



4-18-2023

Recidivism Rates in the United States versus Europe: How and Why are they Different?

Madalyn Hayden
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses



Part of the Finance and Financial Management Commons

Recommended Citation

Hayden, Madalyn, "Recidivism Rates in the United States versus Europe: How and Why are they Different?" (2023). *Honors Theses*. 3665.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/3665

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Recidivism Rates in the United States versus Europe: How and Why are they different?

Madalyn Hayden

Honors Thesis

Lee Honors College

Department of Finance and Commercial Law

Western Michigan University

April 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....1

 Problem Statement.....2

 Review of Related Studies.....2

 Purpose Statement and Research.....3

 Methods Overview.....4

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....4

 Incarceration.....4

 Recidivism.....6

 Europe.....10

 United States as a Whole.....12

 Jail is Not Effective.....15

 School-to-Prison Pipeline.....16

 What Can We Do?.....17

 States Who Have Tried New Programs.....20

 Michigan.....24

 Conclusion.....26

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....27

 Research Design, Approach, and Rationale.....27

 Population, Sample, and Setting.....27

 Instrumentation.....28

 Data Collection.....29

Institutional Review Board.....	30
Data Analysis.....	30
Delimitations and Limitations of the Study.....	30
Conclusion.....	31
CHAPTER IV: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS.....	31
Offenders.....	33
Mental Health.....	34
Socioeconomic Environment.....	37
Reintegration Programs.....	39
Criminal Justice System.....	40
Police.....	41
Bail.....	41
Sentencing.....	42
Specialty Courts.....	43
Juveniles.....	44
School-to-Prison Pipeline.....	45
Conclusion.....	47
CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS.....	47
CHAPTER VI: FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS.....	48
Reflection.....	48
Next Steps.....	50

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States makes up about five percent of the world's population, yet we make up 25% of the world's prisoners (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). This paper seeks to understand why and how incarceration and recidivism rates in the United States differ from our European counterparts, and the perceptions of these differences by professionals in the United States criminal justice system. The United States incarcerates citizens at a rate that is four to seven times higher than other developed Western nations (*The Problem, 2019*). There are many reasons why the United States has such a high rate of incarceration, but some of the biggest are the treatment of juveniles, Nixon's War on Drugs, and sentencing guidelines.

Tied into incarceration rates in the United States are recidivism rates. Recidivism rates are a good way to judge whether sentencing protocols and the prison system in a country are working. The United States has a current recidivism rate of 70% within 5 years (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). This means that, within 5 years of their release, 70% of prisoners will have reoffended. In comparison, Norway has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the world at 20% within 5 years. The biggest reason for this large difference in percentages is that the United States tends to focus on punishment in our criminal justice system, whereas European countries like Norway focus on rehabilitating their inmates. Another big reason is structural barriers that are present when a former inmate tries to reenter society.

Problem Statement

Just because incarceration and recidivism rates are high, however, doesn't mean that we can't do anything to change them. In the 1980s, Norway had recidivism rates that were similar to ours (Kirwin, 2022), but they worked to change their criminal justice system as a whole to get their rates down close to 20%. Many states are working towards reforming their criminal justice systems, and it's working. Michigan is one of them, and our recidivism rates have been declining steadily over the past three years, with a current recidivism rate of 23.6%

In order to address incarceration and recidivism rates in the United States, it is vital to understand the differences between the US and European countries criminal justice system and the steps taken to reduce rates. It is vital to gain an understanding of the differences in perception of these rates by professionals in the US criminal justice system, as well as causes of incarceration, recidivism, and efforts to reduce both.

Review of Related Studies

It is important to note that one of the biggest reasons that recidivism rates are high in the United States is because incarceration rates are high. Our criminal justice system relies on incarceration sentences instead of discretionary sentences like probation, community service, or specialty courts. Incarceration sentences are also much longer, on average, in the United States than in other developed countries (Deady, 2014). These long periods of incarceration lead to problems in a person's life that last much longer than just the time that they are incarcerated.

A high recidivism rate, like the 70% that we have in the United States, shows that a country's criminal justice system is just continuing the crime cycle. Although you may think that

a person's most recent crime would be important to look at when measuring whether or not someone is likely to recidivate after being released from incarceration, it's actually more important to look at their long-term criminal history. People whose most recent crimes were some sort of property crime were more likely to recidivate than those who had committed homicides (La Vigne, 2021). Mental health and psychology are two other big indicators of whether or not someone will recidivate. Some people's life is so bad outside of prison that they find it preferable, and others may feel that all hope is lost, and crime is their only option to survive another day. One big thing that we can do as a system to aid in lowering recidivism rates is aiding in prosocial integration by helping released inmates find jobs and housing (Butler & Taylor, 2022).

Criminal justice systems in Europe tend to focus on rehabilitating prisoners, rather than the punitive system that we have in the United States. This seems to lead to lower recidivism rates, and lower crime rates in general. In a lot of prisons in Europe, inmates are treated like humans, rather than criminals, and life mimics a normal life on the "outside" (Subramanian, 2021), with lots of autonomy. Norway, in particular, was able to revamp their criminal justice system, and as a country went from a 70% recidivism rate in the 1980s to a 20% recidivism rate today (Kirwin, 2022). Many states in the U.S. have started implementing programs like those we see in Norway, and they seem to be working thus far.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore why recidivism rates are so much higher in the United States than they are in Europe. The overarching research questions in this study are: Why are recidivism rates so high in the United States? What is different in the European

criminal justice system? What can we do to reform our criminal justice system in the United States and lower recidivism rates?

Methods Overview

To address my research questions, I conducted a basic qualitative study using a literature review, and then one-on-one in-depth interviews with seven people who currently work in or have experience with different areas of the criminal justice system. These people included police officers, corrections officers, prosecutors, judges, and teachers. I analyzed the data from these interviews and the details of the research design and methods are presented in Chapter III.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Incarceration

Recidivism rates wouldn't be high if incarceration rates weren't high, so it's important to focus on the United States' incarceration rate first. As a country, we have two million people in jail, which equates to about 737 out of every 100,000 people. The countries with the second and third highest incarceration rates are China, who has 1.5 million people incarcerated, and Russia, who have about 870,000 incarcerated. But these numbers aren't really comparable, because both China and Russia are known for having much harsher laws than the U.S. These include imprisoning journalists and political dissidents and laws against "gay propaganda" (*U.S. Prison Population*, 2019). To put these numbers in better context, Brazil and India are fourth and fifth in incarceration rates, having 370,000 and 330,000 incarcerated, respectively. Norway

is one of the lowest incarceration rates, having a rate of 55 people per 100,000 (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*).

We also have a very high juvenile incarceration rate in the U.S. The United States has the most imprisoned minors of any country, with 60,000 in juvenile detention and 95,000 in adult facilities, and over half of them will reoffend in adulthood (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). Juveniles who are sentenced to time in juvenile detention often have limited access to educational services, causing them to fall behind their peers and eventually leading to poorer life outcomes that include less educational success, worse familial and personal relationships, and less gainful employment (*Juvenile Delinquency, 2020*). Greater access to mental health resources like counseling and intervention can keep juveniles out of the prison system. The problem is these resources aren't always available or affordable when they are needed (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*).

The United States tends to rely on incarceration versus community service sentences for people at any age, but once a young person is in the juvenile system, the U.S. tends to rely on keeping them incarcerated as they get older – When a young person is arrested and sent to court, there is a one in three chance that they will be confined (*Youth Incarceration Rates, 2021*). Incarceration at a young age impacts people for the rest of their lives, causing lasting mental health problems and exponentially increasing the chances that they will recidivate after their release.

Another reason for high incarceration rates is because Americans are often imprisoned for crimes that wouldn't lead to prison sentences in other countries. Examples of these crimes would be passing bad checks, minor drug offenses, and some non-violent crimes (Deady, 2014).

A lot of these minor drug offenses and similar crimes weren't charged as they are today before the 1970s and President Nixon's War on Drugs. The War on Drugs instituted mandatory minimum prison sentences for all drug-related crimes. This means there is no room for judges to impose creative sentencing that would help offenders stay away from crime in the future. Since the inception of the War on Drugs in the 1970s, the prison population of the U.S. has increased 600%, while the population as a whole has only increased by 51% (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). The War on Drugs and its implications fail to address the root cause of drug crimes, because first time offenders are often given the exact same sentence as a repeat offender.

Prisoners in the U.S. are also often incarcerated for longer periods than other developed Western countries. On average, someone convicted of burglary in the United States would serve 16 months, while that same person in Canada would serve five months, and in England would serve seven months (Deady, 2014). The longer individuals are incarcerated, the greater the risk they face of having financial problems, or other problems when trying to reintegrate into society. These problems might include losing their shelter or job and developing mental health problems, which may create a reason for people to reoffend since they feel desperate to get by.

Recidivism

A country's recidivism rates tell us if their system is reforming people, or just continuing the crime cycle (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). The higher the rate, the more that their criminal justice system is perceived as just continuing the country's crime cycle. Recidivism is usually measured based on 5 years of release from prison, meaning that today's numbers would

measure people who got released in 2018. While it may seem that people who commit more serious crimes are more likely to recidivate, research in fact shows that the severity of an inmate's original offense is not indicative of the recidivism risk. According to the Council on Criminal Justice's study of prisoners released in 2012, those with original homicide convictions were least likely to recidivate, while those whose original crimes were property crimes were most likely (La Vigne, 2021). This means that it's more important to look at people's long term criminal history than their most recent offense.

There are many things that can cause high recidivism rates in a society. One of the biggest causes of a high recidivism rate is a negative societal reaction to imprisonment. When society has a discriminatory or stigmatized attitude towards prisoners, it makes it harder for those prisoners to integrate back into society after being released. Along these same lines, a person's social environment can cause them to recidivate. People are almost always released back into the same social environment that they were living in when they committed their initial crime. These environments are often riddled with social deprivation and unemployment, or otherwise areas of poverty (Nickerson, 2022), so they aren't exactly environments conducive to rehabilitating ex-prisoners. According to differential association theory, developed by Edwin Sutherland in 1939, criminal behavior is learned through interaction with others. Specifically, criminality is learned through interaction with intimate personal groups, like a person's friends and family (Brookes, 2021).

Another cause of recidivism rates lies in psychology and mental health. The prison system in the United States doesn't address the psychological problems prisoners often have that caused them to commit a crime in the first place (Nickerson, 2022). As far as prisoners'

mental health conditions are concerned, they often leave worse off than when they arrived (Deady, 2014). Tying these causes together, there are a lot of problems in life outside prison that can cause a person to reoffend when they are released from prison. In fact, prison is preferable to life outside for some criminals. In prison, they have guaranteed companionship, food, and shelter that they may not have outside (Nickerson, 2022).

In Michigan, Governor John Engler, who served from 1991 to 2003, “closed almost all state mental health institutions in his quest to cut fiscal spending and to balance the budget” during his tenure (Shelton, 2018). This has created a long-lasting problem for people in our communities with mental health issues, no matter how big or small. One reason that the hospitals haven’t been reinstated is because “the mentally ill, like the poor, have no lobbyists to send to Washington or to state capitals to plead or persuade those that sit in political halls of power” (Shelton, 2018). Someone needs to speak on behalf of these mentally ill prisoners, and nobody wants to, so until they do, we won’t have an improvement in mental illness in jails and in society as a whole.

One nationally recognized organization in Oakland County, Michigan that was created to help people in the community who suffer from substance abuse and mental illness leading to suicide is called Common Ground. It is a “24-hour crisis services agency dedicated to helping youths, adults, and families in crisis” and they “provide professional and compassionate service to more than 80,000 people each year” (*About Us*, 2022). This is a wonderful resource, and if more like this could be available, it would help, but wouldn’t solve completely, the problem that was created by Governor Engler.

As far as our country is concerned, there are a couple policies that may lead to a higher recidivism rate. First, we have less evenly distributed wealth than other countries, caused by lower tax rates. Less taxes collected means less universal social services, like welfare systems, are offered for citizens (Deady, 2014). As previously established, mental health is a big problem for our society as a whole, and mental illness can be a huge driver for criminality. Strong welfare systems can also reduce poverty and inequality, which are two other key drivers of criminality. Our criminal justice system also places a heavy emphasis on punishment rather than rehabilitation. The end goal in European prisons is for inmates to be better citizens upon release (Deady, 2014), whereas in the United States it is to make sure they have been punished for his or her crimes.

Another problem we have is a lack of resources and connection to resources that aid in prosocial reintegration after prison (Butler & Taylor, 2022). When people leave prison, they rarely have any education or vocational training and have little to no money, so cannot find a job or afford housing. The unemployment rate of formerly incarcerated people is over 27% in the United States, which is higher than the U.S. employment rate has ever been, even during the Great Depression (Butler & Taylor, 2022). If we as a country or criminal justice system could set up a prison to job pipeline, people would be set up better for a life after release. This again ties back into the societal reaction to people with a criminal record. If business owners automatically look away from applicants with criminal records, they won't be able to find a way to make a living, which eventually circles back into a life of crime.

Europe

The European criminal justice system is starkly different from ours in the United States. The biggest difference is that in Europe, there is a heavy focus on rehabilitation of prisoners rather than punishment. The goal of the European criminal justice system is humane treatment and decency towards prisoners (Kirwin, 2022). They try to teach inmates new skills and train them while they are locked up, so that they are better off when they come out of prison (*U.S. Prison Population*, 2019). Another difference of the criminal justice systems as a whole is that in most European countries, the maximum age for people to be considered juveniles is higher. In Germany, for example, individuals are considered juveniles up to the age of 21 (Subramanian, 2021). For context, the majority age for juveniles in most states is either 17 or 18. This higher maximum age allows for creative sentencing for juveniles, whose brains are not developed, and often cannot comprehend the severity of what crime they have committed and its consequences.

A large case in the study of the European criminal justice system is Halden Prison in Norway, which is known as the most humane prison in the world (Subramanian, 2021). It is pretty much at the complete opposite extreme as prisons in the U.S. According to research done by the Brennan Center for Justice and Ram Subramanian, the prison is operated on the principle that conditions of confinement shouldn't be punitive or onerous, and the aim of incarceration should be to enable smooth reintegration into society after prison. Life in this prison is organized around the promotion of safety, well-being, and personal development. Their goal is for life inside prison to mimic life on the outside so that they are able to reintegrate more easily. Prisoners are encouraged to maintain healthy measure of autonomy

while in the prison; They cook their own meals, maintain contact with their family and friends, and can earn temporary leave from the prison.

Along with the prisoners being given autonomy, the staff in the prison helps to develop a respectful, supportive, communicative, and caring environment (Subramanian, 2021).

Wardens are lawyers, social workers, and mental health professionals; While this is informally true in United States' prisons, it's a lot more formal in Halden. Staff members are also encouraged to develop social relationships with prisoners, which establishes that respectful environment. Due to the environment and high degree of trust created in these prisons, aggression and physical violence are rare, and prisons are calm, quiet, and congenial (Subramanian, 2021). European prisons are more expensive short-term than US prisons, but the long-term cost is reduced because it stops persistent crime (Kirwin, 2022). Some might say that it's easy to keep a low recidivism rate if you've never had a high one, but Europe wasn't always like it is today. In the 1980s, Norway had recidivism rates that were upwards of 70% (Kirwin, 2022).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Norway had a criminal justice system much like ours in the United States. They "had been sending more people to prison, focusing on punishment and retribution" (Kirwin, 2022). But crime hadn't reduced, so they decided that "it [was] not enough to take them out of prison, we must take the prisoner out of them" (Kirwin, 2022). This changed mindset from retribution to rehabilitation has allowed Norway to drop their recidivism rates to be close to 20%.

United States as a Whole

The United States is on the complete opposite side of the spectrum from European countries like Norway. Not only is our recidivism rate closer to 70% compared to Norway's 20% (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*), but as a country, our criminal justice system places a big emphasis on punishment (Deady, 2014). This is emphasized both in how people are sentenced when they commit crimes, and how they are punished when they break the rules while in jail. Long jail and prison sentences and the taking away of basic rights, are ways that people in our society are punished for breaking the law. Solitary confinement is the biggest punishment that our prison system has for those who break the rules while incarcerated.

There is also a problem with the goals of the prison system. United States prisons are set up with the goals of custody and order. Furthermore, they are built on dehumanizing rituals that are designed to assert authority and control over prisoners, and inmates have their individuality stripped away (Subramanian, 2021). This emphasis on punishment, custody and order has an effect on inmates that lasts long beyond their time in jail.

The way that our prison system, and our society in general, is set up makes it hard for those who are incarcerated to reintegrate into society once they are released, for a variety of reasons. The first long-term impact of prison is that on a person's mental health. One thing that has a huge impact on mental health is solitary confinement, which is often used as a punishment for people who break the rules in prison. Solitary confinement can have long term negative mental health outcomes (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). For this reason, Canada completely eliminated the use of solitary confinement in their jails and prisons. Similarly, in Norway, solitary confinement is rarely used, and when it is, it's restricted to eight hours

(Subramanian). The problem is that “Unhealthy minds can’t make healthy choices” (Benecchi, 2021). Just like we wouldn’t expect someone with a broken leg to run a marathon, we can’t expect someone with a “broken” mind to make the best decisions for themselves and those around them. 37% of prisoners have been diagnosed with mental health conditions, and 66% of those prisoners report no form of mental health care received during incarceration (Benecchi, 2021). If people receive mental health care at any point in their lives or their journey through the criminal justice system, they are much less likely to commit or recommit crimes. “Our justice system has an obligation to prepare prisoners for a safe and successful reintegration, a process which starts with a healthy mind” (Benecchi, 2021).

Before the 1970s and Nixon’s War on Drugs, we as a country were comparatively more focused on rehabilitation than we are today (Benecchi, 2021). The War on Drugs refers to a government-led initiative that started in the 1970s, aiming to stop illegal drug use, distribution, and trade by dramatically increasing prison sentences for both drug dealers and users. It started with the signing of the Controlled Substances Act in 1970, calling for the regulation of certain drugs and substances (*War on Drugs*, 2019). The official “War on Drugs” was declared by Nixon in June of 1971, calling drugs “public enemy number one” (*War on Drugs*, 2019). A big part of Nixon’s initiative was the imposition of mandatory prison sentences for drug crimes. These mandatory minimum sentences leave no room for judges to use creative sentences that might help ensure that offenders get help to stay away from crime, such as probation or specialty courts (*U.S. Prison Population*, 2019). Another problem with mandatory minimum sentences is that they fail to address the root cause of the drug crimes, as first-time offenders can be sentenced the same as repeat offenders. There have, however, been some changes to

drug sentences in recent years. For example, in 2013, the United States Attorney General announced a change in the Department of Justice's policy wherein low-level, nonviolent drug offenders that have no ties to large-scale organizations won't be charged with drug crimes that carry mandatory minimum sentences (Deady, 2014).

One of the biggest problems with the War on Drugs was the motivation behind it. According to Nixon's domestic policy chief, John Ehrlichman, in a 1994 interview, the biggest motive was helping Nixon to earn another term in office. Ehrlichman said that the Nixon campaign had two enemies "the antiwar left and black people" (*War on Drugs*, 2019). Basically, the motivation behind the War on Drugs was to get the public to associate hippies (the antiwar left) with marijuana and Blacks with heroin, "and then criminalize them both heavily, we could disrupt those communities" (*War on Drugs*, 2019). Since the start of the War on Drugs, the prison population in the United States increased by over 600%, while our population has only increased by 51% (*U.S. Prison Population*, 2019).

Exacerbating this emphasis on punishment created by the War on Drugs, sociologist Robert Martinson wrote "What Works?" in 1974. In this paper, Martinson and his colleagues coined the "nothing works" doctrine. The doctrine basically said that rehabilitation programs are a waste of time and money, and the only thing that works is punishment through prison. But the interesting thing about Martinson is that he had real life experience in these conditions; He was a Freedom Rider who was incarcerated in the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman while he was in graduate school (*Robert Martinson*, n.d.). One reason he said that rehabilitation programs don't work is because "it is difficult to treat persons who do not wish to be treated", and that various treatment approaches have "no fundamental effect on

recidivism” (*Robert Martinson, n.d.*). As far as what types of programs he looked at, Martinson noted that parole was “almost a Machiavellian attempt” by offenders to “get out”, and psychological counseling was nothing more than “a good way to pass the time” (*Robert Martinson, n.d.*). Martinson did say that some programs do work, but only if the person in the program wants to change.

Our prison systems here in the United States aren’t the worst in the world, which are in countries like China and Russia, but there is still a lot of room for improvement (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). Most prisons in the U.S. are for-profit, which means that they are privately operated instead of government funded. One big problem with for-profit prisons is that prison owners/operators can cut corners where inmate care is concerned to boost their own profits (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). For-profit prisons are run like businesses because they are businesses in that sense. There is little incentive for wardens to rehabilitate inmates because that would harm their business model and cause them to lose money (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). It is estimated that \$80 billion per year is spent on 6,125 public and private prisons in the United States, not including military prisons or immigrant detention facilities (*U.S. Prison Population, 2019*). A majority of this money comes from taxpayer money, with Michigan taxpayers spending nearly half a billion dollars on jails annually (*Michigan Joint, 2020*). If we could use this money towards rehabilitative programs and mental health resources, perhaps we would be better off as a country.

Jail is not Effective

One thing that emerged from the literature review is that jail, at least the way that it is used here in the United States, is not effective, and its negative effects are lasting. In general,

jail worsens the individual labor market outcomes and increases reliance on government assistance (*Michigan Joint*, 2020). Where jail sentences are concerned, the value of temporary incarceration must be balanced against an individual's constitutional liberty interest and research showing that even temporary incarceration can increase likelihood of future criminal activity (*Jail Reform*, 2022). Where pre-trial incarceration is concerned, low-income families often forced to make difficult financial choices to pay for bail or lawyer costs (forgo paying rent, buying groceries). Detaining a defendant for more than 3 days means that they are more likely to experience residential difficulties such as losing their home, and their children are more likely to experience negative effects from their parent being gone from the home. Additionally, pre-trial Incarceration increases the likelihood of a defendant pleading guilty & receiving a jail sentence. In fact, research shows that low-risk defendants who are detained before their trial are five times more likely to be convicted and sentenced to jail time (*Michigan Joint*).

Available research consistently shows that jail sentences are ineffective at reducing future offending. Some studies even indicate that jail sentences may increase criminal behavior (*Michigan Joint*, 2020). Research also shows that prison sentences less than 12 months are less effective at reducing crime than community sentences are. 64% of people who are sentenced to a prison term of less than a year will reoffend within a year of their release (Kirwin, 2022). If we use more specialized sentences, it is possible we'd be able to divert more prisoners away from reoffending and possibly recidivating when they are released from prison or jail.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The school-to-prison pipeline is a term used to describe the connection between exclusionary punishments in school like suspensions and expulsions, and involvement in the

criminal justice system (Bacher-Hicks, 2021). Many of these students have history of abuse, poverty, or neglect, and are punished from “zero-tolerance” policies in schools. For many students, this pipeline starts with inadequate resources in their public schools (American Civil Liberties Union, 2022). Many schools have overcrowded classrooms and a lack of teachers, and often insufficient funding for mental health resources like counselors. Zero-tolerance policies that have been embraced impose severe punishment, regardless of the circumstances. Examples of these punishments include expulsion for bringing nail clippers or scissors to school, and these overly harsh disciplinary policies push students down the pipeline (American Civil Liberties Union, 2022). Students that are punished with expulsion or even multiple suspensions can find themselves in juvenile detention facilities, and many of those provide few, if any, educational services. This makes it very hard for students to re-enter traditional schools after being released from juvenile detention centers, and a vast majority of students in the pipeline never graduate from high school, exacerbating the crime cycle (American Civil Liberties Union, 2022). The more years of school a student completes, as well as graduating from high school, reduces subsequent criminal activity (Bacher-Hicks, 2021), so it’s important for students to stay in school and to have incentives to stay in school.

What can we do?

The biggest thing that we as a country can do to try and lower our recidivism rates is to shift the goal of prison away from punishment and towards rehabilitation. There are many ways that we can do this. The first is to invest in mental health care and education opportunities for inmates. Research shows that prisoners who participate in education programs have 43% lower chance of being reincarcerated after release. It also shows that for every dollar spent on prison

education, the government, and in turn taxpayers, saves four to five dollars on costs of reincarceration (Benecchi, 2021). Education also shapes decision making abilities, so the more someone is educated, the more likely they are to make good decisions when released from prison.

Mental health is another big problem in prison communities that we can work to fix. Unfortunately, despite recent improvements, the criminal justice system struggles to meet the vast needs of the increasing number of inmates with mental health conditions (Stringer, 2019). The stress of surviving in prison can lead to depression and anxiety, and inmates often leave worse off mentally than when they arrived (Deady, 2014). One resource that can be introduced is teaching correctional officers trauma-informed care, as many prisoners with mental health conditions have histories of abuse that can lead to a sense of worthlessness and distrust of authority figures (Stringer, 2019). Another program that can be implemented is alternatives to hospitalization in the form of community-based treatment. With the use of outpatient competency restoration from private contractors, outpatient treatment centers, or community mental health systems, inmates with mental health issues can get more attention and help (Stringer, 2019), hopefully improving their mental health and in turn reducing their chances of committing a crime.

Another thing that we can do to reform our criminal justice system is to create a prison-to-work pipeline. There are three big parts to this. First, connect prisoners with job opportunities during and right out of prison. It is proven that prisoners who have a job during incarceration are taught valuable skills and are 24% less likely to recidivate when released (Benecchi, 2021). It is very hard for people with a criminal record to find a job, and when people

have no income, it exacerbates the crime cycle. Formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate over 27%. For context, that is higher than the US unemployment rate has ever been, even during the Great Depression, when it was about 25% (Butler, 2022). Setting people up with jobs helps them to rebuild their lives as much as possible and reintegrate into society after leaving prison.

A second part of the prison to work pipeline is lowering license restrictions in the states. Research shows that the states with the strictest licensing requirements (age, criminal record, etc.) tend to have the highest recidivism rates, and there are more than 20,000 licensing restrictions on those with criminal records nationwide (Benecchi, 2021). Again, the harder it is for people to find jobs after prison, the more likely they are to commit crimes to make a living. The third part of the pipeline that ties everything together into reintegration is for states to pass anti-discrimination laws in housing and employment. If people cannot find jobs or housing, they are almost forced to commit crimes to survive. An example of a company who has dropped all discrimination from their hiring process is Greyston Bakery in New York.

Greyston Bakery has an open hiring policy to “create meaningful job opportunities for those who have experienced barriers to employment” (*Our Mission*, n.d.). They allow employees to prove their worth based on their work product rather than have preconceived notion based on their criminal record or other things that may create bias. Greyston Bakery has been using this open hire policy for over 40 years, and other companies have started to adopt similar policies. Policies like this can give people a chance to prove themselves and allow people to not be defined by their record, which is important if we want to change the stigma around criminals and criminal records in society.

A final thing that we can work on to help lower our recidivism rates is bail reform. Bail is an interesting concept in and of itself, as when you are charged with a crime you are still perceived to be innocent until proven guilty. Regardless, bail is usually something that is used to guarantee a person will return for their trial if they are released from jail before their trial takes place. But whether or not a person can afford bail depends on access to money, and the money bail system we've created "has morphed into one that perpetuates widespread wealth-based incarceration" and "the pretrial incarceration caused by unaffordable bail is the single greatest driver of convictions" (American Civil, 2022). If we can release more defendants on personal recognizance bond or some form of that, we can allow people to have freedom before they are convicted, and not lose all of their money in the process.

States who have tried new programs

The federal government, as well as many U.S. states, have begun implementing programs to start to shift the focus of their criminal justice systems to rehabilitation. One program that has been recently implemented in 15 states is the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. This data-based program is aimed at decreasing spending on corrections by reducing prison population and increasing public safety (Deady, 2014). States have used the data from the program to minimize the use of incarceration, better address underlying behavioral health needs, and identify opportunities for policy and practice changes that reduce disparities (*Justice Reinvestment, 2022*).

In March of 2017, the TRUE Program was instituted at Cheshire Correctional Institution in Connecticut. It takes 18–25-year-olds who are already in prison and matches them up with older prisoners who serve as mentors (Chammah, 2018). The program takes aim at juvenile

incarceration problems by trying to help kids in the age group that are most likely to end up in prison and recommit crimes while their brains aren't yet fully developed, so they are still receptive to change (Chammah, 2018). Through the program, inmates learn to deal with mental health problems, confront their pasts, resolve conflict through communication rather than violence, and master basic life skills such as budget management for when they are released. So far, violence has been curbed and nobody has recommitted crimes after release.

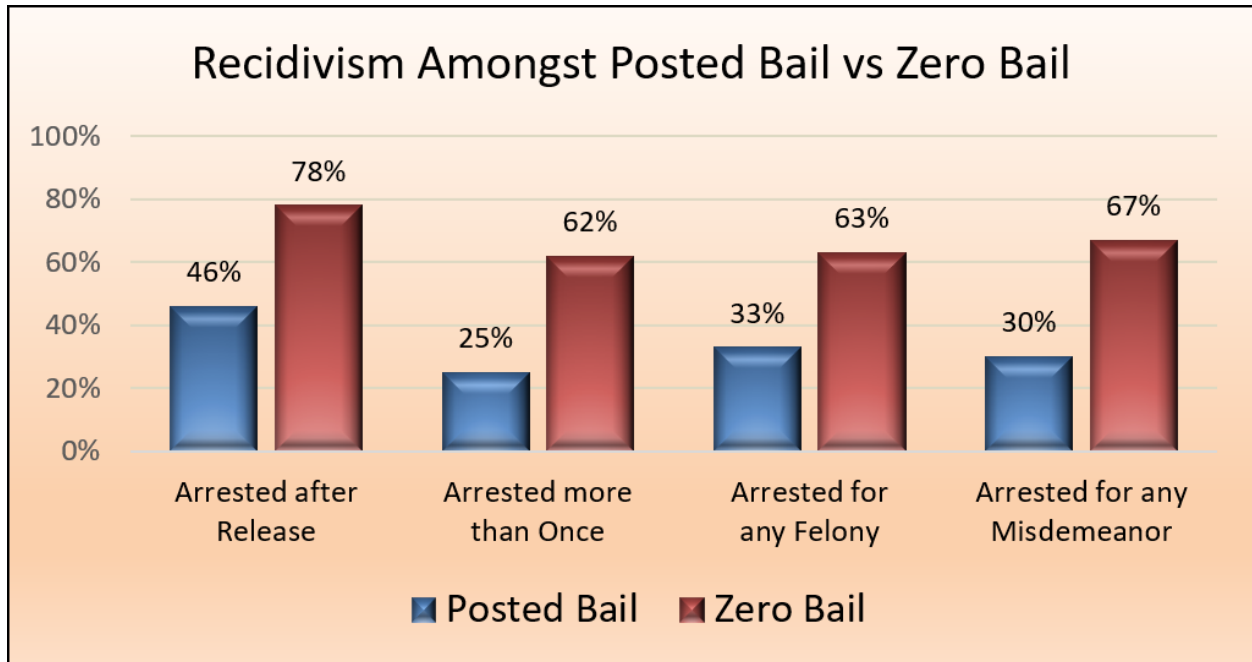
Since 2015, North Dakota has been trying to redesign their prisons to mimic those in Norway. In April of 2017, the North Dakota Senate passed Senate Bill 2015, which required every North Dakota county to explicitly offer alternatives to physical custody for offenders, including drug and alcohol treatment and home detention. As of 2019, the offering of these alternative programs led to a six and a half percent drop in the prison population (Janzer, 2019). They have shifted to a focus on dynamic security, which is a philosophy based on the idea that allowing people to make their own choices and giving them the opportunity to do better will lead to a safer prison, because a person who is treated humanely is less likely to be violent (Janzer, 2019).

At the Missouri River Correctional Center in Bismarck, inmates are called residents and they act like coworkers. Some inmates also live in what is called the Transitional Housing Unit, where they are given their own rooms with locking doors (Janzer, 2019). Again, this goes back to the idea in Norwegian prisons that they should build trust between inmates and guards. At the North Dakota State Penitentiary, they've also implemented some changes to help rehabilitate inmates. One big change is the change of solitary confinement to be called the Behavior Intervention Unit (BIU). When it was solitary confinement, inmates were in lockdown

for 23 hours a day during the week, 24/7 on weekends, for eight or nine months straight, and the return rate to solitary after being released was 42% (Janzer, 2019). Now solitary is only used for 10 of the most serious offenses, such as murder or weapons possession, making its use objective instead of subjective. Time in the BIU includes four and a half hours of programming per day, and report cards with improvement plans that give inmates specific skills they need to move out (Janzer, 2019). Most inmates placed in the BIU are released within 24 hours and if they stay past that, they're usually out within a few months. The return rate with the BIU is closer to 21% (Janzer, 2019).

In Los Angeles County (California), they've created a supportive housing program as a "halfway house" for inmates after they are released from prison. 86% of participants in this housing program had no new felony convictions after 12 months (TCR Staff, 2023). Another program in California is called The Last Mile in San Francisco, which offers a pathway into tech careers during the incarceration and release process (Butler, 2022). A big program that has come into play in California in 2020 is the "Zero Bail" program, which fights to offset the effect of cash bail on the poor and middle class. The program sets a required zero-dollar bail for all misdemeanor and low-level felonies (Hilton, 2020). The results of this program in Yolo County, CA were very surprising. As shown in the chart below, 70.6% of people released on zero-bail were rearrested (29% of those for violent crimes), and individuals released on zero bail were rearrested for 163% more crimes than those released on bail. More specifically, these defendants were rearrested for new felonies 90% more often and new misdemeanors 123%

more often (*Zero Bail, 2023*).



(Recidivism Amongst Posted Bail vs Zero Bail, 2023)

This graphic shows that, although good in theory, having no bail, and therefore no incentive for people to show up to court, does not work. We may still need bail reform to make the system more equal, but it should not be done in the form of zero-dollar cash bail.

At Hawkeye Community College in Iowa, they implemented the Pathways to Education and Employment for Reentry (PEER) Program. The program gives resource referrals, educational and career counseling, and hands-on job training to help inmates reintegrate into society after being released from prison (Butler, 2022). In Washington, D.C., the EZ Street Music Industry Academy helps reentrants connect back into society through exploring creative artistry in music, visual and performance arts, media production (Butler, 2022). These programs, and more, are all great ways that our society is moving towards a rehabilitative criminal justice system and will hopefully help us continue lowering our recidivism rates.

Michigan

As a state, Michigan has a recidivism rate of 23.6%, which is the 4th best in the nation, and has been declining for 3 years (Michigan Department of Corrections, n.d.). Our current director of the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), Heidi Washington has served as the MDOC Director since July of 2015. Washington has put a big focus on providing inmates with educational, vocational, and therapeutic programs to provide them with vital documents before release and give people the tools they need for success upon release (Michigan Department of Corrections, n.d.). Michigan is doing a great job as a state with implementing rehabilitative sentences, with the sixth highest rate of people on community supervision (probation or parole) in the country (*Jail Reform*, 2022). Washington also wants to take a more active role with parolees, helping them understand their risks and needs, helping them build new skills to change their behavior (Michigan Department of Corrections, n.d.).

One program in Michigan that was first implemented in 2016 is Vocational Village, of which there are currently two in the state. The purpose of the program is to house individuals who share the common goal of improving their lives through education in trades together, creating a more positive environment that promotes cooperative discussions, study sessions and leisure time activities (Michigan Department of Corrections, n.d.). 66% of students who have paroled out of the Vocational Village program have successfully found employment in their field, creating a valuable prison-to-work pipeline as well. The program has also helped lower recidivism rates for those who participated, with only a 2% recidivism rate for the first 500 graduates (O'Dell, 2022).

Like the North Dakota Senate, Governor Whitmer passed an Executive Order in 2019 (EO 2019-10) that expanded alternatives to jail, and then followed this up with EO 2021-5 in April of 2021, which created the Michigan Jail Reform Advisory Council, established to ensure successful implementation of the laws and reforms passed in the few years prior (*Jail Reform, 2022*). The Jail Reform Advisory Council gave many recommendations and helped to pass many acts, one of which being the Holmes Youthful Trainee Act. Passed April 2021, this act allows offenses to be dismissed from record if they were committed before the age of 26 and the defendant successfully completes court requirements (the previous age was 24) (*Jail Reform, 2022*).

Another task force that researched the effects of jail was the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration, who released their report in January of 2020. Their biggest recommendation to the criminal justice system of Michigan was to impose more sentences of alternatives to jail, especially for non-serious misdemeanors and others who can be managed in the community (*Michigan Joint, 2020*). Another recommendation they gave was for judges and magistrates to individualize bail, because several studies found that money bail is not more effective than release on recognizance for low-risk defendants (*Michigan Joint, 2020*). Since even short periods of incarceration can increase the risk of future criminal behavior, it is important not to incarcerate people when it isn't necessary, especially before they are convicted of the crime which they are charged with committing. Another big problem that the task force found was the mental health problem our society faces. Local estimates suggest that around 25% of people entering jail have serious mental illnesses (*Michigan Joint, 2022*). Mental health problems are more pronounced in rural counties (closer to 1/3) because treatment and

resources are less readily available. The research also found that people who were experiencing mental health problems tended to stay in jail for longer periods of time.

A third thing that the Jail Reform Task Force focused on was the crimes that people are incarcerated for. In 2018, driving without a valid license was the third most common reason to go to jail in Michigan, and traffic offenses made up 50% of all criminal cases (*Jail Reform, 2022*). That would include driving without insurance, driving with a suspended license, or In Michigan, crime rates have dropped to 50-year lows, but the amount of people in county jails has almost tripled in less than 40 years; In 1975, the average daily jail population was 5700, in 2017 it was 16000 (*Jail Reform, 2022*). The population is split evenly between pretrial and convicted detainees. In a sample from 20 jails across the state that represented about half of the jail population, the most common offense at admission was operating under the influence, and people that were on their second (or higher) time being admitted to jail accounted for about two-thirds of the population.

Conclusion

Several themes emerged from this literature review such as the fact that we incarcerate at a very high rate in the United States, we spend a lot more tax dollars on punishment than rehabilitation, and there is a very large mental health crisis that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. I was able to take a lot of the information learned here into the interviews I conducted with members of our criminal justice system here in Michigan. It is clear from the literature that mental health is a huge problem in our country that needs to be addressed. Additionally, introducing more opportunities for creative sentencing might allow us to continue

lowering our incarceration and recidivism rates. Overall, the literature suggests a need to rehabilitate people rather than just punishing them so that they're able to successfully reintegrate into society.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I utilized basic qualitative research methods to examine the recidivism rates in the United States, and how they compare to those in European countries. I began this study by conducting a thorough literature review, and then through one-on-one interviews with professionals from different areas of the criminal justice system. My analysis focuses primarily on the United States prison systems, with small comparisons to systems in Norway and other European countries.

Research Design, Approach, and Rationale

Quantitative research “provide[s] reliable and valid data that can be used to inform decision-making and improve understanding of the world around us” (Hassan, 2022).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to gather details about human behavior, emotions, values, and motivations that aren't easily quantifiable, which is why interviews were the best choice for this part of the research.

Population, Sample, and Setting

There are many different jobs that make up the criminal justice system, and a large number of people who work in these jobs. For this study, the population I drew my sample from were people who have worked in the criminal justice system in Michigan in some capacity

for at least five years. Inclusion criteria for this sample consisted of adults (over the age of 23) who have worked in the criminal justice system for at least the past five years or were a teacher in the public school system. The reason for the minimum age requirement is because they needed to have worked in the criminal justice system for at least the last five years, so if one was 18 when they entered the workforce in the criminal justice system, they would be 23 today. The reason for interviewing public school teachers was to be able to see the influence of the school-to-prison pipeline on the criminal justice system.

The sampling strategy I used to find participants for this study was using personal contacts. I was able to get into contact with a district court judge, a prosecutor, and a correctional officer turned court officer who all work in Lansing, Michigan through my professional experience in an internship from Spring 2022. I also interviewed three police officers who have experience working in Detroit, Troy, and West Bloomfield. Finally, I interviewed a special education teacher from Holly to learn more about the school-to-prison pipeline and how family members can influence crime.

Instrumentation

For this study, the primary method of data collection was through reading through articles and research done on incarceration rates and recidivism rates. I started by searching for peer reviewed articles from the past five years on Google Scholar with terms including “recidivism rates in the United States” and “incarceration rates in the United States”. This turned up many articles that included comparisons of both recidivism and incarceration rates in the United States and European countries, which made my researching a lot easier. I went on to research recidivism in Michigan through searching information on the Michigan.gov website

with search terms like “recidivism” and was able to find an article that talked about the improving recidivism rates in Michigan, and why they are improving. Finally, I went back to Google Scholar and searched “Why are recidivism rates so high in the United States?” and was able to find articles talking about how some states are working on improving their recidivism rates and how other states can take notes to improve theirs. I then took the information I had learned from my literature review into conducting interviews with professionals in the criminal justice system.

The secondary method of data collection for this study was face-to-face interviews with individuals who have observed recidivism and its causes in their careers. Qualitative researchers ask open-ended questions, structure their interviews around several focal questions, and create comfortable environments for their interviewees (Clifford, n.d.). Interview questions were primarily focused on recidivism rates in Michigan, due to the fact that everyone interviewed has worked in Michigan for the entirety of their careers. They focused on issues that addressed the research questions and provided demographic information.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study included in-depth interviews designed to explore the experiences of those who have worked in the criminal justice system in Michigan. Interviews were scheduled for 30–45-minute blocks and took place at a mutually agreed upon location to achieve a conversational atmosphere. Two of these interviews took place via phone, one via Zoom, and four in person. The interviews were semi-structured, with prepared open-ended questions and prompts that guided the conversation but had the flexibility to adapt based on the flow of the conversation. Each conversation was recorded and then transcribed. I

transcribed the interviews to become more immersed in the data. Though the interviews were audiotaped, I also kept notes on my laptop to note interesting comments and organize prompts and follow-up questions.

Institutional Review Board

Following the approval of my study from my thesis committee, I gained permission to conduct my study by the Western Michigan University (WMU) Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). The people that I interviewed are not considered to be part of a vulnerable population because they are not under any constraints that may affect their ability to give voluntary, informed consent. I also completed the required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) modules, which added more credibility to the study.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used basic descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis looks at what has happened in the past. Further, I used data aggregation, which is “the process of gathering data and presenting it in a summarized format”; It provides an overview of the wider dataset (Stevens, 2022). I then took this data and used it to create open-ended questions to conduct the qualitative study through one-on-one interviews. After the interviews were complete, I used an emergent strategy to analyze the data and find themes throughout it. To ensure the data was accurately captured, I recorded and then transcribed each interview.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study mainly focused on recidivism in the United States, with small comparisons to the European criminal justice system. There were a few limitations to this study. Firstly, I was only able to interview people from Michigan, and did not include interview

data from professionals in European criminal justice systems. Also, data analysis was only from interviews and had a small sample size. If I was able to have a larger sample size with some professionals from Europe, I may have been able to get a better idea of why the European criminal justice system is different, and if they knew anything about the United States system.

Conclusion

This study used a basic qualitative study to collect data about recidivism rates and incarceration rates in the United States and Europe, and then used semi-structured interviews to gather information about these rates and why there might be discrepancies in numbers between the U.S. and Europe through personal experiences of criminal justice system employees. Data collection began with analyzing of peer-reviewed articles, and then continued with one-on-one interviews. Interview transcripts were recorded and transcribed and then analyzed to find recurring themes.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

For the interview portion of this study, I interviewed seven different professionals from different areas of the criminal justice system. I interviewed three police officers, Commander Busen, Officer Irwin, and Officer Stout. Commander Chris Busen, who deployed into the army at the age of 18, and then worked for the Birmingham (MI) Police Department, working his way from a patrolman to the Commander of the Birmingham Investigative Division over his 28 years of service. Officer Ian Irwin started out in the Detroit Police Department, worked there for three years, then worked in the Birmingham Police Department for a year and a half, and now works at the Milford Police Department, where he has worked for the last year. Officer

Christopher Stout worked at the Troy Police Department for 26 years, the Birmingham Police Department for five years, and now has worked at the Milford Police Department for the last two years. I also interviewed Andrea Lacey, who was a defense attorney in St. Clair County and Wayne County for four years each and has worked at the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office since 2021, doing mostly state prosecution, and now for the past year has done delinquency and neglect cases. Another person I interviewed who works in the court system is Chief Judge Stacia Buchanan, who works in 54-A District Court in Lansing. She has worked as a Judge for 54-A District Court for the past five and a half years, and before that worked as a defense attorney for 14 years. While working as a defense attorney, she did about 80% indigent (public) defense. Nick Bigelow also works at 54-A District Court, but as a court officer for Judge Simmons. He has worked in this position for three years, and before that he worked as a corrections deputy at Ingham County jail for three years. He is also working towards his degree in criminal justice with an emphasis in youth development at Michigan State University. The final person I interviewed was Kerry Katsef, who is currently a special education teacher at an elementary school in Holly, MI. Before she worked in Holly, she worked in the West Bloomfield School District. To start her career, she lived in Maryland, and taught in a residential setting for inner city and suburban kids.

One question that I asked every person I interviewed was whether they felt that we, as a country, have an epidemic of mental health issues. Every time I asked the question, I was met with a resounding "yes", and long-winded answers about why we need more resources for mental health. One open-ended question I asked was why people committed crime. Again, I was given similar answers from every interviewee, usually having to do with family life or

socioeconomic circumstances. A third question I asked, that was also open-ended, was what things we could do to improve recidivism as a country. Most people brought up mental health resources, but there was a difference in opinion when talking about prison-to-job pipelines, vocational and educational training and if they would help. Through completing these interviews, there were six major themes that emerged through every interview: There are different types of offenders; Mental health is a huge problem in the United States; A person's socioeconomic environment contributes to whether or not they commit crimes; Reintegration programs can help with rehabilitation of prisoners; There are areas to improve in all aspects of our criminal justice system; There is a large percentage of juveniles in the criminal justice system.

Offenders

One of the most important things I learned through my interviews is that every offender is not equal. Like Officer Christopher Stout stated, "just like I'm a police officer and my sister is an accountant, some people are criminals as a career" because they don't know any different of a life. In my interview with 54-A District Court Judge Stacia Buchanan, she said there are two categories of offenders in our criminal justice system. The first is domestic violence offenders and those who commit other assaultive offenses. These people recidivate because they have an ingrained belief that they need to have power and control over their domestic partner. On the other hand, there are those convicted of crimes resulting from drug use, mental illness, and poverty. These people commit additional controlled substance offenses or theft offenses to get money to pay for drugs and other things. An example of this would be that someone might commit a robbery to get money to pay for drugs, or someone hasn't been able to work, so they

steal to get food or housing. As a system, we are not effectively changing the second group of people's life circumstances so that they are able to get back on their feet and change their lives (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023).

Going along with this notion that not every person in jail is the same is the idea that "not every offender that gets sent to prison is violent, [and] not everyone has committed a horrible crime like murder; Not everybody that's in jail should be in jail" (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023). These people that shouldn't be in jail are often committing crimes because of their addictions and mental health problems. Society can add to these mental health problems through the labeling of people who have been charged with crimes as a criminal. Labeling somebody as a criminal based off of one bad decision isn't a good thing and can affect them long term. For example, someone who gets convicted of drinking and driving isn't necessarily a criminal, they may just have a substance abuse problem; Someone who doesn't register their dog may have been charged with a crime, but they're not really a criminal. On a more severe level, the label of 'felon' by society mentally affects a person too. "People think 'I'm a felon, I'm not getting a job, I gotta provide and feed myself somehow', so they commit crimes again, selling drugs to get money or whatever" (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023).

Mental Health

Probably the two biggest things I learned throughout my research and my interviews were that as a country, the United States has a mental health problem, and we don't have enough mental health resources to combat that problem. In fact, Officer Christopher Stout of the Milford police department said that mental health has probably been the thing that has

changed the most in his 32 years of police work. He said that when he first started as an officer in Birmingham (MI), he would go on mental health calls every couple weeks or once a month. By the time he left his second job in Troy (MI), it was more like four a day.

When talking to Kerry Katsef, a special education teacher to students with emotional disabilities in Holly, Michigan, she noted that “there are no places for these poor, struggling kids to go to. The therapists are booked, there’s no room, they don’t have time to fit people in” (K. Katsef, personal communication, March 13, 2023). Additionally, the resources that we do have available are strictly controlled by insurance companies and their rules. Katsef has run into doctors who have told her ‘Insurance won’t let them stay longer, but we feel like, as medical professionals, as doctors, they need to stay longer, but we can’t keep them’. We should be giving people the opportunities to get better so that they can be the best versions of themselves, and insurance companies shouldn’t be allowed to have a bigger say in these matters than actual medical professionals.

Another problem with mental health in our country is that there aren’t enough medical professionals to provide help to those who need it. Due to this, people like corrections officers and court employees are charged with trying to help inmates or defendants with mental health but they aren’t professionals and have to deal with these problems based purely on their experiences. As Nick Bigelow, who has worked both as a corrections deputy in Ingham County Jail and a court officer for 54-A District Court, said “mental health professionals should be the ones that help people with mental health” (N. Bigelow, personal communications, March 2, 2023).

One thing that was emphasized in my interviews was that a lot of the time, people who are constantly committing crimes and recidivating have some form of mental health issue(s). Mental health issues perpetuate a lot of problems in our society, crime included. “People are struggling to function, which is why they’re homeless, which is why they then shoplift, that kind of thing” (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023). Since a majority of people in the criminal justice system have mental health issues, “Sometimes jails are viewed as mental health hospitals, and they shouldn’t be” (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023).

Connected with the mental health problem in our country is a drug and alcohol addiction problem. Addiction can also lead to incarceration and recidivism, and it’s very cyclical. A lot of people getting out of jail are homeless, because they can’t get a job, because they’re dealing with addiction. If we can help rehabilitate people so they can beat their addiction while they are in jail, society will be better off for it.

As far as the resources available in Michigan for mental health, there are no long-term mental health facilities in Michigan, so most of the time people can only be held on a 72-hour psychiatric hold. This is because in the 1990s, Michigan governor John Engler shut down all of the long-term mental hospitals, leaving no way to “funnel people out of the criminal justice system that don’t belong in it” (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023). If “we had the right funding today and could open those facilities and treat mental health problems properly” maybe we would live in a different world, “but it’s a matter of who wants to talk about it, and nobody wants to talk about it” (I. Irwin, personal communication, March 6, 2023). There are, however, a few resources for those inside and outside the prison system.

One resource in Oakland County, Michigan is called Common Ground. It's a crisis center created specifically for mental health problems, with an in-person center as well as a call center where people can get help. However, because it is a small facility with lack of funding, they have some things that they could improve to help more people. One problem is that they limit the requirements to get in. This means that people who come in for help "can't be under the influence" (I. Irwin, personal communication, March 6, 2023). This can be a problem because a lot of times, mental health problems are exacerbated by alcohol or drug use. People also get turned away if they're no longer in crisis. For example, "kids in crisis will go there and once they get there, their blood pressure has dropped since the police picked them up from my classroom, so Common Ground won't evaluate them" (K. Katsef, personal communication, March 13, 2023). Again, this is a problem because how is someone supposed to get help if they can only be evaluated mid-crisis?

Another program in the MDOC is the Comprehensive Addiction Treatment Services (CATS) program. The program helps incarcerated individuals better themselves through addiction and mental health treatment. However, the main program is only operated from nine to five on weekdays. So, if "someone was suicidal, [we] moved them to an observation cell, [and] had to contact the CATS director and then wait, and if the director wasn't available, we [corrections officers] would have to observe [the inmate]" until they could get in contact with the director (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023).

Socioeconomic Environment

"Socioeconomic factors [living environment, social groups] probably account for 90% of why [police] see people" in the system (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023).

This statistic is crazy, but true. The environment that a person grows up in and lives in, as well as the people they surround themselves with, creates a majority of the reason why they do what they do, whether it's because of socioeconomic factors, or in spite of them. But research shows that people whose parents commit crimes are more likely to commit crimes themselves. "They're brought up in that lifestyle, and they perceive it as a way to basically earn a living" (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023), "if your entire family lives a certain lifestyle, then it's going to be difficult to be different from them" (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023). Additionally, the environment someone grows up in may make it hard for them to reintegrate into society after being released from jail. "When they grow up in a terrible environment that's all they know, so they're not gonna come right out of jail and they're immediately the general manager of a bank and live in this 5-story mansion" (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023), but they can work up to that level if we help them.

The environment you grow up in and leave jail to are important, but so is the environment that inmates are surrounded by when they are in jail. In fact, "most criminals are probably worse off when they come out of jail, and more proficient criminals, than when they came in, because they're hanging out with people who have committed crimes and are likely learning how to commit other crimes" (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023). If we want people to come out of jail better than they went in, we should foster a positive, learning environment while they are incarcerated.

Reintegration Programs

One way that we, as a society, can help those who are leaving prison be successful is through reintegration programs. We need to “Have backend program[s] to help [inmates] when they come out of jail” (I. Irwin, personal communication, March 6, 2023). If we don’t set people up for success out of jail, “they go back to what they know and all they know is survival mode, trying to commit crimes to provide for their family, like theft, they steal to provide and that’s all they know, so they go back to doing that” (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023), adding to recidivism.

One important thing is the creation of housing programs, sometimes known as “halfway housing”. “If you don’t have housing, you’re going to go stay on a friend’s couch, who’s probably a friend you knew before you got clean, so they have drugs and are doing drugs, or you are going to stay with a family member who puts you in the same situation, especially because addiction runs in families” (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023). There is currently a housing crisis in Lansing, which means that there is not enough affordable housing in the city. Not only does this create a problem for the average middle- and lower-class person, but it also affects people getting out of jail when they are trying to find somewhere new to live. Judge Buchanan recounts a time that she “had a man in court, he had been evicted five years ago, and he still [couldn’t] get a reputable landlord to rent to him today. He end[ed] up renting from not good landlords, or staying with people he shouldn’t be staying with, perpetuating his time in the system”. It has been recognized that this is a problem, and there is currently reform in the Michigan legislature to help people clean evictions off their records, similar to the expungement of criminal offenses.

Another thing that would help immensely is the creation of a prison-to-job pipeline, and setting people up with the skills and opportunities they need to succeed outside of prison. The biggest obstacle to creating a prison-to-job pipeline is finding employers who are willing to hire people with a criminal record. “We can give [people] really good training in custody, but if we don’t have a reentry program where we have employers that we know we can send them to, who are willing to accept people who have been recently incarcerated” (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023), they can’t put those skills into practice. Although you may not think it would be true, it’s actually harder for a person with a shoplifting or minor embezzlement conviction to get hired than someone with a domestic violence conviction, because it’s harder for employers to trust them around money or assets. Additionally, a majority of employers who take people with records are in industries that tend to be permitting them to go back to using, like construction, which isn’t good for their reentry. It’s important to note that setting people up with jobs wouldn’t help everyone, “just like in college everyone doesn’t get all A’s” (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023). Just like with anything, people have to put in effort for it to work, but if we as a system can set them up with a job, we can at least give them the first step to success.

Criminal Justice System

There are many areas in the criminal justice system, all of which can be improved to help those with criminal convictions both inside and outside of the prison system. Once you get into the system, it’s hard to get out, especially since the system is not necessarily set up to help you. “Our criminal justice system is not set up to rehabilitate people, it’s set up as a punishment” (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023).

Police

Police officers are tasked with many jobs besides just simply stopping crime, so we would benefit from giving officers more advanced training in things like mental health. But, “a lot of times people are programmed to think police are the enemy, so having someone else there to help is good and gets everyone’s desired outcome” (C. Stout, personal communication March 6, 2023). One program that has already been implemented in many jurisdictions is having social workers present to go on mental health calls with police officers. There are two big reasons why this is a beneficial program. First of all, people are intimidated by police officers, so having someone else there can be helpful for both parties. Second, while police officers have experience with mental health, they aren’t professionally trained in mental health care like social workers are.

An interview with Officer Ian Irwin made me aware of a program that has been introduced in Detroit over the past five years called CIT (Crisis Intervention Team). CIT workers wear khakis and light blue t-shirts to look less intimidating, and less like police. This team specifically goes on mental health runs because actual social workers, understandably, often don’t want to get close to the situation if the suspect is being violent or hostile or has a weapon, because they usually aren’t armed. Both of these programs are helping our system moving the right way towards a reformed system focused more on helping those with mental health problems.

Bail

Bail is a very controversial topic in the criminal justice system. It’s something that affects the middle and lower-class disproportionately, because “not everybody in the world has deep

pockets” (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023). If you can’t make bail, you’re forced to spend more time incarcerated before you are even convicted of a crime, and “if you don’t have the means or the family support to back you up, it’s very difficult to break that cycle and pull yourself out of that once you get into it” (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023). If we can figure out how to reform bail so that it is still in place, but affecting everyone the same, we will be helping people in the long run.

Sentencing

The sentencing of convicted defendants is a very important thing that judges have discretion over. I learned a lot about this discretion, and the changes in sentencing in our country from Judge Buchanan. The United States has been moving towards more discretionary sentencing and lower sentencing because of recent research that shows that anything more than six years in prison no longer has a rehabilitative effect. In addition, the Department Of Corrections says if someone is there for 20+ years, they don’t have enough programming, and what’s the point of programming if you’re never leaving? For some offenses, maybe 20 years or life is appropriate to protect the community, but it’s doing just that, not rehabilitating inmates.

There are also differences in sentencing for different offenses. For example, “for drug offenses, if the goal is rehab and putting them back in the community, we should do that swiftly, because the longer we keep them, the worse off they are” (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023). For Judge Buchanan, she uses her discretion to give probation first. She says that “If [she’s] imposing jail, it’s because the person is not participating in community rehabilitation”. Usually, people who commit crimes have an underlying problem, so

although “the jail in and of itself isn’t beneficial, sometimes that’s the only way to make someone focus on their problem” (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023).

Everyone is also different in the way that they view different types of sentences that they receive. Misdemeanor sentences are anything less than a year, and “some people view misdemeanor sentences as a slap on the wrist” (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023). Felony offenses, on the other hand are anything over than a year, and are for more violent crimes. While probation isn’t necessarily appropriate for extremes like homicide, those people probably still don’t deserve a life sentence. In my interview with Court Officer Nick Bigelow, he likened it to the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, where someone kills someone when they’re 18 years old, now they’re 75 and looking at parole for the first time, they’re institutionalized and a totally different person than they were when they committed the crime. If people have completed programming and can show that they’ve changed, why do we need to keep them imprisoned?

Specialty Courts

Another type of sentence is specialty courts for certain underlying problems. Some examples of them in Michigan are sobriety court, drug court, and domestic violence court. These courts can work, but again, only if people are willing to do it and recognize that they have a problem. As a state, we do have an expectation that with more and more treatment courts becoming available, recidivism will hopefully go down. But sometimes punishment just has to be there; “There has to be a negative consequence to a behavior in addition to the therapeutic response” (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023). These courts allow inmates to not only receive a punishment so they understand the consequences of their actions, but

also help them fix a problem they have that might be exacerbating their choices to commit crimes.

Juveniles

Another big problem that we have as a country is juvenile crime. According to Nick Bigelow, when kids come from the 'bad' neighborhoods, they end up entering the system one way or another, because they are surrounded by friends or family members committing crimes. One big problem with juveniles is that there are "way too many young people with guns in our community, [the] majority of gun cases [in Lansing] are minors" (S. Buchanan, personal communication, March 2, 2023). An issue that has been in front of many legislatures in our country is whether to raise the maximum age someone can be charged as a minor from 18 to 21. According to Judge Buchanan, there may be a benefit to increasing the minor age because "it's not about whether they know right from wrong, it's whether they have the capacity to make good choices under peer pressure". Peer pressure is probably one of the biggest reasons that minors commit crimes, because they want to seem 'cool' or don't want to get bullied by the people surrounding them.

An additional reason to consider raising the maximum minor age is because our brains aren't fully developed until the age of 25, and "how can we call someone an adult when their brain isn't even fully developed yet?" (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023). Also, "society views you as an adult at the age of 18, but you can't legally buy alcohol until you're 21" (N. Bigelow, personal communication, March 2, 2023). How can we expect someone to make the 'right' decision when their brain isn't fully developed, they are still susceptible to peer pressure, and they can't even go to the bar or rent a hotel room?

One thing that has been introduced in Oakland County is a youth diversion program. In this program, when minors commit their first misdemeanor, they are diverted from a jail sentence, and they sign an agreement with the court that says as long as they stay drug and crime free for an agreed upon amount of time, then the crime is expunged from their public record (C. Busen, personal communication, February 21, 2023). This is very helpful for kids who may have been peer pressured into committing a crime, or simply just made a mistake to not be punished for that mistake for the rest of their life.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The school-to-prison pipeline is a big phenomenon in our country, and it was a large topic of discussion in my interviews when talking about juveniles. When kids are disciplined in school through suspension or expulsion, they are much more likely to commit crimes. If we can change the way that kids are disciplined, we may be able to help change this phenomenon. When disciplining students, administrators' personal biases can come into play (K. Katsef, personal communication, March 13, 2023), which can lead to different groups being disproportionately represented when being punished. The rules when disciplining special education and general education students are also different. For special education kids, they can only be suspended for ten days, then administrators/teachers have to complete a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR), which determines if the child's behavior is caused by their disability. There isn't a system like this in place for general education kids, but "as an administrator, you should always be looking at what systems are in place, what procedures you're using, and always looking at if it's really benefitting all students" (K. Katsef, personal communication, March 13, 2023). Katsef also tries not to suspend kids, because in her

experience one of two things happen: kids' home life isn't the best and it's worse for their mental health, or it becomes a pattern of behavior because kids like not being at school.

Although the way a child is raised is an important part of the way they act, the 'best' parents on the inside looking out aren't always caring about their children's best interests. Katsef said that she "ha[s] one dad who has been in jail, who you can tell wants his son to be successful, and he's doing the best he knows how to because he hasn't been given a lot to help him through life. But on the other side, I've also had 'very good' parents who, whenever I would call them to discuss their child's behavior, they would say 'don't bother me, I'm working', but their kids were really struggling. I've seen some really struggling parents who still get their kids to school on time and make them respect their teachers". Parents caring about their children and their success is often a bigger indicator than the area a person grows up in for whether they will end up in the system.

Kids with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are also much more likely than general education kids to struggle with finding a job. Judge Buchanan has a friend who is a special education teacher for Lansing School District that opened a coffee shop at her school for her students to help run. When she retires, she wants to continue this in the community, and hire people who had IEPs while in school so they can be successful after school.

Another thing that can be implemented for general education kids that have trouble with getting in trouble is specialized schools. For kids with severe behavioral problems, there are more restrictive schools because these kids are so severe behaviorally that they can't be safe in regular schools. But these schools are mostly only available for kids with identified

special education needs, and there are general education kids that need the help too. (K. Katsef, personal communication, March 13, 2023).

Conclusion

The two biggest things I learned from my interviews were that we have a big mental health problem in this country, and the earlier we can treat these problems, the better chance we have at curbing their effects on people and on society as a whole. There are things in every aspect of the criminal justice system that can be improved to in turn improve our recidivism rates.

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS

My interviews both confirmed things that I learned in my literature review and taught me new things. As I have said many times, the extent of the mental health problem in the United States is much larger than I first thought. In my literature review, I mostly learned about the effects that incarceration has on a person's mental health. During my interviews, this view was confirmed, but then I also learned about how lacking the system is in mental health resources. Every person I interviewed emphasized the fact that, in order to lower our recidivism rates as a country, we have to first focus on improving the mental health conditions of our population.

I also learned a lot about juveniles and the way that our system treats them. I learned in my literature review that our maximum age of 18 is very low compared to other developed western countries. My interviewees reiterated the view that this was a young age, and that we should probably change it to be at least 21, if not 24 or 25 since that's the age when your brain

fully develops. Another thought that was brought up in my interviews was that most kids (under the age of 21) are subject to a lot of peer pressure, so even though they may know the difference between right and wrong, they don't listen to their brain or common sense because they want to seem 'cool' to their friends.

A third thing I learned more about through my interviews that I was able to explore some in my literature review was the school-to-prison pipeline that is present in our country. I learned the basics of it through reviewing literature, and then learned a lot more about the why when I completed my interviews.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

Reflection

The completion of this study was very insightful, and I learned something during every step. I think the biggest thing that I learned overall was how bad the mental health problem in our country is. The literature review taught me a lot about other countries, but also a lot about our country and our state. On a basic level, I was able to learn how to research, how to use search terms to find what I was looking for, and how to structure a large research paper, all of which are things that will be helpful in my next step of law school. On a more data-based level, I was blown away by the statistics on how many people have mental health issues in our country. I also thought that the statistics about what crimes are the most committed, and how a majority of them are traffic offenses, was crazy.

My interviews were very interesting in the things that I learned academically as well as in general. Again, I learned a lot about mental health. I learned about the shutdown in the 1980s of the long-term mental health hospitals, which is something I hadn't ever heard of before. I also thought something really cool was how multiple interviewees brought up the same things. For example, both Officer Ian Irwin and Officer Chris Busen brought up the shut down, but they had differing opinions on it, which I found very insightful and interesting. Another thing that both Officer Irwin and Kerry Katsef brought up was Oakland County's common ground, and they did have the same opinions on it, but gave different perspectives since Officer Irwin brings mostly adults there, but Katsef has only ever dealt with her K-5 kids being brought there.

Another thing that I learned through the interviews was the difference in generational views. The two older police officers (Officer Busen and Officer Christopher Stout) made comments about how my generation (Gen Z) was a lot less mature at 18 than theirs was, and also how we were "really bad" at communicating because we "grew up on our phones". While I understand where the ideas behind the comments came from, I felt that they were a little rude and kind of out of the blue, especially because these themes did not come up in the literature review. I don't think that we are less mature because we choose to be, but rather because of the world we've grown up in. For example, Officer Busen said that he left the house to join the military at 18 and never came back. While there are still people who do this today, it's a lot less common than when my grandparents or parents were graduating from high school, and a lot more people are getting college degrees today. Additionally, the cost of living and the cost of

higher education are exponentially higher today than they were one or two generations ago, so people can't necessarily afford to move out on their own.

Next Steps

I think that the most important next step for our criminal justice system is to shift the focus from punishment to rehabilitation, and everything else will follow. Shifting to rehabilitation encompasses helping with mental health and helping people reintegrate into society after prison, which are the two biggest causes of recidivism. One way that we can give our prisoners more mental health resources is to fix our prison budgets so that more money is going towards mental health resources and less is going towards ways to punish them. A big way to repurpose the money is to get rid of the for-profit prison system so that prisons are run more humanely and less like a business. When we recalibrate our system, we can also use some of the money to help create more programs that can help people be successful when coming out of the system. If we can fix our country's mental health problem and help prisoners reintegrate successfully, our country will be much better off for it.

Works Cited

- About Us*. Common Ground. (2022, January 12). Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://commongroundhelps.org/about-us/>
- American Civil Liberties Union. (2022, February 15). *Bail reform*. American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/bail-reform>
- American Civil Liberties Union. (2022, April 4). *School-to-prison pipeline*. American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/juvenile-justice-school-prison-pipeline>
- Bacher-Hicks, A., Billings, S. B., & Deming, D. J. (2022, December 21). *Proving the school-to-prison pipeline*. Education Next. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.educationnext.org/proving-school-to-prison-pipeline-strict-middle-schools-raise-risk-of-adult-arrests/>
- Benecchi, L. (2021, August 8). *Recidivism Imprisons American Progress*. Harvard Political Review. Retrieved March 21, 2023, from <https://harvardpolitics.com/recidivism-american-progress/>
- Brookes, E. (2021, July 21). *Sutherland's Differential Association Theory explained*. Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory - Simply Psychology. Retrieved February 19, 2023, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/differential-association-theory.html>
- Butler, L. T., & Taylor, E. (2022, April). *A Second Chance: The Impact of Unsuccessful Reentry and the Need for Reintegration Resources in Communities*. A second chance: The impact of unsuccessful reentry and the need for reintegration resources in Communities. Retrieved February 25, 2023, from https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/04-2022/reintegration_resources.html
- Chammah, M. (2018, May 8). *The unique way one state is trying to help young prisoners*. The Marshall Project. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2018/05/08/the-connecticut-experiment>
- Clifford, S. (n.d.). *Tipsheet Qualitative Interviewing - Duke University*. Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from https://dism.duke.edu/files/2020/05/Tipsheet-Qualitative_Interviews.pdf
- Deady, C. W. (2014, March). *Incarceration and Recidivism: Lessons from Abroad*. Retrieved February 12, 2023, from chrome extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Deady_march2014.pdf

- Hassan, M. (2022, October 20). *Quantitative Research - Methods, Types and Analysis*. Research Method. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://researchmethod.net/quantitative-research/>
- Hilton, L. C. (2020, June 4). *Emergency court rules during covid-19 restrictions explained*. Higgs Fletcher & Mack®. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://higgslaw.com/emergency-court-rules-during-covid-19-restrictions-explained/#:~:text=Emergency%20rule%204>
- Jail Reform Advisory Council 2021 Report*. (2022, January). Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.courts.michigan.gov/48f0f9/siteassets/committees,-boards-special-initiatves/jails/jail-reform-advisory-council/jail-reform-advisory-council-2021-report.pdf>
- Justice Reinvestment Initiative (jri): Overview*. Bureau of Justice Assistance. (2022, December 16). Retrieved March 25, 2023, from <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/justice-reinvestment-initiative/overview>
- Juvenile Delinquency Statistics and Risk Factors in the U.S.* Maryville Online. (2020, October 28). Retrieved April 13, 2023, from <https://online.maryville.edu/blog/juvenile-delinquency-statistics/>
- Kirwin, A. (2022, May 26). *Why aren't all jails like Norway's?* The New European. Retrieved February 12, 2023, from <https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/why-arent-all-jails-like-norways/>
- La Vigne, N., & Lopez, E. (2021, October 7). *Recidivism rates: What you need to know*. Council on Criminal Justice. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from https://counciloncj.org/recidivism_report/
- Michigan Department of Corrections. (n.d.). *MDOC Vocational Villages*. SOM - State of Michigan. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.michigan.gov/msi/about/vocational-villages>
- Michigan Department of Corrections. (n.d.). *Michigan's recidivism rate*. SOM - State of Michigan. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.michigan.gov/corrections/recidivism-rate>
- Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration Report and Recommendations*. (2020, January 10). Retrieved March 25, 2023, from <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.courts.michigan.gov/48e562/siteassets/committees,-boards-special-initiatves/jails/jails-task-force-final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>

- Nickerson, C. (2022, January 23). *Recidivism: Definition, causes and examples*. Recidivism: Definition, Causes & Examples - Simply Psychology. Retrieved February 19, 2023, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/recidivism.html>
- O'Dell, H. (2022, March 18). *Michigan prison recidivism declines as vocational skills rise*. Spartan Newsroom. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://news.jrn.msu.edu/2022/03/michigan-prison-recidivism-declines-as-vocational-skills-rise/>
- Our mission*. Greyston Bakery. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://shop.greyston.org/pages/about-greyston>
- The problem: Recidivism & mass incarceration*. Prison Scholar Fund. (2019, July 20). Retrieved February 12, 2023, from <https://www.prisonerscholars.org/what-we-do/222-2/>
- Recidivism Amongst Posted Bail vs Zero Bail*. (2023). Yolo County District Attorney's Office. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://yoloda.org/zero-bail-case-study-zero-bail-policies-increased-crime-in-every-category/> .
- Robert Martinson and Nothing Works*. Communicating with Prisoners. (n.d.). Retrieved April 13, 2023, from <https://www.acrosswalls.org/robert-martinson-nothing-works/>
- Shelton, S. M. (2018, July 5). *The Tragedy of Mental Illness in Michigan*. Telegram. Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <https://www.telegramnews.net/story/2018/07/05/news/the-tragedy-of-mental-illness-in-michigan/225.html>
- Stevens, E. (2022, November 30). *The 4 types of data analysis [Ultimate Guide]*. CareerFoundry. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/data-analytics/different-types-of-data-analysis/>
- Stringer, H. (2019, March). *Improving mental health for inmates*. Monitor on Psychology. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/03/mental-health-inmates>
- Subramanian, R. (2021, November 29). *How some European prisons are based on dignity instead of dehumanization*. Brennan Center for Justice. Retrieved February 12, 2023, from <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/how-some-european-prisons-are-based-dignity-instead-dehumanization>
- U.S. prison population vs. The World: Statistics and insights*. Background Checks.org. (2019, May 5). Retrieved February 12, 2023, from <https://backgroundchecks.org/us-prison-population-vs-the-world.html#:~:text=Recidivism%20rates%20in%20the%20United%20States,-One%20basic%20way&text=The%20rate%20of%20recidivism%20in,just%2020%25%20within%205%20years>

War on drugs - timeline in America, definition & facts - history. History.com. (2019, December 17). Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.history.com/topics/crime/the-war-on-drugs>

Youth incarceration rates in the United States. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2021, December 14). Retrieved February 12, 2023, from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/youth-incarceration-in-the-united-states>

Zero bail case study – zero bail policies increased crime in every category. Yolo County District Attorney. (2023, February 14). Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://yoloda.org/zero-bail-case-study-zero-bail-policies-increased-crime-in-every-category/>