a secure and password-protected laptop. I then transcribed the recordings and

coded the data to establish themes. In qualitative research, the researcher has the flexibility to define and determine the method of analysis since there is no defined structure in this form of research (Heldring et al., 2021). The data collected from the eight participants were carefully analyzed for transcription and defining themes.

The participants were given the consent form to read before the face-to-face interview. I also reviewed the Informed Consent Form with the participants. They all agreed to participate, and they placed their names on the form and signed it to reflect their consent to participate.

Demographics

This study used social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp as well as flyers in government offices, barbershops, and hair salons to recruit participants in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The purposive sample was eight adults who met the criteria for participation. A purposive sample ensured that all participants were first-time adult offenders recently released from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility with no previous incarceration experience or outstanding matters before the Court. The participants were between the ages of 19 and 56 and were geographically dispersed across St. Vincent and the Grenadines. All participants were Black Vincentians. The sample was not representative but generated thick and rich descriptions of participants' experiences. This outweighed the benefits of randomized representative sampling since the participants had not been previously studied.

All the participants were over 19 years old, but below the age of 56, two of the eight participants were female, and three were incarcerated for minor offenses. None of

the participants had tertiary education, while three had completed primary level education (Grade K-6) only, and four had completed both primary and secondary (Grade 9–12; see Table 2).

Table 2

Demographics

Participants	Gender	Type of convicted offence	Employment status before & after incarceration
Participant 1	Male	Serious offence	Yes / No
Participant 2	Female	Serious offence	Yes / Yes
Participant 3	Female	Serious offence	No / No
Participant 4	Male	Minor offence	Yes / No
Participant 5	Male	Serious offence	No / Yes
Participant 6	Male	Minor offence	Yes/ Yes
Participant 7	Male	Serious offence	No / No
Participant 8	Male	Minor offence	No/ No

Data Collection

Walden University's institutional review board (IRB) approved this study with the specific population requested on February 02, 2004 (IRB Approval no. 02-07-24-0390616). I then printed the invitations to participate in the study and placed them at several barber shops, salons, and government offices in the capital city of Kingstown. I also posted the flyer on WhatsApp, FaceBook, and Instagram social media platforms. Within hours, I received messages from volunteers to participate; however, most of them did not meet the criteria for participation either because they had been to prison more than once or had an outstanding matter before the Court.

From February 03 to 18, 2004, 15 people contacted me to participate, nine of whom met the criteria. All participants preferred face-to-face interviews at the Botanical Gardens. The participants expressed that face-to-face interviews were preferred either because of the absence of a device or the operational competency of a device. I scheduled participants' interviews one per day to avoid participants seeing each other or to avoid overhearing answers.

All interviews were conducted during the period February 19–27, 2024. Each participant was given the consent form to read, and then I reviewed the forms with them. They wrote their name and signature on the forms. Once the informed consent form was signed, the participants were asked questions from the interview guide. They were also told that the interview would be audio recorded, which was then encrypted, and password protected. After completing the eight interviews, I felt I had gathered rich, detailed information, and reached saturation. Saturation is when data are repeated, which signifies that the study has reached the sample size (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

After each interview, I asked the participants if they would like the transcript to verify that I captured the information correctly. Still, only two people indicated that they would like to see the transcripts. I thanked them for their participation and reminded them of the information for Marion House (a free government counseling service), if they needed any psychological support. The interviews lasted between 38 to 76 minutes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Peers and professionals periodically reviewed the study. All information was discussed and briefed before finalizing the study. The eight interviews reflect the personal experiences of the participants. I had no prior relationship with any of the participants. I diligently transcribed the interviews and reviewed them multiple times to ensure all information was documented accurately. I then identified themes and patterns from the data and documented them accordingly.

Transferability

Eight participants comprised the sample for this study. When the sample size is smaller, it restricts the ability to be transferable to other sampling groups. This study was conducted to assist prison administration with policy and practice to improve the positive outcome of inmates on release. Nonetheless, I carefully documented the participants' firsthand experiences, which may also reflect the experiences of others.

Dependability

Each participant read the informed consent form, which was reviewed before the consent form was signed. The eight participants were asked the same questions from the interview guide. During the interview, patterns and themes were identified, and the data gathered was documented, encrypted, and password protected.

Confirmability

The interviews were conducted professionally to ensure that not only rich data was collected, but it was accurate. All interviews were completed utilizing a script to

reduce any biases. All information collected can be determined as authentic and free from any biases.

Data Analysis

Face-to-face interviews were recorded, encrypted, and password protected. I then manually transcribed the recordings. The eight interviews were transcribed and coded to establish different themes. Since qualitative data do not have a defined structure for data analysis, I determined how the process is defined and approached (Heldring et al., 2021). The expressed experiences by the participants were carefully analyzed and transcribed, and themes were identified. The data collected were analyzed thematically. In thematic analysis, the researcher peruses the transcripts and conceptualizes the information to establish patterns (Sim et al., 2018). The data were carefully scrutinized to identify any pattern, similarities and reoccurrences so that data can be properly analyzed.

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes and themes were established from the data collected. The recordings and transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy in the data analysis. Codes and themes were assigned to each question relevant to the research. Five themes (see Figure 1 and Table 3) were identified from the data: (a) cellmates imparted good knowledge; (b) cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime; (c) experiences in prison motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives; (d) friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration; and (e) reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society.

Figure 1

Themes Chart

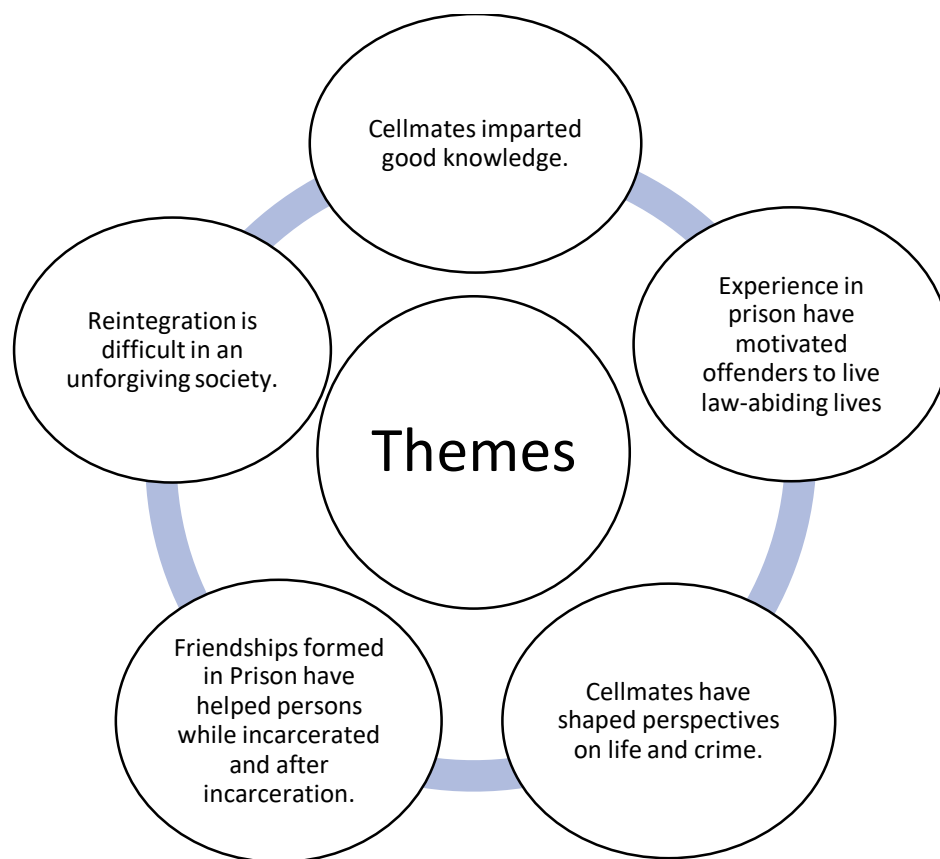


Table 3*Themes, Categories and Examples*

Themes	Categories	Examples
Cellmates imparted good knowledge.	Cellmates were knowledgeable in many ways such as drawing, and reading and shared these knowledge with each other.	Participant 4: “When I went to prison I didn’t know about the bible or how to read. I left Jail knowing more about God and the bible and can handle myself with the reading.”
Cellmates have shaped perspective on life and crime.	Being incarcerated and interacting with others have shown that crime only has negative consequences and being incarcerated prevents an individual from living a productive and purposeful life.	Participant 6: “When you in prison you have plenty time so you get to reason with yourself and others and crime don’t pay, it just waste your life.”
Experiences in prison motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives.	The life of a prisoner and the prison environment are stressful and frustrating and act as reminders to desist from criminal activities.	Participant 2: “Miss jail ain’t nice, being a prison aint nice and when I think about that place, I not going back.”
Friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration.	Friendships formed while incarcerated have helped person cope with the stress of prison and even on release the same coping strategies have been used to maintain a law-abiding life.	Participant 3: “A lot of things I learned to survive in prison is what helping me to survive on the streets and keep me out of prison.”
Reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society.	The stigma of prison is lifelong because people do not forget a prisoner, even though the prisoner wants to forget the crime.	Participant 8: “People don’t forget who been jail even if you ask for forgiveness, they hold it against you for life.”

Results

The results show that participants had good interpersonal relations with other cellmates while incarcerated. These interpersonal relationships have assisted participants in coping with the various challenges of prison. The positive impact of cellmate interpersonal relationships has also assisted persons with reintegration into society; as such a transition can be difficult and requires mental tenacity. Although persons reported that there were some negative interactions with other inmates, those whom they developed bonds with had a positive influence on them and their perceptions of life and crime. Five themes were established from the data collected.

Theme 1: Cellmates Imparted Good Knowledge

The first theme that was discovered was that cellmates imparted good knowledge. The interpersonal relationships formed saw the sharing of knowledge in an informal way. The knowledge was shared in inmates' spare time, not through rehabilitative or vocational programs. Participants indicated that they were able to use some of the knowledge learned from their cellmates upon their release. Participants indicated that prison is filled with many knowledgeable people, and knowledge can be gained while incarcerated when you associate yourself with the right persons.

Participant 5 stated,

Before I went to prison I couldn't read or write too well. When I got there I met a guy from my community and we became friends. He started to teach me a little reading and writing. By the end of my sentence I was able to read and write more. Now I out, I can go to Money Gram and do my own business. I feel more

confident now to ask someone for a work because I know I can handle myself with the reading and writing.

Similarly, Participant 7 expressed,

I could have painted but couldn't draw. I use to turn down paint jobs that wanted me to draw and paint. When I go prison, I meet a guy who could draw really good and he show me a thing or two so I started to draw too. I now did my first draw and paint job. Now that means more money for me and I can avoid getting myself into trouble.

Moreover, Participant 4 stated,

When I went to prison I didn't know about the bible or how to read. I left Jail knowing more about God and the bible and can handle myself with the reading. Now that I learn about God and what he can do, I started going back to church and this has really help me fit back in.

In addition, Participant 1 expressed,

One of the persons I got close to while in prison was like our cell lawyer, he knew a lot about the law and police thing. It was because of him I was able to do write for certain things that were given to me. You just have to learn the people and know who to get close to and who to stay away from. Now when I speak to the other guys on the block, them respect me because I speak with authority about what I learn about the law, and despite I went jail, it still have people who respect me to an extent and that is a good thing.

Likewise, Participant 3 stated,

When you go into prison you have to be smart. You have to watch and learn the people. I know who had influence in my cell and me and he got close. I was able to get in a program and that helped me to pass my time in prison. I can't done thank him because without him it would have been a depressing and lonely journey so now I out I am smart with who I get close too.

Theme 1 captured that the knowledge learned from cellmates while incarcerated has assisted participants to become self-sufficient and has positioned them to live more law-abiding lives either by becoming gainfully employed, connecting with others that will help them with their reintegration or acting as a base to learn more about a skill that can improve their outcome now that they are released.

Theme 2: Cellmates Have Shaped Perspectives on Life and Crime

The second theme emphasized was that cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime. Participants reported that cell conversations were positive and uplifting. It was stated that cellmates encouraged good behavior not only while incarcerated as it can extend their sentence but also encouraged good behavior on release because life is wasted when incarcerated. It was also mentioned that cellmates' conversations were about family, employment, and living more meaningful lives with a better label than prisoners. These encouragements have shifted the participants' perceptions on life and crime and the need to live a more purposeful.

Participant 1 recounted that

Prison has the good, bad and ugly but once you find the good you will be good. I was smart, I linked with people who I know was positive because in a negative

place you need positive thoughts so I surround myself with positive people. I still have all the positive vibrations in me because outside negative too so you have to always be positive and prison have taught me to think positive and be positive.

Similarly, Participant 7 stated,

You have plenty time to think. I use to reason with a inmate and he help me see life and crime differently. I have my son that I have to show example to so I ain't on any badness because I don't want my son go in there. Man crime is just problems. You get a temporary high for a permanent stain and that what I learn when I reason with them fellas in prison.

In addition, Participant 8 said,

The same money that you chasing and doing crime to get, you get lock up, and lock down so how you suppose to get money or the money you get ain't no use to you in prison. Miss, prison ain't all that bad because I meet good people who help me change my meditation.

Moreover, Participant 4 expressed that

Everybody journey is different but when you hear the stories of others, you thankful for your life although it's not the best, you still have to be thankful and try to do better and make the best of your life.

Theme 2 describes how participants went to prison with a concept of life and crime, and through their experience and interactions with others while they were incarcerated, there has been a shift in how they perceive life and crime, which has

motivated them to live more honest, productive, and positive lives that exclude criminality.

Theme 3: Experiences in Prison Have Motivated Ex-Offenders to Live Law-Abiding Lives

Theme 3 describes that the experiences in prison have motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives. Participants recounted that prison is a dark place that can have long-term negative effects on an individual psychological and mental state. Participants mentioned that the prison environment, such as food, hygiene, and operations, will make any inmate not want to return. Participants shared that the friendships formed while incarcerated helped them cope with prison life, which would have otherwise led to depression, suicide, or violation of rules. It was also a consensus that participants found different means to occupy themselves. One way to do this was to align themselves with experienced and positive inmates who knew the prison operations and could guide them.

Participant 5 expressed,

You can lose your soul in prison. You can lose focus in prison. I saw and heard things in prison that I do not want to go back there. I had to close my mind at times because you in a big cell and you will hear things but you have to be strong mentally.

Participants 1 also expressed,

Prison is mental slavery and physical slavery. Is a bad place but not everyone bad. The food bad, the way some the prison officers treat you is bad, plenty sickness in

there too, is not a place I will return too. I thankful for the few friends I made in there that helped me because you can come out worse than how you went in.”

Similarly Participant 3 mentioned,

The prison system is a Babylon system to oppress the poor. Nothing goes right in there, I not seeing a wall inside there again. The only good thing for prison is the lessons learned which is not to go back to prison. The food ain't good, plenty scabies, the place just nasty. I not going back in there, the only time I go there is to take things for the friends I made while I was in there.”

Likewise, Participant 6 mentioned,

I had really bad days and I don't want to repeat them days. I have wasted too much of my life in prison so it's now for me to live my best years, I had some good cellmates which helped made the days easier and a couple of the officers but other than that, not me going back in there.

Theme 3 portrays prison as a negative place with emotional and uncomfortable experiences. Participants suggested that there are few positives about prison, and one such positive is the friendships gained while incarcerated. However, the experience in prison is sufficient for the participants not to want to return to prison.

Theme 4: Friendships Formed in Prison Have Helped Persons While Incarcerated and After Incarceration

Continuing in Theme 4, participants believed that the friendships formed in prison have helped them while incarcerated and after incarceration. Friendships formed in prison were considered positive, impactful, and constructive. The participants expressed that

those friendships formed while incarcerated assisted them in coping with the stresses of prison. Participants also expressed that the words of encouragement, optimistic outlook on life, and mentorship they received have assisted in reshaping their thoughts to one that engenders an appreciation of the simple things that are often taken for granted, living more meaningful lives, and improving their life circumstances. Participants also stated that the friendships formed served many roles, such as counselors, advisors, and lawyers. It was expressed that the conversations on religion, politics, and life have helped while incarcerated and were transferred upon release. Participants mentioned that many positive injections while incarcerated have remained with them and have assisted them to aspire to live appreciative, meaningful and purposeful lives.

Participant 1 stated that

Prison can be a hard place and with the wrong mindset you will struggle. I came and learn the place and the people and then select my friends. You have to have friends. You can't do prison on your own but you have to know who you choosing as friends. I learn a lot from good people and a lot of it has stuck with me.

Similarly, Participant 6 stated,

In there has two kinds of people good and bad. I choose the good. I linked with a guy who was able to get me to work in the welding shop and that taught me something simple. If you associate with the right people you will get the right things. So now I release I change my address and friends to try connect with the right people so I can do the right things.

Additionally, Participant 2 expressed,

Being locked up has taught me so much. I met people who taught me a lot too because them who make you get lock up does forget about you. A lot of it is still with me because you can't forget the lessons prison taught you.

Moreover, Participant 8 also expressed,

My cell people helped me big time. I was in a good cell. We helped each other, relate and talk to each other. We encouraged each other and when anyone come with any bad vibe, we will deal with it, cause you can't be in a negative place with negative thoughts else you drown. So now I on the outside, I took the same mentality with me because outside ain't easy either, you have to still be positive. I remember one the cellmate telling me, I am a good guy. As simple as that is, it has stayed with me because I know I have good in me and now I am out I will ensure that others see that good.

Participants also admitted that bad people with bad influence can be found in prison, but it is in the minority since the prison environment forces individuals to be optimistic in order to survive and be their brothers' keeper. Participants have also expressed that they still maintain communication with the friends formed while incarcerated and sometimes return to the Prison to visit.

Theme 5: Reintegration Is Difficult in an Unforgiving Society

Theme 5 describes that although people are well equipped with the positive relationships formed while incarcerated and other tools that position them for successful reintegration, reintegration can be difficult in an unforgiving society. It was found that

society makes it difficult to reintegrate because the label of a prisoner is affixed to an individual for a long time, even though the individual has been rehabilitated or is at a low risk of reoffending. Participants expressed difficulty finding proper housing, employment, and socializing, making reintegration difficult. Nonetheless, the positive interactions while incarcerated, the negative experience of prison, and family support have motivated persons to continue to live crime-free lives with the aim of successful reintegration.

Participant 8 expressed,

St. Vincent is small, everybody knows everybody, so once you go jail everyone knows and when you come out, it's hard to be yourself, it's hard to find a work and provide for your family. If you're not strong willed, then you will end up right where you started but not me going back to that place. I learn enough not to go back there.

Similarly, Participant 7 stated,

I went looking for a work, I got the work and then one the workers told the boss I was in prison. I was laid off immediately. It's like you pay for the crime all your life. It's a life sentence because you have to deal with the consequences of your actions all your life. If you don't have a strong support system, it is easy for you to end up right back into prison.

Participant 3 also expressed,

The government needs to help us, we need money to survive, we need jobs so we can stand on our own because people not hiring jailbirds as they call we. We need

to be able to take care of ourselves and families because the people not going to take care of us.

In addition, Participant 2 recalled “The amount of names I have been called, only God why I don’t lose it. The same survival skills I used in Prison, I have to use out here so is like you leave prison but you still in prison.”

Summary

This study was conducted to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of first-time offenders who were sentenced to prison. The data was collected from eight participants through semistructured interviews. The data collected was analyzed through thematic analysis. After the data was transcribed and analyzed, five themes were established: (a) cellmates imparted good knowledge; (b) cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime; (c) experiences in prison have motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives; (d) friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration; and (e) reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society.

These themes suggest that interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated have positive, constructive, and meaningful influence on ex-offenders, which have assisted them in living law-abiding lives and reducing their risk of recidivistic behavior. Participants in this study expressed that cellmate associations and interactions have helped them cope with the stresses of prison. Many of the relationships have left indelible impressions that have assisted them in their reintegration into a society that has ostracized

them. Chapter 5 discusses the importance of this research, the need for further research, and the social implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This qualitative study aimed to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of first-time offenders who were sentenced to prison. While previous studies have primarily focused on criminal friends before incarceration, the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on further criminal behavior is empirically deficient and should be examined if rehabilitating offenders is a fundamental goal of the prison. For this reason, a qualitative design employing a phenomenological approach was used to conduct this research. This design was chosen because qualitative research involves the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in their natural settings (Teherani et al., 2015) while providing an in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In addition, a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to examine the meaning of human experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Moustakas (1994) postulated that phenomenological research captures the entire experience to understand the phenomenon, as knowledge and behavior are integrated.

This study comprised eight participants, two women and six men, aged 19–56, who were dispersed from different communities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They all satisfied the criteria of being released as first-time prisoners from the Belle Isle Correctional Facility, having no previous convictions other than the prison sentence, and having no pending matters before the court. The participants provided rich data about their experiences, a combination of their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and emotional feelings about the friendships they formed while incarcerated, in prison, and in reintegration and

crime. Five themes were identified from the data: (a) cellmates imparted good knowledge; (b) cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime; (c) experiences in prison motivate ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives; (d) friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration; and (e) reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society. Understanding the experiences of inmates while incarcerated and the reintegration process can assist prison administrators in understanding prison socialization and its effect on rehabilitation and reintegration. It can influence practice and policy and affect a prison's operational procedures, such as prison categorization, selection of cell inmates, and social dynamics. Chapter 5 summarizes the limitations, the implications for positive social change, recommendations for prison practice, policy and future research, and conclusions of this research.

Interpretation of the Findings

This chapter will provide an interpretation of the findings established in Chapter 4, and any other findings found throughout the study are reviewed. I identified that prison life has a fundamental role in the reintegration experiences of inmates. The themes that were defined in this research study, as shown in Table 3, were (a) cellmates imparted good knowledge; (b) cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime; (c) experiences in prison motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives; (d) friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration; and (e) reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society. These themes allude to the fact that interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated were non-criminogenic and assisted participants to live more law-abiding lives on release, thus reducing their recidivistic risk

and increasing their chances of successful reintegration. This result is consistent with Meisel et al.'s (2018) findings that suggest that the role of criminal peers was statistically significant in many studies; it has been questioned as researchers have indicated that the effect of peer influence on crime is only valid during the adolescent period and that criminal peers can have a positive influence. Likewise, Boduszek et al. (2012) suggested that not all relationships formed in prison have criminogenic outcomes.

While participants acknowledged that there is an option to be associated with inmates who can negatively influence them, they chose to form strong bonds and ties with the inmates whom they considered to be positive, motivating, and stimulating. All the participants reported that the friendships formed while incarcerated yielded positive outcomes and imparted good knowledge that has assisted them tremendously, especially in the absence of rehabilitation programs to address their cognitive needs. Additionally, the knowledge imparted ranged from skills training in drawing, plumbing, literacy, and religion, and participants indicated that such knowledge has assisted them in their reintegration journey and resisting criminal activities. Auty and Liebling (2020) posited that positive prison experiences with staff and peers and meaningful activities may have a rehabilitative effect that results in cognitive changes, which may equip them with helpful skills.

All participants agreed that being incarcerated and interacting with others proved that crime has negative consequences and that being incarcerated prevents an individual from living a productive and purposeful life. Participants felt that their family life was the most affected area of their lives due to their incarceration, particularly their role as

parents. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships were considered positive and uplifting and encouraged good behavior, which caused cognitive shifts in perspective of life and crime. Their adjustment has motivated people to live more meaningfully and productively on release. The most impactful friendships were those with persons doing long or lifetime sentences. Participants indicated that friendships with these inmates were more impactful than those with other family and friends because prisoners speak from a place of experience. They are not only told about the negative consequences of crime but also encouraged to live a crime-free life by inmates who have testimonies on how their criminal behavior has affected their lives and the simple pleasures of it.

The eight participants reported that prison was not a place they wanted to return to because of its physical environment, hygiene, food, and operations. Participants recounted that prison is a dark place that can have long-term negative effects on their psychological and mental state, and the friendships formed while incarcerated helped them cope with prison life, which would have otherwise led to depression, suicide, or violation of rules. This finding underscores the deterrence theory that increasing the cost of crime through incarceration is a deterrent to future criminal behavior, specifically to the offender and generally to others (Beccaria, 1986). Furthermore, Windzio (2006) similarly found that the “pains of incarceration” from first-time imprisonment could have a deterrent effect on committing crime after release, and prisoners who are isolated from other inmates might suffer because the basic social need of interaction is not met. Moreover, participants found different means to occupy themselves. One way to do this

was to align themselves with experienced and optimistic inmates who knew the prison operations and could guide them.

Additionally, participants considered the friendships formed while incarcerated to be positive, impactful, and constructive, and these effects continued after release. The participants expressed that those friendships formed while incarcerated assisted them in coping with the stresses of prison. Participants also expressed that the words of encouragement, optimistic outlook on life, and mentorship they received have assisted in reshaping their mindset to one that engenders an appreciation for the simple things that are often taken for granted, living more meaningful lives, and improving their life circumstances. Participants also stated that the friendships formed served many roles, such as counselors, advisors, and lawyers. It was expressed that the conversations on religion, politics, and life have helped while incarcerated and were transferred upon release to cope with the challenges of reintegration. Participants mentioned that many positive interactions while incarcerated have remained with them and have assisted them in aspiring to live appreciative, meaningful, and purposeful lives. These results show that human beings are naturally social creatures who thrive on social interactions; as such, social interaction while incarcerated is critical, and prison authorities must control this through the classification of offenders if the criminogenic effects of the prison are to be reduced.

Additionally, all the participants reported that reintegration in an unforgiving and small society makes the reintegration and rehabilitation more difficult. It was found that society makes it difficult to reintegrate because the label of a prisoner is affixed to an

individual for a long time, even though the individual has been rehabilitated or is at a low risk of reoffending. The absence of welfare and family support for housing, employment, and recreational activities makes reintegration difficult. Therefore, the results suggest that participants must be given the requisite socioeconomic support, particularly housing and financial support, if they are to have a viable chance of successful reintegration since the absence of this support may increase an offender's risk to reoffend to provide what should be the essential and basic commodities to mankind.

Interpretation of Findings Through Differential Association Theory Lens

The differential association theory explains the results and postulates that criminal behavior and attitudes are learned within the individual's social environment. While the results did not promote the learning of criminal behavior, it highly suggests that individuals will learn the values, attitudes, and behavior of individuals with whom they socialize.

Social learning theory similarly proposed that values, beliefs, and attitudes on the morality of committing a crime are learned through associating with others with criminal values, beliefs, and attitudes. According to the social learning theory, individuals who connect with criminal peers are more likely to have crime-promoting belief systems and engage in criminal behavior (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). Losel's (2003) findings supported the theories. Losel concluded that an individual's behavior is more consistent with the attitudes and behavior of their peers, primarily if the attitudes and behavior are supported by their peers. Therefore, the results from this study suggest that while people can learn bad behavior from their peers, they can also learn good behavior, especially

when such behavior is promoted, encouraged, and rewarded. The participants suggested that their interpersonal relationships were very positive and motivating as this was a way to cope with the prison conditions, creating positive networks to make prison life more manageable, to constructively pass the time while incarcerated, and assist in their holistic development in the absence of rehabilitative programs that catered towards their risk and needs.

Utilizing the social learning theory, of which the differential association theory is part, this research attempted to understand how criminal behavior is learned, prompted, and encouraged among offenders. The research question was grounded in the differential association theory, and the data was also analyzed through this lens. Analyzing research data through the differential association theory lens allowed the researcher to understand the relationship between interpersonal relationships while incarcerated and recidivistic behavior and reintegration. Examining the interpersonal relationships of first-time offenders in prison through the differential association theory lens created a better understanding of how prison socialization can be criminogenic or deterrent based on whom an inmate chooses to form strong bonds and ties with.

More importantly, this study is unique as it examines interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on recidivistic behavior and not interpersonal relationships formed prior which criminological literature is laden with and explains that criminal association often results in criminal offending (Bales & Piquero, 2012). However, the results show that individuals can find positive relationships while incarcerated that can act as a deterrent to future offending. Therefore, prison administrators can use this study

as a guide to practice and policy when considering the classification of offenders, the context and dynamics of prison socialization, the effects of prison environment on recidivistic behavior and rehabilitation effects on reintegration, if the prison is to satisfy its mandate beyond incapacitation.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are restrictions that occur during a study that the researcher has no control over. The study's participation criteria made it difficult to have a large population for sample selection. The smaller the sample size, the lower the generalizability of the results. Although the sample size was small, consistent with qualitative studies, saturation still occurred, which mitigated the effects of a small sample size. Additionally, the interview is an excellent data collection method for qualitative studies, but there was uncertainty about participants' willingness to be open and frank about their experience. However, special effort was made to develop a good rapport with participants so that our interactions were more of a conversation rather than an interview and that confidentiality was not breached.

Implications of Social Change

This study connects the importance of social change to criminal justice; one must fully understand the root causes of crime, punishment, and reducing criminal behavior. It is incumbent upon criminal justice researchers to present critically analyzed studies that can be used by practitioners and policymakers so that decisions are based on scientific evidence and best practices. The findings of this study advanced the knowledge of the social learning theory of crime, how criminal behavior can be learnt and modified, and

the importance of prison experience on the continuance or resistance of this behavior.

Therefore, if the social learning theory of crime and the role prison has in learning more deviant behaviors are understood, then practitioners are better positioned to make strategic decisions about prison socialization and categorization that embodies the motto of the prison “To hold and treat.”

This study has implications for social change. Prison is a form of punishment, and understanding the criminogenic and rehabilitative nature of prison must be understood if persons on release are to live productive lives and crime rates are to be reduced. There is no debate that a high crime rate affects the social fabric of society, mainly citizens’ sense of security, socialization, and the general well-being of the population. Therefore, prisoners must have the best prospects of rehabilitation to improve their chances of successful reintegration on release. Therefore, controlling prison socialization is one way to ensure that the label “prison is a school of crime” is not realized, but rather positive behavior is learned and reinforced. Additionally, the domino effect of more prisoners who are reintegrated includes fewer crimes committed and fewer people going to prison. This will mean that there will be a lower financial budget for the prison, less burden on the government’s resources and social infrastructures, and more people contributing to the social good. Therefore, the implications for social change from this study are significant for prison administrators and policymakers to ensure that the unintended consequences of prison are minimal and positive and prosocial behavior replaces antisocial and criminal behavior by improving prison practices as it relates to rehabilitation, targeted interventions and cellmate associations.

The findings from the study also suggest that society can make the reintegration process more challenging, thus increasing a person's risk to reoffend if they do not have the proper support in place on release. Therefore, the multiagency approach is critical to ensure released offenders receive the necessary psychosocial, financial, and housing support to end criminal behavior and reintegrate successfully into society. Providing ex-offenders with this support can provide a sense of independence as they transition into society, hoping that society will adjust and give them a chance to live law-abiding lives. Understanding the effect of a first-time offender's incarcerated experience can assist with policy and practice that targets rehabilitation, recidivism, and successful reintegration upon release.

Finally, with intentional classification and treatment of prisoners and the proper support on release, ex-offenders will increase their chances of reintegration and reduce their recidivistic behavior. This will reduce the recidivism rate of the prison and change the sole negative perception of prison. Once society has a cognitive shift, the stigmas and labels that trail the prison and ex-offenders will be reduced, giving them a chance to become socially inclusive with opportunities for employment, recreational, spiritual and educational benefits.

Recommendations

Several recommendations can assist in reducing the recidivism rate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and increasing the chances of successful reintegration on release. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, using probation as an alternative sentence is not legislative. Having probation as an alternative form of sentencing, under the supervision

of probation officers, can reduce the number of persons sentenced to prison predominantly for nonviolent and misdemeanor offenses. Bales and Piquero (2012) found that criminal behavior was higher with institutionalized offenders when compared to offenders who received non-custodial sanctions. The reduction in incarcerated numbers reduces overcrowding in prisons, the financial implications that come with overcrowding, and reduces the unintended consequences of prisons. More importantly, persons on probation will suffer less ostracism from society as they are exempted from the stigma of prison while having the opportunity to rehabilitate and live everyday lives, especially when employment is considered.

Another recommendation is that prisons conduct a risk-need assessment as part of the intake procedure and protocols. Andrews et al.'s (1990) RNR model of effective correctional intervention suggests that the risk principle must match the level of service to the offender's risk to re-offend, while the need principle must assess the criminogenic needs and treatment must target these needs and the responsivity principle must maximize the offender's ability to learn from a rehabilitative intervention by providing cognitive behavioral treatment and tailoring the intervention to the learning style, motivation, skills and strengths of the offender. Vitopoulos et al. (2012) found that matching treatments to RNR principles will reduce recidivism offenders. Therefore, including risk, need, and responsivity assessment will assist prison administrators in targeting a rehabilitative regime that is individualized and catered to the risk and need of each offender, thus increasing their chances of rehabilitation and successful reintegration.

Additionally, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the prison service only classification of inmates is remand and penal. Remand is prisoners awaiting trial, and penal are those who are sentenced. Conducting RNR assessments also allows prison authorities to efficiently classify offenders, especially by risk, to ensure that more cultured prisoners are not socializing or housed with lower-risk offenders. In Chapter 2, I would have shown the nexus between categorization and learned criminal behavior according to the social learning theory, specifically the differential association theory. Categorization is important to assist prison officers with procedural and technological methods and constraints to prevent violence in high-risk prisons. This also helps manage resources between low, medium, and high-risk prisoners, where more resources are deployed to prisoners of higher risk (Brennan, 1987). More importantly, if low-risk offenders are celled with other low-risk offenders, it further reduces the school of crime hypothesis and is not left solely by chance or the selection of the inmate to choose positive associations to end their criminal behavior. Instead, inmates will be celled with likened criminal risk offenders and be exposed to interventions that the RNR assessment has identified as their criminogenic need.

Currently, the Belle Isle Correctional Facility does not have any cognitive-behavioral rehabilitative programs. Rehabilitative programs are primarily based on vocational programs such as farming, carpentry and tailoring. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) reduces recidivism in both juveniles and adults. CBT proposes that offenders become aware of their thoughts and behaviors, thus making positive adjustments (Ritter, 2013). CBT has been found to be effective with juvenile and adult

offenders and violent and nonviolent offenders. Prison authorities must implement cognitive-behavioral programs that can change thoughts and behavior since vocational training develops skills. Further, in the absence of positive cellmates, CBT programs can assist in the rehabilitative effort of inmates. Moreover, conducting RNR on entry will help prison authorities choose the right program that targets the inmates' risk and need.

Moreover, inmates on release must receive the necessary support to prevent them from becoming vagrants or spending considerable time on the streets. Those mentioned can only promote a life of crime because they lack the basic resources or support to reintegrate successfully. On release, inmates can receive a transition allowance for the first 3 months if they do not have housing, food, and clothing. Additionally, once inmates are released, they have no further contact, supervision, or involvement with the police. Providing the necessary psychosocial or counseling support for ex-offenders' transition will increase the probability of successful reintegration, especially in a society that they have described as cruel.

Finally, it would be interesting to investigate further the effects of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on recidivists with consideration for variables of age, offense, and involvement in rehabilitation programs. It will also be good to examine how interpersonal relationships formed in prison impact recidivist so further comparative analysis can be done and the phenomenon better understood.

Conclusion

This qualitative study aims to understand the influence of interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated on the recidivistic behavior of first-time

offenders who were sentenced to prison. While the literature is varied with studies on peer influence on crime, no contribution seeks to understand the influence of friendships formed while incarcerated on future criminal behavior on a Caribbean sample of ex-offenders.

This phenomenological qualitative study included eight participants who were interviewed about their lived experiences. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions in efforts to explore and understand their perceptions of their recidivistic behavior and their socializing experience while incarcerated. A thematic analysis strategy was employed to analyze the results. Five themes emerged from the data: (a) cellmates imparted good knowledge; (b) cellmates have shaped perspectives on life and crime; (c) experiences in prison motivated ex-offenders to live law-abiding lives; (d) friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated and after incarceration; and (e) reintegration is difficult in an unforgiving society. The themes suggest that interpersonal relationships formed while incarcerated were positive and uplifting, reducing the risk of recidivistic behavior and increasing the chances for successful reintegration.

The study also established that the experiences in prison, such as the food, treatment of prisoners, sanctuary conditions, and the positive influence of cellmates, are constant reminders of why participants should live law-abiding lives. Participants' responses indicated cellmates had shaped ex-offenders' perspectives on life and crime, which can have a long-term positive influence on a decision to discontinue crime. It was also illuminated that friendships formed in prison have helped persons while incarcerated to cope with the challenges of prison and have assisted on release to cope with the

challenges of reintegration, which can be extremely difficult in small and unforgiving societies.

The result of this study has implications for positive social change. Policymakers and prison administrators must understand the criminogenic and rehabilitative nature of prison if persons on release are to live productive lives and crime rates are to be reduced. Additionally, the social infrastructures through a multi-agency approach must be given to ex-offenders if their prospects of rehabilitation are increased, thus initiating society's cognitive shifts on labels and stigmas that have paralyzed the reintegration process for offenders.

From this study, several recommendations were made. First, the introduction of a probation system will reduce the number of persons sentenced to prison primarily nonviolent offenders. Second, the prison conducts risk-need assessments as part of the prison intake process. This will allow for treatment to be targeted and intentional to the risk and criminogenic needs of the offender. Third, classifying offenders based on risk reduces the possibility of deviant peer influence. Fourth, cognitive-behavioral programs should be introduced to increase the options of targeted interventions to the offender's risk. Fifth, provide the necessary social support, especially housing, financial and employment, when an offender is released from prison to increase their independence in the transition into a liberated life.

Finally, this study should be replicated to expand the literature on interpersonal relationships and recidivism. Research in this area could benefit training, policy implementation, and an overall understanding of the importance of prison categorization,

prison socialization, consequences of prison, and recidivism rates. It is also fair to conclude that while persons can learn negative things in prison, they can also learn positive things from their cellmates that influence their recidivism rates. This study can be the matriculation of the development of a new theory since the differential association theory focuses primarily on the learning of criminal behavior from criminal peers but this study shows that an individual can learn prosocial and positive things from criminal peers, the outcome that causes an individual to resist and not persist in criminal activities.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Age: _____

Occupation Prior Incarceration: _____

Employment Status before Incarceration: _____

Post-release Employment Status: _____

Education Level: _____

Length of Sentence: _____

Date of Release _____

Convicted Offence: _____

1. How many people were in your cell?
2. Did you know your cellmates prior to your incarceration?
3. How would you describe the relationship between you and your cellmates?
4. How do you think your cellmates perceive you?
5. What is the usual topic of conversation with your cellmates?
6. What word will you use to describe the friendship between you and your cellmates?
7. What have you learned from your cellmates while you were incarcerated?
8. If you had a choice, would you change your cellmates? Give reasons for your answer. If yes, what would be your criteria for cellmate selection.
9. Were there other non-cellmates who had any impact on you while incarcerated? If yes, describe the impact.

10. What did you learn about crime while incarcerated?
11. How has your prison experience shaped your thinking on crime?
12. How has your prison experience shaped your thinking on life?
13. What rehabilitative programs you were enrolled in while incarcerated?
14. What do you think is the probability of you being arrested again?
15. How would you describe your prison experience?
16. What do you think could have been done to improve your prison experience?
17. How have you reintegrated into society?

Appendix B: Permission to Reprint Table



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