

Chapter 1: Introduction

Returning Home

Reintegration after Prison or Jail

Bob had been in prison twice previously; this time, upon release, he was committed to turning his life around. He was grateful his wife had stayed by him, and he was glad to see his son again. However, adjusting to life outside of prison was a challenge. He had a difficult time finding employment that would enable him to support his family. After an extensive search, he took a job as a cook at a local restaurant for \$10 per hour. The work was hard and he barely made enough to pay the family's expenses. Christmas was approaching and he wished he had the money to buy some nice things for his family. He made the decision to shoplift to get some money:

I started feeling like I had to make up everything for those last two years and stuff and for Christmas and stuff and I . . . I wasn't, you know, I'd just barely got, you know, like a ten-dollar-an-hour job and stuff and trying to make up our bills and everything, and so I . . . I shoplifted to try to . . . to get some extra money.

Bob was rearrested and returned to prison for violating his parole.

Fred had a similar story. Things were difficult after he was released and he needed money, so he used a stolen credit card. He was convicted of credit card fraud and sent back to prison. Later, when asked about it, he said,

I had the opportunity to use a stolen card. I had a baby on the way. I thought I could make some money selling what I bought on the card. The temptation was too much. I'd done it before and didn't think I'd get caught.

Jenny also had been in prison several times for various property and drug offenses; after release, she too was committed to doing things differently this time. It was a challenge for her to stay away from drugs, but with determination, treatment, and family support, she was able to complete her parole successfully. As she looked back on her journey, she made the following comments:

No, it's taken a long time for me to get to that point, though. Before, I didn't care because jail was really no big deal for me. Now it's different. What makes it different is just—I guess, as I matured, just realizing the impact that my behavior has had on my family and my children. Just tired of being without my family 'cause I separate myself from them, you know, 'cause they're all in Texas and I know that they'll know that I'm using, so I just stay right away from them, you know. And I'm tired of spending life—like the last four Christmases and Thanksgivings in a row, I've been locked up in jail or prison and that's no way to live, you know.

Bob, Fred, and Jenny illustrate the stresses faced by individuals as they leave prison and attempt to reintegrate into their communities. Even under the best conditions, reintegration is challenging. Collectively, it is difficult for communities to provide the resources necessary to help former prisoners adjust successfully. One of the most profound challenges facing societies today is the reintegration of so many prisoners (Maruna, 2011; Petersilia, 2003).

REINTEGRATION

During the past 30 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people incarcerated in jails and prisons. When more people go to prison, more people are released. About 95 percent of all prison and jail inmates will be released to reintegrate into communities. In the United States, about 650,000 prisoners are released annually (Petersilia, 2005). What happens to those thousands of people being released into our communities?

We define *reintegration* as the process of transitioning from incarceration to the community, adjusting to life outside of prison or jail, and attempting to maintain a crime-free lifestyle (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Reintegration is a complex process that occurs over time, and there is much we do not know about the process (Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; Maruna, 2001; Maruna & Toch, 2005; Petersilia, 2005; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Although most who leave prison desire to stay out, making that desire a reality is difficult. Recent data indicate that about half of all prisoners are reincarcerated within three years of release (Langan & Levin, 2002).

Reintegration is difficult because multiple challenges must be faced simultaneously (Maruna, Immarigeon, & LeBel, 2004; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Many have difficulty finding employment because they tend to be uneducated and have few job skills. Even if they had employable skills previously, those skills may have become obsolete during their incarceration (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). A substantial majority of offenders have a substance abuse problem, and avoiding relapse is a continual challenge. Many have little family support (Petersilia, 2003). It is common for offenders to have alienated family members to the point that their family has given up on them. Others have family support but the wrong type, such as family members who use drugs. Some offenders have mental and physical health problems that interfere with adjustment. In addition, many of the attitudes and skills learned while incarcerated are not helpful for adjusting to life outside of prison. Not only are prison and jail different from the world outside, but often the world that offenders return to is quite different from their world before incarceration. Finally, offenders experience the added stigma of a criminal record, which is a major barrier to employment (Pager, 2003). These challenges make reintegration difficult even for those with the desire and ability to remain crime free. The motivation to change may wane with the day-to-day stresses of finding work, earning money, staying away from old friends, and remaining drug free.

Released prisoners may be divided into three broad groups. First, there are those who have made up their mind not to return to prison and have the skills and support to reintegrate successfully. Second, there are those who are likely to recidivate even if they receive substantial support and treatment. Some are attached to their current lifestyle and do not desire to change. Many in this group have mental health issues or drug dependency that may preclude their being able to successfully reintegrate. Third, there is a group in between these two extremes, who desire and have the ability to change but whose success is uncertain.

Individuals in the first group are likely to reintegrate successfully even without support. Those in the second group are not likely to reintegrate successfully even if they receive substantial support and treatment. The third group consists of potential recidivists who could avoid future criminal activity and reintegrate successfully if they receive appropriate treatment and support at the right time.

DESISTANCE

Desistance may be defined as a developmental process in which one maintains a state of nonoffending (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001). Although desistance is part of the reintegration process, it is not synonymous with reintegration. One could desist from crime and still have difficulty adjusting to life outside of prison (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008; McNeil, 2006).

Maruna et al. (2004) distinguished between primary and secondary desistance. Primary desistance refers to the immediate move away from criminal behavior, such as when an offender remains drug free for two months. Secondary desistance refers to the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who previously were persistent offenders (Maruna, 2001). Desistance means becoming a law-abiding person on a permanent basis and requires maintenance over time rather than just short-term change. It emerges as one gradually develops a new identity and becomes a changed person (Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; Maruna & Toch, 2005).

Understanding desistance requires a different perspective than much of the theorizing in criminology. Rather than focusing on why people commit crime, the focus is on how offenders can stop committing crime and avoid continued involvement in criminal behavior (Maruna et al., 2004). It is one thing to stop offending for a few months and quite another to remain in a crime-free state over an extended period of time (Maruna, 2001; Runggay, 2004). Laub and Sampson (2003) identified some offenders who were able to desist from crime, some who persisted in crime, and others who zigzagged in and out of crime intermittently.

Scholars and practitioners have attempted to develop frameworks to help understand the desistance process more fully (Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes, & Muir, 2004; Bushway, Piquerro, Brody, Cauffman, & Mazerolle, 2001; Maruna et al., 2004; McNeil, 2006). In this section, I summarize seven theoretical perspectives that are helpful in understanding the processes of reintegration and desistance from crime: social learning theory, social control theory, life course theory, strain theory, cognitive transformation theory, the social development model, and social disorganization theory.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theorists posit that criminal motivations are learned through associations with significant others. Whether parolees are able to desist from crime depends in part on the criminality of their interpersonal networks (Aaltonen, Macdonald, Martikainen, & Kivivuori, 2013; Capaldi, Kim, & Owen, 2008; Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Schroeder, Giordano, & Cernkovich, 2007). Through associations with peers and family members, parolees are exposed to and receive reinforcement for particular attitudes and behaviors (Agnew, 2005). If they associate with those who are not involved in criminal activities, they are likely to receive support for avoiding illegal behavior and deviant peers. Conversely, if parolees associate with individuals who are involved in illegal behavior, they are likely to be influenced by those associations. To illustrate, if they associate with individuals who use drugs, they will be exposed to attitudes favorable toward drug use, will see others using drugs, will be offered drugs, and are likely to receive positive reinforcement for drug use and negative sanctions if they refuse to use drugs. In such an environment, it may be difficult for parolees to resist the pressure to use drugs, especially if they have used drugs previously.

The transition from prison to the community is a vulnerable time when individuals may be susceptible to the influences of deviant peers (Agnew, 2005). Marriage and employment may alter networks so individuals spend less time associating with deviant friends and more time associating with law-abiding people (Giordano et al., 2002; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Warr, 1998). As a result, parolees who obtain a job or find a partner may have fewer deviant peers or spend less time associating with these peers. With fewer friends to encourage and reward deviant behavior, motivation for committing crime may diminish (Maruna & Toch, 2005; Schroeder et al., 2007; Warr, 2002). Research on desistance confirms that a shift away from friendships with people who are involved in crime is one element in the desistance process (Byrne & Trew, 2008).

Self-efficacy was an important concept in Bandura's (1977, 1982) social learning theory, and it appears to be useful in understanding reentry and desistance. Bandura defined self-efficacy as

individual judgments of how well one can execute courses of action. In the context of criminal desistance, self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to comply with parole agreements and remain crime free. Bandura maintained that self-efficacy was a key ingredient of behavioral change, and he discussed how self-efficacy may be influenced by various types of treatment and experiences. According to his theory, individuals low on self-efficacy will put little effort into complying with parole agreements, particularly when faced with obstacles. They will give up and stop trying if they doubt that they can succeed (Bandura, 1977, 1982). Thus, self-efficacy may have a significant influence on attempts by parolees to comply with parole agreements.

Social Control Theory

According to social control theory, the development of bonds helps people change. As parolees associate with individuals involved in conventional activities, they are likely to develop bonds that constrain them when they are tempted to violate their parole. For example, associating with family members and peers who are law abiding may help constrain parolees who are tempted to participate in illegal behavior. As they think about becoming involved again in illegal activities, the prospects of losing associations with a partner or losing a job may constrain them.

Consistent with social control theory, findings from several studies have suggested that marriage may help parolees refrain from crime (Horney, Osgood, & Marshall, 1995; Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1990). Informal monitoring by a spouse appears to help individuals desist from drug use and other law violations (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Vaillant, 1995; Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1987). However, Laub et al. (1998) found that it was not just marriage but a cohesive marriage that had a preventative effect on crime. The social ties that developed within a marriage helped explain why offenders stopped committing criminal acts (Sampson & Laub, 1990).

When parolees obtain a desirable job, they develop a stake in conformity— that is, they have something to lose if their behavior jeopardizes their employment (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1990). In addition, work may provide an opportunity to create new networks that replace old deviant networks.

The type of work may be more important than just being employed, however (Agnew, 2005; Shover, 1996). For example, low-paying or distasteful work may do little to help parolees adjust, whereas enjoyable, well-paying jobs are likely to aid in the adjustment of parolees.

In summary, according to social control theory, offending is influenced by informal controls. As individuals develop bonds to conventional individuals and institutions, they develop a stake in conformity, which may constrain them when they are tempted to participate in illegal activities.

Life Course Theory

Life course theory integrates social learning and social control concepts in a developmental framework. According to life course theory, desistance depends on both subjective factors and social influences. Subjective factors are internal characteristics such as attitudes, self-esteem, identity, and motivation. Social influences include employment, marriage, parenthood, friends, and treatment interventions. Social networks provide structure and opportunities for law-abiding behavior and enable offenders to separate or insulate themselves from the deviant environment and develop new scripts for their future (Maruna & LeBel, 2010).

A key element of the life course perspective is a focus on change over time rather than on an initial change in behavior. Existing research indicates that offenders who recidivate tend to lack the connective social structures that help them sustain a crime-free lifestyle (Byrne & Trew, 2008). For example, creating bonds with family members and friends can help individuals desist

from crime. Conversely, associations with deviant peers may appeal to individuals who are unsuccessful in developing meaningful relationships at home or work.

Laub and Sampson (2001, 2003) focused on social factors and emphasized the importance of structured routine activities and social controls. However, they acknowledged that internal factors also play a significant role in desistance.

Strain Theory

When offenders describe how they got involved in criminal behavior, many begin with a traumatic event or strain. One woman said she started taking drugs to dull the pain after she was raped. Another was angered after she was beaten up by a group of young women while attending a party. The next night she went to a party to get back at them and ended up stabbing a girl. The girl died and she was charged with murder and sent to prison. A young man said he started committing crimes after his wife left and took their son with him.

Agnew (2006) postulated that strains tend to produce negative emotions such as anger, frustration, jealousy, depression, and fear. These emotions lead to pressure for corrective action, reduce ability to cope in a legal manner, and reduce concern with the costs of crime.

Agnew (2005) identified three different types of strain. First, there is goal blockage—the inability to achieve a desired goal. Second, one may lose something of value—as in the breakup of a relationship or the loss of a child. Third, one may receive a negative stimulus, such as being bullied at school, losing a job, or being raped. Furthermore, strains may reduce social control and foster the social learning of crime. The key is how strains influence decisions to become involved in various illegal activities (Agnew, 2006).

According to strain theory, the process of desistance requires the reduction of strain. This could be a direct reduction in strain by achieving some goal, eliminating a negative stimulus, or replacing something that was lost. Strain could also be reduced by increasing coping and problem-solving skills, which will enable individuals to face strains and respond to them more constructively. Support from family or conventional others may provide resources to deal with a strain. The strain of not having a job could be relieved by obtaining a job. The loss of a relationship will become less stressful if one is able to begin a new relationship.

Cognitive Transformation Theory

According to the cognitive transformation theory, there are four key elements in the desistance process (Giordano et al., 2002). First, individuals conceive of personal change as a possibility. They desire change and are willing to attempt to change their behavior. In a study of 73 offenders, Healy and O'Donnell (2008) found that 95 percent desired to change and 85 percent said they were capable of changing. Similarly, in the Oxford Recidivism Study, Burnett (2004) reported that 80 percent of offenders said they wanted to stop committing crimes, although only 25 percent thought they would definitely be able to do so.

Second, individuals are exposed to particular circumstances or “hooks” that may help them move toward change. Hooks for change include social characteristics such as obtaining a good job or attending a treatment program (Giordano et al., 2002). Marriage, employment, and drug treatment have been identified as important turning points that may influence the desistance process (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001).

The third element in Giordano et al.'s (2002) desistance theory is the development of a conventional replacement self. Offenders begin to see themselves in a different light and attempt

to change their identity. For example, Shapland and Bottoms (2011) reported that offenders who wanted to change often saw themselves as different people who no longer wanted to be involved in crime. Burnett (2004) observed that some individuals saw themselves as "converts" who had transformed their lives.

Finally, those previously involved in illegal behavior begin to view this behavior as something that hurts people and that they want to avoid. In the example at the beginning of this chapter, Jenny saw how her actions hurt her family and expressed a desire to change. In the Sheffield Desistance Study, Shapland and Bottoms (2011) observed former offenders who saw themselves as different people than they used to be. Similarly, Burnett (2004) reported that some offenders defined their previous crime as an anomaly that was not reflective of their real selves.

Terry (2003) described desistance as a conversion process that takes a considerable amount of time. He observed that the process often begins when an event helps individuals reassess their lives. Maruna (2001) also argued that desistance requires a reformulation of one's identity. After analyzing in-depth interviews of "desisters" and "persisters," he observed that desisters tended to describe redemption narratives in which they viewed their "real selves" as noncriminals. They differentiated themselves from their previous mistakes, crafted a moral tale from their experiences, and expressed a desire to use their experiences to help others (Maruna, 2001). Similarly, Shover (1996) and Runggay (2004) found that desisters were able to conceive of change as possible and alter their perceptions of their previous activities.

Social Development Model

The social development model is a life course theory that integrates concepts from social control and social learning theories into a developmental framework (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). Catalano and Hawkins (1996) identified five key steps in aiding individuals' progression. First, provide opportunities for prosocial involvement. Second, teach skills needed to take advantage of opportunities. Without skills to succeed, individuals will not be able to take advantage of opportunities. Third, provide rewards for prosocial involvement. Reinforcement for positive behavior will improve skills and lead to further prosocial behavior. The fourth concept is to help individuals develop bonds. This can be done by consciously attempting to develop and strengthen relationships but also occurs as a consequence of being recognized and rewarded for their behavior. Fifth, set clear expectations about behavior and the social order.

The authors conceptualize a prosocial and antisocial path. Thus, individuals will have perceived opportunities for antisocial behavior and perceived rewards for antisocial behavior. Those will influence attachment to antisocial others and beliefs in antisocial values. Of course, individual characteristics and external constraints also affect opportunities, rewards, and skills (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). The social development model seems particularly useful for understanding parolees and their efforts to change, desist from crime, and reintegrate successfully.

Social Disorganization Theory

According to social disorganization theory, the community context influences criminal behavior. There is a long history in sociology of the study of community disorganization and how it affects individuals (Shaw & McKay, 1942). The essence of the theory is that each community has its own set of characteristics that influence individuals in the community. Regardless of individual characteristics, the community exerts an influence on those who live in the community. Some communities with high levels of disadvantage, unemployment, poverty, and residential instability do not have strong social networks and lack informal social control (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). Other communities have high levels of social efficacy where community members know each other and cooperate to provide informal social control and actions against undesirable activities and people (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). When parolees return to communities with

concentrated disadvantage, there will be lower levels of informal social control and greater exposure to criminal activities (Hipp, Tita, & Boggess, 2009). This is likely to make reintegration more difficult not because of any characteristics of the parolee but because of the community disorganization.

Each of these theories provides some useful insights into how offenders may desist from crime. In addition, they are useful tools to examine different situations and identify programs and policies that may help offenders after they are released.

FACTORS AFFECTING REINTEGRATION

A review of the theories and existing literature revealed 10 factors that are important in the process of reintegration: housing, employment, family, friends, substance abuse, mental health, treatment and programs, social context, motivation to change, and age. All have been found to be associated with recidivism, although the nature and magnitude of the associations vary. A major goal of this book is to present a more complete understanding of how offenders perceive these 10 variables to be relevant in their lives.

Housing

When individuals are released from prison, they must live somewhere. For most, the housing options are limited because they have little money. Many move in with a family member, at least temporarily, and others live with a friend. Who they live with will influence their associations and exposure to various social contexts. If those they live with use drugs, this could affect their own ability to refrain from drug use.

Employment

When individuals are released from prison, they must start paying for their own food, housing, and clothing. While incarcerated they never had to worry about a place to sleep, where the next meal would come from, clothing, or medical care. Once released, they need a source of income, which usually requires some type of employment.

Work may increase associations with law-abiding peers, leave less time for associations with deviant peers, and increase bonds to conventional society. Temptations to participate in illegal behavior may be constrained by the potential loss of their job and paycheck. The responsibilities and monitoring in the workplace can create informal social controls.

Family

After release, many offenders turn to a family member for a place to live and for other financial support. Laub and Sampson (2003) maintained that the development of bonds with family members may help individuals desist from crime. The association with deviant peers may be more appealing to individuals who do not have meaningful family relationships. Marriage and children may create bonds that increase the costs of law violations and increase the motivation to avoid illegal activities. A number of scholars have confirmed that support from family members tends to be associated with lower recidivism (Bersani & Doherty, 2013; Bersani, Laub, & Nieuwbeerta, 2009; Doherty & Ensminger, 2013; Farrall, 2004; McGloin, Sullivan, Piquero, Blokland, & Nieuwbeerta, 2011; Theobald & Farrington, 2009).

Friends

One of the most consistent findings is that peers have a strong influence on the onset and persistence of criminal behavior (Agnew, 2005; Elliott & Menard, 1996). Research confirms that a shift away from friends who are involved in crime is one element in the desistance process (Byrne & Trew, 2008). Law-abiding friends tend to provide law-abiding models, reinforcement for law-abiding behaviors, and discouragement of illegal attitudes and activities. In addition, associations with law-abiding friends may result in the development of bonds that constrain illegal activity (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Shapland & Bottoms, 2011).

The transition from prison to the community is a vulnerable time when individuals may be susceptible to the influences of deviant peers (Agnew, 2005). Those who are lonely and lack law-abiding friends may be particularly likely to succumb to offers from drug-using friends (Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010). Those who obtain a job or have family support may decrease the number of and time spent with deviant peers. With fewer friends to encourage and reward deviant behavior, motivation for committing crime may diminish (Maruna & Toch, 2005; Schroeder, Giordano, & Cernkovich, 2007, 2010; Warr, 2002).

Substance Abuse

Among prison inmates in the United States, 73 percent used drugs regularly prior to their incarceration (Petersilia, 2005). At the time inmates committed their latest offense, 50 percent were under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Karberg & James, 2005). Drug offenders comprise an increasing proportion of probation, prison, and parole populations (Blumstein & Beck, 2005).

Large numbers of those who are released from prison are rearrested and returned to prison. Often the reason for their rearrest is their inability to refrain from substance abuse (Blumstein & Beck, 2005; Terry, 2003). Relapse usually occurs while associating with others who are using drugs. There appear to be reciprocal influences in that substance abuse tends to increase associations with individuals who are not law abiding and weaken bonds to family members and law-abiding friends.

Mental Health

Many prisoners have mental health problems that make reintegration more difficult. In addition to drug dependency, some face depression, low self-worth, mood disorders, impulsiveness, and anger management (Feucht & Gfroerer, 2011; Lurigio, 2013). Prison life and reintegration are more difficult if mental health problems are not diagnosed and treated. Being able to receive support and mental health treatment appears to be important in enabling offenders to successfully reintegrate and complete their parole successfully. In addition, mental health disorders may make reintegration more difficult if they co-occur with other problems, such as drug abuse (Baillargeon et al., 2010).

Treatment and Programs

There are numerous treatments and programs available for offenders (Bahr, Masters, & Taylor, 2012). However, because of high caseloads and a lack of funding, many parolees and parole officers may not be fully aware of the various programs and treatments that are available. Even when programs are available, parolees may not take advantage of them because they have difficulty making and preparing for appointments, attending appointments, and completing forms necessary to be admitted to a program (Feucht & Gfroerer, 2011; Taxman, Perdoni, & Harrison, 2007).

Many who desire treatment may not be able to receive treatment because it is not available. There is evidence that there is a large gap between need for treatment and receipt of treatment.

There is also the question of the effectiveness of treatment: Does it really help offenders? (Cullen & Jonson, 2011).

Social Context

Much of the research on offender reintegration has focused on the individual characteristics of offenders and how to help them change. However, there is strong evidence that the community context of parolees is an important factor in reintegration (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). Where a parolee lives will affect routine activities and associations during the transition from prison to the community (Kirk, 2009). Social disorganization theory posits that the type of neighborhood one lives in influences informal social control, which may be critical in the daily decisions of parolees (Hipp, Petersilia, & Turner, 2010).

Motivation

Some scholars maintain that change will not occur unless offenders have a strong, internal motivation to change (Gideon, 2010). Others argue that motivation to change will have little impact unless the social circumstances of offenders support their desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2001). In their cognitive transformation theory, Giordano et al. (2002) asserted that existing theories are incomplete because they have ignored the role of choice and internal characteristics such as motivation. Laub and Sampson (2001) suggested that change is most likely when offenders have the desire to change, view change as possible, and have social support for change. There is a need for a more complete understanding of motivation and how it affects reintegration.

Age

Although it is one of the most consistent correlates of crime, it is not clear how age is associated with desistance (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Holland, 2003; Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; Shapland & Bottoms, 2011; Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008). As offenders age, their ability and motivation for illegal activities may wane, especially at key turning points, such as a health crisis or the transition out of prison. Terry (2003) observed that as the prison population was replaced with younger offenders, older offenders felt less comfortable in prison and no longer had their self-concepts bolstered while they were in prison. Thus, their bonds to and status in prison decreased over time. Health problems became more common as offenders got older and they had to face their physical limitations. In addition, as they aged some became more aware of how their behavior hurt their family members. Finally, age is likely to alter perceptions, associations, and bonds. Qualitative data are needed to understand better how offenders' perceptions change as they age.

GOALS OF THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to explore the process of reintegration. Using quantitative and qualitative data, I examined offenders' own stories to discover what they feel was and was not helpful in their own reintegration. The major questions asked in this book include

- What is it like to reenter society after being in jail or prison?
- What characteristics help individuals reintegrate into society successfully?
- What factors make it difficult to reintegrate successfully?
- What types of programs and policies are effective in helping parolees reintegrate successfully into society?

DATA ON PRISONER REINTEGRATION

In an effort to understand the reintegration process better, I analyze four different data sets throughout this book. For each data set, the proposed research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects at Brigham Young University. Before all participants were interviewed, the research was explained to them and they signed a consent form. They agreed to participate in the research and to have information from their interview used in research reports as long as their identity was not revealed. In this section, I describe the sample and data collection procedures used in each of these studies.

Study of 51 Recently Released Parolees

The objective of this research was to use life course theory to explore the process of reentry from the perspective of the parolees and identify what differentiates those who succeed from those who fail. New parolees were interviewed in two major metropolitan areas in an intermountain state in the United States. All new parolees were required to attend an orientation meeting within the first month following their release. At the beginning of six of these orientation meetings, we described the purpose of our study, invited the parolees to participate, and passed a sheet for parolees to sign if they were willing to be interviewed (Bahr et al., 2010). It was explained that we would be available at the end of the meeting to interview them and offered \$20 for each interview. We were able to interview 51 of the total of 66 new parolees who attended the six meetings (77 percent).

Parolees were interviewed shortly after release from prison and again at one month, three months, and six months after the first interview. We were able to obtain one-month interviews with 31 parolees (61 percent of the sample), three-month interviews with 35 parolees (69 percent of sample), and six-month interviews with 40 parolees (78 percent of sample). Finally, with cooperation from the state Department of Corrections, we were able to track all 51 respondents for three years following their release to determine how many had successfully completed parole, how many remained on parole, and how many had returned to prison.

The first interview schedule included 129 quantitative and qualitative questions, which asked about background, criminal history, drug treatment, friends, work, family, recreation, and future plans. The second and third interview schedules included 79 questions from the first interview schedule. The fourth interview schedule included 27 key questions from the earlier interviews.

Each interview was recorded for later qualitative analysis. The initial interviews averaged about 45 minutes, while the follow-up interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The initial interviews were conducted from September to November 2004, and the follow-up interviews were conducted from November 2004 to July 2005.

All initial interviews took place at the Adult Probation and Parole offices of the two cities. For follow-up interviews, we called the parolees and arranged to meet them at the day reporting center. The fourth interview was conducted by phone for those who were still in the community and in person for those who were in jail or prison.

The 51 parolees had an age range from 22 to 56 years, with a median of 34. Eight (16 percent) of the respondents were women. In response to a question on ethnic status, 38 (75 percent) said they were white, eight identified themselves as Latino, one as Asian, and four as "other." Forty-three (84 percent) had graduated from high school or received their GED, but only one (2 percent) had graduated from college. Three-fourths (37) were parents, and the number of children ranged from one to six, with a median of two. Thirty-six (71 percent) had been married, but only eight (16 percent) were currently married.

Drugs were the most common offenses for which our respondents (13 of 51; 26 percent) were last incarcerated. Forty-eight (94 percent) admitted that they currently or previously had a drug problem. The length of their latest incarceration varied from two to 132 months, with a mean of 26 months. The number of times they had been in jail or prison varied from one to 50 times, with a mean of 10 times.

The 51 parolees were similar to the U.S. parolee population on a number of demographic characteristics, but the sample had a higher proportion of women and fewer minorities and was somewhat more educated. The purpose of the study was to explore the reentry process from the perspective of these parolees. As noted by Visser and Travis (2003), there is a dearth of information from the perspective of individual parolees, and this type of data is needed to understand better the process of prisoner reentry.

Study of 140 Jail Inmates

The second study comprised 70 individuals who successfully completed a drug treatment program in a county jail in an intermountain state and 70 individuals in the same jail who were not in the program. A protocol was developed where jail personnel notified the researchers when an individual was near completion of the program. A research worker then went to the jail and interviewed the individual. Jail records were used to identify a current jail inmate who was not in the program and matched the treatment participant on age, gender, type of offense, and seriousness of offense. They were first matched on gender and type of offense. For example, if a treatment participant had been convicted of a drug offense and a violent offense, an inmate was identified who shared both of those characteristics. Usually several cases were found that matched on those two characteristics first, and then researchers looked for an inmate who matched on age and seriousness of previous offenses. The inmate who matched closest on those four criteria was then contacted and interviewed. Thus, for each person in the treatment group, there was one person in the general jail population who was used as a match.

To ascertain the equivalence of the two groups, we compared the two groups on a variety of background, criminal history, and drug variables. On background variables (age, race, gender, and education), the groups were almost identical. In a comparison of length of current sentence and number of previous felonies, there were only small, insignificant differences between the two groups. The average length of sentence for the treatment participants was 8.7 months compared with 7.9 months for those not in the program. The two groups were also compared on several drug variables—whether participants reported that they ever had a drug problem, the frequency of thoughts about drug use prior to coming to jail, whether their current offense was a drug offense, whether they had ever received drug treatment, and, if so, whether they had completed treatment. Next, the two groups were compared on family bonds—whether they had a partner and whether they were parents. Finally, they were compared on whether they had friends outside of jail who had an alcohol or drug problem. None of the differences were statistically significant. Thus, on 14 different attitude and behavioral variables, including age, criminal history, drug abuse, previous drug treatment, and family ties, the drug treatment graduates and the comparison group were similar.

The total sample had an age range from 18 to 51 years, and 89 percent were men. Only 12 percent were currently married, but 42 percent had a partner and 56 percent were parents. Seventy percent had graduated from high school, but only one of the 140 respondents had graduated from college. Ninety-one percent identified their race as white. The length of their latest sentence ranged from one month to three years, with a mean of 249 days (eight months).

An interview schedule was developed with 68 questions covering 10 key areas: background information; relationships; drug use; drug treatment; drug court and probation; employment and income; self-improvement; family members; recreation and friends; and housing. Those in

the treatment group were asked additional questions to get their evaluation of the program. The interview schedules included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face at the jail by one graduate assistant. He explained to all inmates that he was not affiliated with the jail and that participation was voluntary. All were told that the purpose of the study was to learn about their experiences regarding why they were in jail and what does and does not help prepare them for release. None of the inmates refused to participate. After each person signed the consent form, the interviews proceeded. The respondents readily shared their experiences, and their reports of drug use and crime were consistent with available information in their police and jail records.

The first interview was conducted in March 2005, and the last jail interview was conducted in September 2005. In December 2006, we began a systematic search of the jail and prison databases to identify the total number of bookings within the state for all participants since their release. All participants were required to remain within the state boundaries while they were on probation. Those whose initial interview was in March were tracked for 21 months, while those whose initial interview was in September were followed for 14 months. We were able to identify the criminal history of all the participants during the 14 to 21 months following their release from jail. The records included all arrests, specific charges, how many days they had spent in jail or prison, if any, and whether they had successfully completed probation.

Qualitative Study of 16 Parolees

The sample for this study consisted of 16 offenders who were involved in classes at a day reporting center in an intermountain state in the United States. All were former prisoners who had spent time in jail or prison and were required to attend the classes. The researchers attended classes at the center, explained that the purpose of the study was to understand adjustment after being in jail or prison, and asked for volunteers. The researchers emphasized that they had no formal association with the local Adult Probation and Parole office and that their objective was to gain a better understanding from parolees' experience of what does and does not help them adjust successfully.

Because the purpose of the research was to understand offenders' perceptions, sampling was intended to capture a range of voices and relevant experiences among offenders. Therefore, the results may not generalize to probationers and parolees in other areas. However, the findings provide a detailed view of the experiences and opinions of the offenders involved. The characteristics of those interviewed matched well with the composition of adult parolees in the state. There were 14 men and two women, their ages ranged from 25 to 48 years (median = 35), and all were white. Their offenses included assault, theft, driving under the influence, drug possession, and drug sales. All reported some type of drug or alcohol abuse in the past or present.

The interviews were conducted from January to August 2009 and were a guided conversation rather than a question-answer session. The interviewer brought up relevant topics while still allowing participants to speak their thoughts freely and comfortably. Interviews lasted from 30 to 90 minutes, and all were audio recorded with the exception of a jail interview, where audio recorders were not allowed.

During the interviews, participants were asked about pre-prison life, prison life, and experiences after prison. In the pre-prison section, participants were asked about their childhood and family life, how they got involved in crime, and the nature of their crimes. Then they were asked about their experiences in prison and how they were affected by them. Finally, they were asked about life after prison or jail, including major turning points, drug use, family, and employment. The interviewer explored what helped participants desist from crime as well as any problem areas.

This included questions about drug use, drug use attitudes, drug treatment, and how drug use affected them.

Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) was a large government-funded study of programs to improve criminal justice, employment, education, health, and housing outcomes for released prisoners. A multisite evaluation was conducted to determine whether individuals who participated in enhanced reentry programming had better outcomes than individuals who did not receive the programming. For this book, I analyze the SVORI data to estimate how a variety of variables are associated with reintegration success.

From 2004 to 2007, SVORI collected data on a total of 1,697 men and 357 women. For the multisite evaluation, program participants were selected from 12 states: Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Washington. Although the respondents were not a random sample of all inmates in the United States, their characteristics are similar to those of all U.S. prisoners who are being released (Petersilia, 2005). They tended to be young, uneducated, and minorities. The average age was 29 years for the men and 31 years for the women. Forty percent of the men and 38 percent of the women had not completed high school. Only 44 percent of the men and 38 percent of the women had a high school degree or GED, and only 0.5 percent of the men and 2 percent of the women had a college degree. Most (75 percent of the men and 57 percent of the women) had never been married, but 63 percent of the men and 83 percent of the women were parents. Fifty-three percent of the men and 41 percent of the women were African American. A profile of the SVORI respondents is given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Prisoners from SVORI

Variable	Men (<i>n</i> = 1,697)	Women (<i>n</i> = 3,57)
Age (mean, in years)	29	31
Education (%)		
Without high school degree	40	38
With high school degree/GED	44	38
With vocational/some college	15	23
With college degree	0.5	2
Race (%)		
White	34	44
African American	53	41
Other	13	16
Marital status (%)		
Never married	75	57
Married	10	14
Separated or divorced	15	29
Parental status (%)		
With a child	63	83
Without a child	37	17
Years incarcerated (mean)	2.5	1.7

Note: SVORI = Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative.

The data provide information on reentry for a relatively large number of men and women offenders. The information is particularly valuable because the participants were interviewed in prison (30 days before release) and again three, nine, and 15 months after release from prison. For a complete description of the study and sample, see Lattimore and Visher (2011).