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THE EFFECTS OF A CAREER AWARENESS PROGRAM ON THE  
RECIDIVISM RATE OF AN INMATE POPULATION

by  
Bernardine Rochelle

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan College in Special Education  
1995

Approved by

Date Approved 5/8/95

## ABSTRACT

Rochelle, Bernardine

The Effects of a Career  
Awareness Program on the  
Recidivism Rate of an  
Inmate Population, 1995  
Advisor: Dr. Jay Kuder  
Special Education

The purpose of this ex-post facto research, a two year follow-up, was to determine the effect of a Career Awareness Program on the recidivism rate of an inmate population. The participants in the study were sixteen male inmates, ages nineteen to forty-six, with less than three months before release who had attended the first Career Awareness class.

Using a cross-sectional design survey, a two-paged selected-response questionnaire was mailed to the subjects. The responses of the respondent group were summarized through descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages.

After two years, eighty-seven percent of the studied population remained out of jail and were employed full-time. The findings in this study seem to suggest that a Career Awareness Program decreases the recidivism rate in an inmate population. This fact is only partially significant, given the small sample size.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

Rochelle, Bernardine

The Effects of a Career  
Awareness Program on the  
Recidivism Rate of an  
Inmate Population, 1995

Advisor: Dr. Jay Kuder

Special Education

This study evaluated the effects of a Career Awareness Program on an inmate population. The findings indicated that the program helped to decrease the recidivism rate in the studied inmate population. Generalizability is questionable due to the small sample size in the survey.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is dedicated to the late James Rochelle, my father, and Bertie L. Rochelle, my mother. These two individuals instilled in me an unrelenting desire for academic excellence and achievement.

The author would like to thank Mrs. Caroline LaVois and the Houston Independent School District who provided me with the opportunity to develop and flourish as an educator.

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**CHAPTER I**  
**THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED**

**Introduction**

Society is concerned about the ever growing prison population. Some of the factors contributing to this growth include an increase in the 18 to 25 year old population, a tougher stance on crime resulting in more prison sentences, longer sentences for violent crimes committed by younger offenders (Imel, 1990) and a high recidivism rate due in part to the inmates deficiencies in basic skills and vocational training and the absence of career education (Hassell, 1988).

One possible way to reduce the prison population is by academic and vocational training programs. In New Jersey, the Department of Corrections and its Education Departments have devoted years of time and money into academic and vocational training. The academic program consists of Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), and High School Equivalency Preparation in Spanish for the adult inmate population and the State Facilities Education Act and Quality Education Act (SFEA/QEA) program for special education pupils under 21 years of age. The vocational

program services inmates who are 18 years of age or older. Its major components consist of courses in Automotive Service Mechanic, Small Engine Repair, Welding Trades, Masonry Trades, Commercial and Residential Electrical Wiring, and Upholstery. It also offers apprenticeships in Cement Finishing and Upholstery Production. However, the recidivism rate among its inmates remained high.

Students were given skills in academic and vocational training; however, they were not given the psychological and educational components of career development. The psychological components would include self-awareness and values clarification and social skills. The educational components of career development would include conducting a successful job search, developing interviewing skills, writing a resume, and knowing availability of resources and the market trends for a given geographic area. Also, the State mandated the inclusion of a Career Awareness component to the SFEA curriculum. Subsequently, the Education Department wrote a proposal to the federal government for funds to develop and implement a Career Awareness program for the inmate population.

I was one of two teachers brought in to develop and implement a Career Awareness program. It consisted

of six components: 1) career exploration; 2) self-awareness and values clarification; 3) occupational job search components; 4) job interviews; 5) post release job searching; and 6) resources for the ex-inmate. Also, Apticom, a pre-vocational skills assessment computerized test, was purchased and used in conjunction with the program. The program also used a number of teaching techniques and learning strategies.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this ex-post factor research is to determine what was the effect of the Career Awareness program on the recidivism rate of the inmate population in the first Career Awareness class. Using a cross sectional design survey, a selected-response questionnaire will be mailed to the 16 inmates from the first class. This follow-up study hopes to determine: 1) the recidivism rate of the class participants; 2) the aspects of the program which were most beneficial; 3) the identity of items which should be changed/deleted from the curriculum; and 4) the implications for further study.

#### **Hypothesis Statement**

I believe the study will show that the recidivism rate will decrease in the studied inmate population; the continued employment of class participants will be

higher than that of non participants; and that there will be a direct correlation between age/success, socioeconomic factors/success, race/success and educational attainment/success.

### **Rationale**

The findings in this study could have significant implications on education, corrections, and service delivery models on a state and national level. The findings should determine if it is possible to foster self-esteem and moral reasoning which generalizes across settings by instructional techniques and the by-product becomes a functioning productive member of society. If so, aspects of the program can be adapted to reduce recidivism and revised to be utilized in primary and secondary schools to decrease the number of first-time offenders. For the institution in the the study, it would mean the ability to offer a viable research supported program to the inmate population. It might also mean a more favorable public opinion of the prison system.

### **Limitations of the Study**

First, a comparison cannot be made with a control group, since one was not initially established for the study. Second, participants of the study may not be representative of the entire inmate population;

therefore, caution should be used in generalizing results. Finally, the success or failure of this study depends on the number of favorable responses to mailing.

### Definition of Terms

**Recidivism** - Ex-prisoners who become repeat offenders.

**Individuals included in study** - Sixteen inmates, ages 19 - 46, with less than three months before parole.

Priority is given to SFEA (juvenile offenders) with a 6.5 grade level in reading comprehension, ABE graduates, GED graduates, and then individuals in a post secondary track.

**Career Awareness Program** - Career education with a curriculum which includes six components: 1) a career exploration; 2) self-awareness and values clarification; 3) occupational job search; 4) job interviews; 5) post release job search, and 6) resources for the ex-inmate. It is supplemented with a review of academics, stress management, critical thinking, social skills, and learning strategies such as cooperative learning. The Apticom, used in conjunction with this program, is the computerized version to the state's GATB, an aptitude test, and the VIP, an interest inventory test. The Apticom offers the taker career options based upon a match between what he/she is good at doing and what he/she truly likes to do.

**Career Education** - All the experiences through which students learn about and prepare to engage in work as a part of their way of living. Students prepare for the World of Work.

**Career Awareness** - Instruction on the labor market and its trends in the future. The student is given relevant data by which to base his career choices.

**Career Exploration** - The skills and competencies needed in various careers and vocations.

**Vocational Training** - Student receives training for a specific job (Lerner, 1993)

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

If the United States is to regain its competitive edge, schools must better prepare their graduates for a transformed workplace. Unless students in the United States are better equipped to enter a changing workplace, the financial future for graduates--and the economy as a whole--is likely to remain bleak. Specialized vocational training, cooperative education, and other school-based programs serve a relatively small portion of students (O'Neil, 1992).

Naylor's (1985) study found that all students, whether handicapped or not, must make numerous adjustments or transitions. Ultimately they must move from the fairly sheltered environment of school into the more competitive world of work.

However, Bullis et al., (1994) found that adolescents and young adults with emotional or behavioral disorders pose difficult service delivery problems. This population generally exhibits poor in-school and community adjustments after leaving school. In a study of 502 secondary school in Wisconsin (Lombard, Hazelkorn & Neubert, 1992), only 37% of all students classified as mild disability,

learning disabled, emotionally disturbed and mild mental retardation participated in formal or informal vocational assessment activities.

The appearance of better information about the skills, knowledge and habits of mind that students need to be prepared for the workforce; the development of systematic plans to address the school-to-work transition issues; and previous and present legislation (O'Neil, 1992) offer some promising signs.

### History

The National Longitudinal Transition of Special Students findings indicated that students who participated in secondary vocational educational education were more likely to be competitively employed than youths who did not take vocational courses. Access to appropriate vocational education opportunities enhances employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Lombard et al., 1992). It, also, provided fiscal, equal access, and information and service delivery mandates (Cobb, 1987).

A pressing issue in vocational education revolves around access and equity issues for individuals with disabilities. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, P. L. 98-524 outlined specific assurances that students with disabilities be provided access to a

full range of vocational training. Title II, Part A of P.L. 98-524, included the following categories: services for handicapped individuals, disadvantaged persons, adults in need of training or retraining, single parents and displaced homemakers, students in nontraditional programs, and services for criminal offenders in correctional institutes (Lombard et al., 1992).

In 1984, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) transition model was introduced to establish a national priority on a transition from "school to work", OSERS has funded over 300 model demonstration projects. Part C, of P. L. 98-199 (Education of the Handicapped Act of 1983) contains the authorizing legislation that resulted in specific requests for applications, funding. (Rusch, Kohler & Rubin, 1994).

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Act of 1990, P. L. 101-392, is an amendment to the 1984 law. It reiterates the need for programs to provide assessment activities that identify students' vocational interests, abilities and special needs and incorporate transition services designed to facilitate the school to work transition process. There is, however, limited empirical evidence to

suggest that these services are being provided to students with disabilities (Lombard et al., 1992).

The Individuals with Disabilities Act, P. L. 101-476 states that schools must provide specific transition plans for students with disabilities. Transition services for these students, which can begin as early as age 14 but must be in place by age 16, are to be included in a student's individualized education program (Dragan, 1994). It ensures that students with disabilities receive a coordinated education resulting in planned post-school outcomes, including independent, competitive employment (Schriner & Belline, 1994; Rusch, Enchelmaier & Kohler, 1994). Through its inclusion of school to adult life transition planning IDEA has solidified and formalized early initiatives (Tilson, Luecking & Donovan, 1994).

Transition education or school to work describes the entire planning process involved in preparing students for adult life by paving the way from school to the new environment of adulthood (Nemiko & Feichtner, 1990). The career development framework covers values, attitudes, personal and work habits, personal-social skills, leisure-time activities, human relationships, occupational information and awareness, job skills and daily living skills.

The foundations of career development and transition are significantly related because both forms increase the chances for students with disabilities to be effective, productive and satisfied in their adult life (Fisher, 1994).

To facilitate the development of educational programming that results in employment, attention has focused upon the concept of transition planning. Model programs development and research have followed, funded by federal initiatives (Kohler, 1994). Vocational education, special education and vocational rehabilitation have become the three primary providers of school to work transition services to handicapped youth, with parents and the business sector playing key roles in cooperative transitional programming (Naylor, 1985). Evidence suggests that vocational training and work experience are positively associated with post-school employment of youths with disabilities.

In Kohler's (1993) study, she examined 17 follow-up studies of students with disabilities which related to best practices in transition services. The majority of these studies, which ranged in scope from local, one-district samples to statewide populations, were one-time attempts to describe the post-school status of youths with disabilities within the target area. A

variety of methods were utilized to obtain data, including personal interviews with students or parents as well as telephone and mail interviews.

Vocational training and parent involvement were cited in more follow-up studies, 53% and 47%, respectively, than any of the other practices.

With the presence of transition services provisions of IDEA 1990 (P. L. 101-476) and a similar emphasis in related federal program areas of vocational education (P. L. 101-392), rehabilitation services (P. L. 102-596) and job training (P. L. 102-376), we would expect to see significant improvements in the education, employment, and living options of persons with disabilities (Greene & Albright, 1994).

However, Johnson et al., (1993) states that there is a national concern over the inadequacies of the educational system as a whole and, in particular, the need to re-structure and improve the effectiveness and quality of special education and transition services nationally. The dilemma is that we currently lack effective planning models and an adequate foundation of important and timely evaluation information on which to base judgements and decisions regarding needed transition policy and program improvements.

### **Recidivism**

Most of the previous review has focused on persons with disabilities with regards to access to vocational education. There is limited research available on policies, practices, or effectiveness of vocational programs in correctional institutes. However, correctional institutions are covered by P. L. 98-524, 1984 and P. L. 101-392, 1990 and they, too, are held accountable for ensuring that the inmate population is provided with a comprehensive program which offers access to vocational education programs and transitional services.

Within the Department of Corrections, there is also a large juvenile population. Educational programs and services must be provided for each pupil between the ages of three and twenty-one. Pupils with educational disabilities are entitled to all the benefits ensured under P. L. 101-476, 1990, P. L. 98-524, 1984 and P. L. 101-392, 1990. Nondisabled pupils are also ensured access to vocational education programs and services under vocational rehabilitation legislation.

In the literature review six studies were found that showed a positive correlation between some form of vocational education and the studied inmates recidivism rate. Whereas, five other studies

questioned the validity of using the recidivism rate of an inmate as the only product outcome.

The Texas Council on Vocational Education (1992) assessed the vocational education program in the Texas prison system. They assessed the educational needs of the studied population with the framework of existing educational programs within Texas' prison system, access to vocational education in prison, and the coordination of vocational education in the states' corrections school districts.

The council found that of the approximately 37,000 inmates released from Texas state prisons in 1991, only 8,588, or 23%, were ever enrolled in a regular secondary vocational education course while in prison. The low participation rate could be due to several factors, including short prison stays, literacy skills, lack of vocational courses, security and motivation.

Their findings, also, indicated that inmates who received academic and vocational education were more likely to be employed and less likely to return to prison. Moreover, the state saves \$22,000 a year when an offender does not return to prison and 6.6 billion dollars with a 1% reduction in the recidivism rate of the total inmate population. Based on their study, the council had adequate information on which to base

their recommendations for program improvements.

Hassell's (1988) findings indicate that in Arkansas only 7.5% of those inmates who complete a GED and received vocational training return to prison after release. With a decrease in federal funding the training program was in danger of being shut down but enough follow-up data had been maintained to permit the conclusion that the money spent for training inmates was worthwhile. Subsequently, the state of Arkansas enacted legislation to fund the program.

Schumacker, Anderson & Anderson (1990), found that vocational and academic groups had the highest employment rates and lowest criminal activity rates after twelve months of tracking. The control group had the highest criminal activity rate after release. It also found that most inmates avoided parole violations for about ten weeks after release. After that, the violation rate is steadily upward.

Three studies found that participation of the incarcerated in correctional education seems to result in some decrease in recidivism (O'Neil, 1990; Spaniol & Cleberg, 1990; Tilson, & Neubert, 1987). O'Neil (1990) indicated that prison education prepares the inmate psychologically for reentry into the free world. Spaniol & Cleberg (1990) stated that the true success

of their or any program can be measured by the success of its participants. Whereas Tilson & Neubert (1987) found that the qualitative data collected on the needs and performance of the participants in their study throughout the program hold implications for increased collaborative efforts both at the secondary and post secondary levels.

In looking at studies against the use of recidivism as the major end product for measuring the effectiveness of career education programs, Michalek (1988) states that the majority of prison classes are directed toward skill acquisition because they attempt to help the inmate become more economically viable upon release. Most of the research measuring the effectiveness of career education programs defined success in terms of some sort of recidivism variable. Using recidivism exclusively to measure the effectiveness of programs involves the proverbial comparison of apples and oranges.

The most immediate and primary goal of education is learning, usually determined by student's performance on some type of standardized test. The main goal of rehabilitation is quite different, i.e. personality change and subsequent post-release success.

Collins (1988) states that studies contrive to

show via statistical significance a mechanistic link between participation in prison education and an acquired disposition to "stay out of trouble" after release. Educators ought to eschew any preoccupation with rhetoric on reduction in recidivism as the prime justification for their work. It is not necessary to either uphold or sustain the central importance of education in the prisons.

Keeping job skills and acquiring cognitive knowledge, although important, may not alter the perception the juvenile delinquent has of society. Thus, incarcerated adolescents, when reentering society, may still be highly alienated and prone to recidivism (Colabrese & Adams, 1990). Reduced recidivism, as an end-point index that some change has occurred, is clearly inadequate in revealing either the nature or the source of that change. The pathways to change offenders are multiply-determined within a chain of events, reinforced, and supported by changes in both personal and social circumstances.

It must be acknowledged that recidivism is only one indirect measure of effectiveness and that other factors may confound the effects of educational programming; however, dismissing recidivism altogether as a measure of outcome is clearly inappropriate (Porporino &

Robinson, 1992).

The previously cited studies differ in whether they considered measuring the success of a vocational education program solely on the recidivism rate of the studies participants, but they all either stated or implied the need for an effective comprehensive evaluation process. Also, they all agreed that the recidivism rate is at least one of the determining factors in evaluating the effectiveness of a program.

### Evaluations

Recent amendments to IDEA place considerable emphasis on improving the provision of secondary special education and transition services to create more productive outcomes for these young people and society (Lichtenstein, 1993). At all levels of the service delivery system, there is a critical need to engage in comprehensive and systematic evaluations of programs and services. School and community agencies need evaluation data to provide decision makers with reliable information to modify programs and improve transitional services (Johnson, Brunninks, & Thurlow, 1987). Systematic formative and summative evaluations must be utilized to provide information useful in understanding how, why, and to what extent the efforts actually succeed in helping to make adjudicated youth

more effective transitions (Cook, 1990).

The need exists for well-defined program outcomes that can be measured and reported by the educator (Rusch et al., 1994). Transition outcomes include those achievements, statuses, or behaviors of youth with disabilities that occur in both secondary and early postsecondary stages of transition (Desliefano & Wagner, 1993). Identifying and subsequently measuring these outcomes should lead to evidence suggesting certain activities that promote selected outcomes. The accurate and comprehensive quantification of an intervention in the social sciences is extremely difficult; however, such measurements can allow for inferences to be drawn about which components of programs are effective and which are not (Bullis et al., 1994).

The studies examined in the literature review reflect the need for follow-up studies in conjunction with transitional programs, whether indicated for regular students, special education/vocational education students or for students in a correctional facility.

A 1992 report published by the New Jersey Department of Corrections in conjunction with the New Jersey Criminal Disposition Commission offered the

latest statistical analysis of the New Jersey inmate release outcomes (recidivism) for 3,634 inmates released in 1984. Sixty-two percent were arrested within three years of release. Those convicted for offenses equalled thirty-eight percent. Ex-inmates who were reincarcerated totalled twenty-four percent, with thirteen percent being placed in state prisons and eleven percent being sent to county facilities.

In terms of ethnicity, fifty-six percent of the inmates were Afro-American, thirty-one percent were Caucasian, fourteen percent were Hispanic, with less than one percent constituting the other category. Finally, ninety-five percent of the inmates released were male and five percent were females.

It is the purpose of this study to do a summative evaluation of the Career Awareness Program at Bayside State Prison by conducting a two-year follow-up study using a survey questionnaire with sixteen ex-inmates from the original course. The research offers a split decision on basing the effectiveness of a program on the recidivism rate of inmate participants. However, in our industrial society, the biggest issue becomes whether or not the program is cost effective, i.e. what is the cost and benefit to society?

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Introduction

An adequate vocational program is one which supports successful transition from the school to the job environment. While teaching staffs attest to the success of the program, little is known about its generalization to the community (Hoisch, 1994). Consequently, as previously cited, it is necessary that established programs provide both formative and summative evaluations.

Four areas are discussed here: (a) the setting in which the Career Awareness program was based, (b) the participants of the study, (c) the procedures for data collection, and (d) the analysis of the collected data.

#### Setting

The Career Awareness Program, a twelve week course, is an integral part of Bayside State Prison's total Career Education Program. It was implemented in April, 1992. Initially, inmates were given the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to establish their academic levels in reading comprehension, math, and grammar. Next, they were given the Apticom test, a computerized version of the state's GATB, an aptitude

test, and the VIP, an interest inventory test, to assess their pre-vocational skills. The scores from the Apticom gave each inmate a composite of careers that matched his interests and abilities. Inmates then utilized the computers for career exploration. The career exploration software package offered the inmates detailed information on their various career options.

Classroom instruction included individualized, small cooperative learning groups, and large groups. The course work covered values clarification, stress management techniques, social skills, critical thinking skills, resume writing, and interviewing skills. Upon completion of the program, inmates had a final resume copy; developed interviewing skills for a variety of settings; effectively mastered various stress management techniques; were knowledgeable in market trends, available training, and service delivery options; and had a number of viable options for becoming productive citizens upon release. These areas were assessed through role playing, teacher-made test, and individual and group critiques.

### **Subjects**

The participants in the study were sixteen male inmates, ages nineteen to forty-six, with less than three months before release. Priority for intake into

the program was 1) special education students under the age of 21 years old who fall under the State Facilities Education Act and Quality Education Act (SFEA/QEA), 2) reading comprehension of 6.5 and above, 3) GED graduates, and 4) post secondary work students.

### Data Collection

This ex-post facto research, a two-year follow-up study, utilized a cross-sectional design survey. A two-page selected response questionnaire, which was broken up into three parts, was mailed to the sixteen inmates from the first class.

Part I of the questionnaire consisted of five questions and asked the respondents demographic information, such as socioeconomic status, age, race, and educational attainment. This information was necessary to determine possible correlations between these independent variables and the dependent variable recidivism.

Part II of the survey consisted of four closed-end questions, which were utilized to ensure the ease of respondent's responses and to minimize error. The first question asked respondents for their overall impression of the program. "What was your impression of the Career Awareness Program?" The respondent choices were positive, somewhat positive,

somewhat negative, and negative.

The next question examined the usefulness of the following program components: interviewing skills, stress management techniques, resume writing, market trends, and access to service delivery agencies. "What did you find the most helpful part of the program?" The respondents choices were very helpful, somewhat helpful, and not helpful.

The third question referred to the number of jobs they had held since being released from prison. "How many jobs have you held since your release?" The specific rating choices were from under 3, 3 - 5, 6 - 8, and over 8.

The respondents were then asked to rate their job satisfaction. "Rate your satisfaction with your present job?" The choices given were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, and not satisfied.

Part III of the survey consisted of one open-ended question. Open-ended questions allow respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their response. "What can we do to improve the Career Awareness Program?"

The survey also included a short statement, "Welcome Back to Zooley - The Universe of Critical Thinking Skills." This short catchy phrase referred to the initial critical thinking activity in the class.

It was chosen because the students would easily identify who was sending the survey. The respondents were also told not to include their names on the survey and that only the surveyor would see their responses. Each respondent received a survey form and a self-addressed return envelope and were instructed to return completed survey within three days of receipt.

### **Data Analysis**

The demographic portion of the questionnaire (Part 1) required a correlation analysis to determine if there was a relationship between participant or program experiences and the recidivism rate. A dichotomous dependent variable was chosen to represent recidivism or program outcome--successful and unsuccessful. Using a univariate chi-square analyses of each of the independent variables: age, race, income, and education to the dependent variable: successful or unsuccessful program outcome (Bullis et al., 1994 & Hagner, & Daning, 1993), comparisons could be made to identify which combination of variables, or single variables, were associated in the strongest manner with the dichotomous outcome.

The response of the respondent group to the closed-ended question was summarized through simple descriptive statistics, means and frequencies.

The open-ended question was coded for frequency of occurrence and then these responses were summarized through descriptive statistics .

## CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the Career Awareness program on the recidivism rate of the inmate population in the first Career Awareness class. This ex-post facto research, a two year follow-up study, utilized a cross-sectional design survey. A two-page survey was mailed to the sixteen former students; however, there were only fifteen favorable responses.

### Results

Results of the survey are presented in the following sequence: 1) demographics of the subjects, 2) subjects' impression of the program, and 3) improvements to the program.

**Demographics.** Table 1 reflects respondents' demographic information, such as age, race, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of jobs held since their release from prison and to rate their present job satisfaction.

Five (33%) of the respondents were within the 35 to 44 years old range. There were four (27%) respondents over 44 years old. The remaining six

respondents were equally dispersed between the under twenty-five and twenty-five to thirty-four years old range, 3 (20%) respectively.

The ethnicity of the subjects consisted of nine (60%) Afro-Americans, four (27%) Caucasians and two (13%) Hispanics.

Educationally, eight (53%) respondents had two or more years of college, four (27%) had a high school diploma or GED, and three (20%) had less than a twelfth grade education.

With regards to socioeconomic status, the family income of thirteen (87%) participants was ten thousand dollars or more, with thirteen (87%) participants working full-time jobs. The remaining two (13%) individuals made less than ten thousand a year and were unemployed.

Since their release from prison, the majority of the respondents, eight (53%), have held over six jobs. Of the remaining respondents, four (27%) have held three to five positions and three (20%) have held less than three jobs. When asked to rate their job satisfaction, eight (53%) subjects were not satisfied, three (20%) were somewhat satisfied, and four (27%) were very satisfied.

With two participants having returned to prison,

Table 1

<b><u>Frequency Distribution of Respondents Demographics</u></b>		
<b>Question #</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1. Age</b>		
Under 25	3	20
25 - 34	3	20
35 - 44	5	33
over 44	4	27
<b>2. Race</b>		
White	4	27
Afro-American	9	60
Hispanic	2	13
Other	0	0
<b>3. Family Income</b>		
Under 10,000	2	13
10,000 - 20,000	6	40
20,000 - 30,000	7	47
Over 30,000	0	0
<b>4. Employment Status</b>		
Full-time	13	87
Part-time	0	0
Unemployment	2	13
Retired	0	0
<b>5. Education</b>		
Less than 12th	3	20
Diploma/GED	4	27
2 - yrs College	5	33
Over 4 yrs College	3	20
<b>8. How many jobs have you held since your release?</b>		
Under 3	3	20
3 - 5	4	27
6 - 8	6	40
Over 8	2	13
<b>9. Rate your satisfaction with your job.</b>		
Very Satisfied	4	27
Somewhat Satisfied	3	20
Not Satisfied	8	53

it was then necessary to reexamine the demographic data to extrapolate their responses. One respondent was Caucasian and over forty-four years of age. The other respondent was Afro-American and between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four. Both respondents had over four years of college, listed their income as under ten thousand dollars and their employment status as unemployed. Also, they had both held over six jobs while released and neither had been satisfied with the jobs they held.

Impressions. The subjects in the study were asked to rate their overall impression of the Career Awareness program and to identify the most helpful parts of the program, by answering the closed-end questions on the survey (Table 2).

Fifteen (100%) respondents rated their impressions of the program as positive. In examining specific components of the program, the respondents indicated that the most helpful components were resume writing and interviewing skills, fifteen (100%) and fourteen (93%), respectively. Out of fourteen (93%) respondents, half (46.5%) found the stress management component to be either very helpful or somewhat helpful. Seven (47%) respondents rated the market trend component as somewhat helpful and three (20%) rated the component as

Table 2

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**Summary Closed-Ended Questions on Survey**


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Question #	Frequency	Percentage
<b>6. What was your impression of the Career Awareness Program?</b>		
Positive	15	100
Somewhat Positive	0	0
Somewhat Negative	0	0
Negative	0	0
<b>7. What did you find the most helpful part of the program?</b>		
<b>A. Interviewing Skills</b>		
Very Helpful	14	93
Somewhat Helpful	1	7
Not Helpful	0	0
<b>B. Stress Management</b>		
Very Helpful	7	46.5
Somewhat Helpful	7	46.5
Not Helpful	1	7
<b>C. Resume Writing</b>		
Very Helpful	15	100
Somewhat Helpful	0	0
Not Helpful	0	0
<b>D. Market Trends</b>		
Very Helpful	5	33
Somewhat Helpful	7	47
Not Helpful	3	20
<b>E. Access to Service/Delivery Agencies</b>		
Very Helpful	6	40
Somewhat Helpful	7	47
Not Helpful	2	13

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being not helpful. Finally, the access to service/delivery component was rated somewhat helpful by seven (47%) respondents and not helpful by two (13%).

**Improvements.** The final section of the survey was an open-ended question which allowed respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their previous responses. "What can we do to improve the Career Awareness Program?" (Table 3).

After receiving participants' responses to the open-ended question, the responses were examined for any similarities which could be grouped. There were three recurring generalities (categories) which could be grouped and then summarized through descriptive statistics. These categories were extending the length (time) of the program (n=13), expanding the options of the program (n=8), and revising the order of the program (n=3).

### **Summary**

It was hypothesized in Chapter 1 that the recidivism rate would decrease in the studied population; that the continued employment of class participants would be higher than that of non participants; and that there would be a direct correlation between age/success; socioeconomic

Table 3

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**Summary of Responses to Open-Ended Question**

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**What can we do to improve the Career Awareness Program?****Extended Time (n=13)**

The program should be extended to six months.  
More time should be allocated for independent study  
and role playing interviews.

**Expand Program (n=8)**

Expand the starting your own business and stress  
management parts of the program.  
A detailed career change options section should be  
added to the program.

**Revise Program (n=3)**

Revise the order of when the various components occur.  
The Apticom Testing should occur upon entry into the  
population.

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Note: Some respondents statements covered more than  
one are. Thus, the number of statements catalogued  
exceeds the number of positive respondents.

factors/success, race/success, and educational attainment/success. The findings in this study indicate that thirteen (87%) of the studied population have not returned to prison and are employed full-time. In chapter five, a more detailed account will be provided of specific findings and the implications of these results.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### Summary

For inmate programs designed to affect recidivism, the degree to which the program deters post-release criminal behavior (the program's effect size) is a critical factor in the ability of statistical tests to reveal significant differences in outcome when they exist (Lattimore et al., 1990).

The purpose of this study has been to determine the effect of the Career Awareness Program on the recidivism rate of the studied inmate population. Specifically, it hoped to determine the recidivism rate of the class participants; the aspects of the program which were most beneficial; the identity of items which should be changed/deleted from the curriculum; and the implications for further study.

The hypothesis for the study was that the recidivism rate would decrease in the studied inmate population; the continued employment of class participants would be higher than that of non participants; and that there would be a direct correlation between age/success, socioeconomic factors/success, race/success, and educational attainment/success.

The findings in this study indicate a significant number of inmates in the studied population (87%) have remained out of prison and are currently employed in full-time jobs.

### **Findings**

Originally, sixteen surveys were mailed to the participants in the study. However, only fifteen responses were returned. The sixteenth person is presently listed as missing with a warrant having been issued for his arrest due to a parole violation.

After two years, thirteen (87%) of the fifteen favorable responses had not returned to prison; whereas, two (13%) had been reincarcerated. Eighty-seven percent of respondents were also working a full time job. However, it is alarming that forty percent (53%/not in prison - 13%/in prison) were unsatisfied with their jobs and changed jobs frequently.

It should also be noted that the two individuals who returned to prison had both completed more than four years of college, had been unsatisfied with their jobs and had changed jobs frequently prior to their return to prison.

The study was able to determine, by the responses of the participants, the most beneficial components of the program. These components were identified as

resume writing (100%) and interviewing skills (93%).

The findings also indicated possible changes to the program. Respondents felt that the course time should be extended (n=13) to allow more time for independent study and opportunities for practice. They also indicated that specific components such as starting your own business and stress management should be expanded (n=8) and a career change option component added to the curriculum. Finally, a few (n=3) believed that the sequence of the various components should be revised.

Since only two respondents had returned to prison, I was unable to use statistical data to identify which combination of variable, or single variables (subjects demographics or program experiences), were associated in the strongest manner with the dichotomous outcome (recidivism or program outcome--successful and unsuccessful).

### **Conclusions**

The findings in this study seem to suggest that a Career Awareness Program decreases the recidivism rate in an inmate population. As cited in the literature review, the latest available statistics in New Jersey place the recidivism rate at sixty-two percent versus the thirteen percent rate found in this study.

This fact is only partially significant, given the small sample size in the survey.

The research does support previous research findings that the recidivism rate is at least one of the determining factors in evaluating the effectiveness of a program. Therefore, the Career Awareness Program is an effective program.

On the other hand, the lack of results for the attempted correlation analysis is, also, indicative of the research discussed in the literature review. Some of the previous research indicates that a decrease in the recidivism rate is inadequate in revealing the relationship between specific independent variables and program success.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Given the small sample size of the studied population, any generalizability (external validity) must be argued on a logical basis.

Another limitation of the study was the researcher's inability to control for confounding variables. Consequently, comparisons could not be made to determine which variables when manipulated could be a predictive indicator of success (decreased recidivism).

The lack of a control group for comparison with

the studied population was another limitation of the study. It became necessary to compare the survey group with the inmate population again using a logical basis.

Nonetheless, the results of this study have some significance. The recidivism rate in the studied population was less than the overall recidivism rate for New Jersey. Also, information was obtained that can positively effect the scope and sequence of the program's curriculum.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Future researchers must find a way to adequately account for possible confounding variables. Class participants and control groups must be set simultaneously from the start, using a much larger sample size than the one in this study.

The two reincarcerated subjects had completed post-graduate work. Can it be concluded that the more education a person has, the less likely it is that society can rehabilitate him, or were the findings in this study a one in a million fluke? This area will require future research to determine the direct correlation between education and recidivism.

Another area for future research would be determining what factors directly affect the disproportionate number of minorities in the penal

system. These minorities also have the higher recidivism rate.

In the future, researchers should also use longitudinal surveys to provide both summative and formative evaluations of programs; track recidivism using periodic follow-up studies; and incorporate aftercare components to ensure pupil success.

In conclusion, Spaniol & Cleberg (1990) suggest that given the high cost of social service needs, court appearances, probation services, and incarceration, society can either attempt to alter criminal behavior by providing diversion programs or in the end pay the high cost of incarceration. The Career Awareness Program is not the only solution but it is a program with possibilities which has helped to give eighty-seven percent of the studied population a new beginning.

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**APPENDIX A**

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**SURVEY**

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

**"WELCOME BACK TO ZOOLEY"  
THE UNIVERSE OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

We are presently conducting a follow-up study of the participants in the Career Awareness Program. Please complete and return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope within three days of receipt. don't put your name on the survey. Your responses to this questionnaire are confidential. Thanking you in advance for your cooperation. Your teacher, B. Rochelle.

Please place an "X" next to your answer.

1. **What is your age?**  

Under 25 _____	25 to 34 _____
35 to 44 _____	Over 44 _____
  
2. **What is your race?**  

White _____	African-American _____
Hispanic _____	Asian _____
  
3. **What is your family income?**  

Under 10,000 _____	10,000-20,000 _____
20,000-30,000 _____	Over 30,000 _____
  
4. **What is your employment status?**  

Full time _____	Part-time _____
Unemployed _____	Retired _____
  
5. **What is the highest grade you have completed in school?**  

Less than 12th grade _____	HS/GED _____
2-4 years college _____	Over 4 years college _____
  
6. **What was your impression of the Career Awareness Program?**  

Positive _____	Somewhat positive _____
Somewhat negative _____	Negative _____
  
7. **What did you find the most helpful part of the program?**  

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful
a. Interviewing skills	_____	_____	_____
b. Stress management techniques	_____	_____	_____
c. Resume writing	_____	_____	_____
d. Market trends	_____	_____	_____
e. Access to service	_____	_____	_____

delivery agencies \_\_\_\_\_

8. **How many jobs have you held since your release?**

Under 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6-8 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 8 \_\_\_\_\_

9. **Rate your satisfaction with your job.**

Very satisfied \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat satisfied \_\_\_\_\_ Not satisfied \_\_\_\_\_

10. **What can we do to improve the Career Awareness program? (Explain)**