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A Qualitative Study Examining the Perspectives of Probation Officers on the Effectiveness of
Reentry Programs on Recidivism in San Francisco

A Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education in Organizational Change and Administration

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Dr. Robert K. Jabs School of Business

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A Qualitative Study Examining the Perspectives of Probation Officers on the Effectiveness of
Reentry Programs on Recidivism in San Francisco

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has been approved by the Dr. Robert K Jabs School of Business in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the perspectives of probation officers in San Francisco on the effectiveness of reentry programs in reducing recidivism. The problem addressed was the high rate of recidivism, posing challenges to public safety and the criminal justice system. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of probation officers on the central phenomenon of recidivism and reentry program effectiveness in San Francisco. The research was framed by the general strain theory, which explains criminal behavior as a response to strain, and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which considers the environmental factors affecting rehabilitation. Methodologically, semistructured interviews with San Francisco probation officers were conducted and were complemented by surveys and document analysis for triangulation. The qualitative analysis highlighted patterns and themes from the officers' narratives and provided a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in reentry programs. The findings revealed critical insights into the alignment of reentry programs with probation officers' professional judgments and identified key factors that influence recidivism. These insights can inform the development of more effective reintegration strategies, ultimately aiming to enhance public safety and reduce repeat offenses.

Keywords: probation officer, recidivism, reentry, rehabilitation, leadership, law enforcement

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DEDICATION

To my son, this work is dedicated to you. Your presence in my life has made me stronger, improved me in ways I never thought possible, and filled me with a sense of fulfillment beyond my imagination. My love for you knows no bounds.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Probation officers are pivotal in the criminal justice framework because they engage directly with clients to oversee adherence to probationary conditions and support their reintegration into the community. Their insights provide a nuanced view of offenders' obstacles and the broader systemic factors that might fuel recidivism. This research explored probation officers' perceptions of recidivism and the efficacy of reentry initiatives in San Francisco. An analysis of a 3-year trajectory of individuals released from San Francisco County Jail indicates a striking 72% rearrest rate within 3 years for recurrent property offenses (Lofstrom & Martin, 2021). Despite the abundance of skilled job opportunities in San Francisco, clients often lack the requisite skills for viable employment. Research has shown that criminal behavior tends to escalate in severity with each subsequent offense, further entrenching individuals in the criminal justice system (Bozick et al., 2018). The escalation in the severity of criminal behaviors with each subsequent offense underscores the critical need to halt these activities for public safety.

The unique insights of probation officers, derived from their direct and continual interaction with clients, can provide invaluable information on how to best address these issues. By understanding the specific challenges and needs of their clients, probation officers can help tailor reentry programs to be more effective. They can identify the gaps in current support systems and advocate for resources that directly address these needs. Equipping these individuals with the skills necessary for meaningful employment postrelease can yield significant benefits, not only for the individuals themselves but also for the broader community. Minimizing repeat offenses is a key strategy to lower overall crime rates and reduce the incidence of victimization in society. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding probation officers'

perspectives to enhance reentry programs and effectively address the challenges associated with recidivism.

Background

The issue of recidivism is a multifaceted problem that has been extensively studied, revealing a myriad of contributing factors such as lack of education, substance abuse, mental health issues, and systemic barriers like discrimination and poverty (Barnett & Fitzalan Howard, 2018; Lockwood et al., 2017; Wakefield, 2022; Walters, 2014). Recidivism in this study is defined as the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend. Although reentry programs effectively reduce recidivism by providing essential skills and a sense of purpose (Gerber, 1995; Ilijic, 2014; McNeeley, 2023), there is a gap in understanding how these programs address the unique needs of individuals released in San Francisco.

Probation officers face significant challenges when their concerns and insights go unheard, impacting their job satisfaction and ability to serve probationers effectively. The stress and burnout associated with feeling that they are not fulfilling their duties to the community can be demoralizing (Alward & Viglione, 2023). When officers believe they are unable to prevent probationers from reoffending, it exacerbates a sense of professional failure and emotional exhaustion. This diminished job satisfaction can lead to decreased performance, affecting the quality of service provided to probationers, which can impact the cycle of recidivism. Giving probation officers a platform to voice their perspectives enhances their professional efficacy and provides valuable insights that can improve interventions and support systems for probationers (Zhu et al., 2022). This reciprocal benefit strengthens the overall effectiveness of the probation system, contributing to community safety and successful reintegration.

Probation officers play a pivotal role in this context because they are directly involved in the supervision and reintegration of individuals postrelease. Their perspectives of behaviors observed postrelease are crucial because they can provide insights into the real-world effectiveness of interventions and identify gaps or opportunities for improvement. They are the linchpin in reentry, overseeing compliance with court-ordered conditions and providing resources and support. Their role is administrative and involves a deep understanding of the socioeconomic and systemic issues contributing to recidivism. Therefore, their viewpoints can offer a more impactful understanding of how existing programs and policies are either facilitating or hindering successful reintegration, particularly in the unique context of San Francisco.

The aim of this study was to fill this research gap by focusing on the San Francisco probation officers' perspectives. It sought to understand probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco, thereby offering a more localized and practical viewpoint that complements existing academic research (Barnett & Fitzalan Howard, 2018; Lockwood et al., 2017; Wakefield, 2022; Walters, 2014). Given their direct impact on the issue, their insights are not just valuable but essential for a comprehensive understanding of the recidivism landscape in San Francisco.

Statement of the Research Problem

The core issue examined was the potential ineffectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco, which may stem from an insufficient incorporation of probation officers' perspectives. Despite their pivotal role in the reintegration process, the insights and experiences of probation officers remain largely untapped in the design and evaluation of these programs (Brandon, 2020). This oversight could be a critical barrier to optimizing reentry strategies,

because it overlooks the practical, on-the-ground challenges and opportunities identified by those directly involved in facilitating reintegration. This study investigated how the inclusion of probation officers' viewpoints may impact the success of reentry programs, with the aim of uncovering actionable insights to enhance their effectiveness in reducing recidivism. By employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study delved into the nuanced experiences of probation officers within the specific socioeconomic and systemic context of San Francisco, providing a more grounded understanding of how to improve reintegration outcomes.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of probation officers on the central phenomenon of recidivism and reentry program effectiveness in San Francisco. The participants in this study were probation officers who operate in the San Francisco criminal justice system. Recidivism was defined in this study as the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend; the effectiveness of reentry programs was generally defined as their capacity to reduce the recidivism rate and facilitate successful societal reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

What are probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco?

Research Subquestions

1. What are probation officers' perspectives on the effectiveness of current rehabilitation programs?

2. What are probation officers' perspectives on the efforts to foster successful reintegration into society?
3. What are probation officers' perspectives regarding their ability to supervise and guide probationers effectively through reentry programs?
4. In what ways do probation officers believe that reentry programs align with or deviate from the principles of the general strain theory?

Scope and Significance of the Problem

The United States confronts a critical challenge with its unparalleled incarceration rates globally, housing approximately 2.3 million individuals in prisons and jails, a figure that has surged nearly fivefold since the 1970s (Wakefield, 2022). This escalation occurs in the context of an expanding job market and the emergence of new skilled job sectors. The ramifications of this high incarceration rate are multifaceted and profound. The financial burden is staggering, and the cost of incarcerating a single inmate potentially exceeds \$30,000 annually (Beth & Shannon, 2022), thereby diverting substantial public funds from essential services like education and healthcare.

Moreover, the pattern of recidivism is intrinsically linked to this elevated incarceration rate (Beth & Shannon, 2022). A concerning trend has been observed wherein individuals reoffending are more likely to commit more serious crimes, leading to repeated imprisonment. This cycle not only perpetuates crime but also entrenches societal disadvantages, hindering effective reintegration into the community.

Addressing this issue requires a nuanced understanding of the reentry process. This study aimed to dissect the reentry paradigm, potentially revolutionizing how correctional agencies approach rehabilitation and reintegration. By focusing on the experiences of San Francisco,

California probation officers, who have over 5 years of experience, this research sought to capture a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in the reentry process. The findings could be instrumental in shaping new, impactful programs, profoundly affecting the lives of countless individuals and, by extension, society at large.

Definitions

Probation. The method of dealing with offenders, especially young people guilty of minor crimes or first offenses, by allowing them to go at large under the supervision of a probation officer (National Institute of Justice, 2021).

Probation officer. A law enforcement professional responsible for supervising and monitoring individuals on probation, ensuring they comply with court-ordered conditions, and facilitating their reintegration into society (Lowry et.al., 2024).

Recidivism. The tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend. In the context of this study, recidivism is measured within a 3-year period postrelease (National Institute of Justice, n.d.-a).

Reentry programs. Structured initiatives designed to assist individuals to successfully reintegrate into society after being released from a correctional facility (National Institute of Justice, n.d.-b).

Organization of the Study

This study begins with a comprehensive literature review, outlining the theoretical framework and identifying key themes and variables pertinent to the impact of probation programs on recidivism. The search methodology for sourcing relevant literature is detailed, providing a clear map of the research landscape. Subsequently, Chapter 3 articulates the study's purpose and poses specific research questions designed to investigate the efficacy of probation

programs. The research design is described, highlighting a systematic approach to selecting the study population and sample, ensuring representativeness and relevance. Instrumentation and data collection methods are outlined, emphasizing the tools and techniques used to gather data. The study employed robust data analysis techniques to interpret findings while upholding the highest data confidentiality and participant protection standards. Limitations of the study, including potential biases and constraints, are acknowledged, providing a transparent overview of the research scope and boundaries.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction and Purpose

The literature on recidivism and reentry programs is shaped by a confluence of factors, including socioeconomic conditions, psychological elements, and systemic challenges, all of which are further nuanced by the unique characteristics of San Francisco. The purpose of this literature review is to critically examine these dimensions through the lens of general strain theory and ecological systems theory and emphasize the underexplored yet pivotal role of probation officers to shape and implement reentry strategies. The aim is to explain how their perspectives and job satisfaction levels directly impact the efficacy of interventions and, consequently, community safety. The leadership theory of transformation leadership is examined to explain how the study's findings can be used to administer change to the probation department.

In this literature review, several key themes are explored to provide a comprehensive backdrop for the study. First, the review delves into the various factors contributing to recidivism, such as economic conditions, substance abuse, and mental health, to establish a foundational understanding. Second, it examines the effectiveness of different types of reentry programs with a focus on education-based initiatives and their impact on reducing recidivism. The role of probation officers in the reintegration process is also investigated, including their responsibilities, challenges, and overall impact. Additionally, literature on stress levels, burnout, and job satisfaction among probation officers is reviewed to explain how these factors affect their performance and consequently, probationer outcomes. Theoretical frameworks like general strain theory and ecological systems theory are discussed to provide a lens for analysis. Research specific to San Francisco's socioeconomic and criminal landscape are included to contextualize

the study. Literature on transformational leadership and its effect on change in a law enforcement organization is examined. Finally, the review validates the study's qualitative methodology by referencing similar research methods used in criminal justice studies. This multidimensional approach offers a robust context for evaluating this study's findings.

Search Description

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using the California Baptist University library online database to gather information on the perspectives of probation officers regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs on recidivism in San Francisco. The following keywords and phrases were employed:

- probation officers' perspectives, to understand the viewpoint of those directly overseeing offenders' reintegration;
- reentry programs effectiveness, to evaluate the success rate of these programs;
- recidivism rates San Francisco, to locate specific data on reoffense rates within the city;
- criminal justice system rehabilitation, to explore broader rehabilitation efforts within the system;
- postincarceration support, to identify the types of support available to individuals postrelease;
- offender reintegration strategies, to analyze the methods used to reintegrate offenders into society;
- criminal behavior and social support, to understand the role of social support in deterring criminal behavior;
- restorative justice and recidivism, to research the impact of restorative justice programs on repeat offenses;

- crime deterrence in urban areas, to study the effectiveness of crime prevention measures in urban settings;
- socioeconomic factors in recidivism, to examine how socioeconomic variables influence the likelihood of reoffending;
- community-based corrections, to investigate the role of community involvement in the correctional process;
- probation system challenges, to identify challenges within the probation system that could affect reentry outcomes;
- transformational leadership in law enforcement change, to study the effectiveness of transformational leadership on law enforcement organizational change;
- quantitative analysis of probation success, to find data-driven studies on the probation system's effectiveness;
- qualitative research in criminal justice, to source qualitative studies for a deeper understanding of the probation officers' perspectives;
- correctional policy and reentry programs, to analyze the policy framework governing reentry programs;
- general strain theory in crime, to investigate the theoretical framework and its ties to crime; and
- ecological systems theory, to investigate the theoretical framework.

The search was refined using Boolean operators, allowing the combination of terms to narrow or expand the results as needed. For instance, “probation officers’ perspectives AND reentry programs effectiveness” was used to find literature that specifically addressed the viewpoints of probation officers on program effectiveness. Filters like publication date, peer-

reviewed status, and geographical focus were applied to ensure the relevance and quality of the sources. The database's advanced search options were used to access journal articles, dissertations, theses, and pertinent reports. This methodological approach ensured a robust and focused collection of literature to support the research objectives.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

General Strain Theory

General strain theory (GST), initially conceptualized by Agnew and White (1992), serves as a seminal framework in criminology for understanding the psychological and social underpinnings of criminal behavior, particularly property crime. Agnew and White's theory was not developed in isolation; it was an intellectual extension of the work of criminologists such as Robert Merton (1938) and Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960). These theorists laid the groundwork for understanding how societal structures and individual experiences contribute to criminal tendencies. GST posits that individuals who experience strain or negative emotions are more likely to resort to criminal behavior as a coping mechanism. Strain, in this context, is defined as the dissonance between an individual's aspirations and their lived experiences. This could manifest in various forms, such as the inability to achieve a desired goal or the loss of a valued relationship or object.

In empirical research, several studies have sought to test and expand upon the tenets of GST. For instance, Wilcox and Clayton's (2001) study employed a multistage model of differential coping to delve into the relationship between GST and property crime among young adults. Their research illuminated that the coping strategies adopted by individuals, such as avoidance or substance use, serve as moderating factors in the relationship between strain and

property crime. This suggests that the impact of strain on criminal behavior is not uniform but is mediated by how individuals choose to cope with their negative emotions.

Gender differences in the application of GST have also been a focal point of scholarly inquiry. Broidy and Agnew (1997) examined how gender influences the relationship between strain and property crime among young adults. Their findings were revelatory in showing that the strain experience was a more potent predictor of property crime among males than females. This was further corroborated by Mary Vager's (2018) study, which found that negative life events such as financial difficulties and relationship issues were significant predictors of property crime among young adult males.

The relationship between economic strain and property crime has been another area of significant research. Studies by Mazerolle et al. (2000) and Wilcox et al. (2003) have provided empirical support for this relationship among adult offenders. These studies suggest that individuals who experience economic hardship are more likely to engage in property crime for economic survival. Moreover, Agnew and Brezina's (2017) study added another layer to this understanding by showing that negative emotions like anger and frustration serve as mediators in the relationship between strain and property crime.

Additional insights from the Agnew and Brezina (2017) indicate that GST is a multifaceted theory that considers a range of factors beyond just the experience of strain. These include an individual's coping skills, the availability of social support, and even one's beliefs about crime. They also noted that trait-based emotions, particularly an angry disposition, can play a significant role in moderating the relationship between strain and criminal behavior. The theory has been applied to a variety of specific deviant behaviors beyond property crime, such as aggressive behaviors in schools and violence in the workplace.

Ecological Systems Theory

By adopting a framework traditionally used in educational and developmental psychology, this study underscores the multifaceted nature of probation and the diverse factors impacting probationers' journey toward societal reintegration. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, renowned in the fields of developmental psychology and education, presents a layered approach to understanding individual development within a complex web of environmental systems. There are five levels or systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The theory posits that human development is influenced by a complex interplay of various environmental systems, ranging from immediate settings like family and school to broader societal constructs (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The microsystem, constituting an individual's immediate environment, is pivotal in shaping probationer behaviors and responses to probation terms. Research by Berg and Huebner (2011) emphasized the significant role of familial ties, peer influences, and interactions with probation officers to determine probationers' compliance and recidivism rates. Furthermore, Tripodi et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of stable employment in fostering a conducive environment for rehabilitation. The mesosystem examines interactions between different microsystems, such as the interplay between family dynamics and community support structures. Berg and Huebner illustrated how conflicts or synergies between a probationer's family and external support systems like rehabilitation programs critically affect their rehabilitation process. This intersystemic relationship underscores the need for coordinated community efforts in probationer support.

The exosystem refers to external societal structures and processes that indirectly influence probationers. Tripodi et al. (2010) demonstrated how societal factors like employment

opportunities and social welfare policies impact probationers' decisions and compliance with probation terms. The exosystem's indirect influence calls for a broader understanding of societal impacts on probationary outcomes. The macrosystem encompasses overarching cultural values, beliefs, and legal frameworks. Moriconi (2018) explored how societal attitudes toward crime and rehabilitation, alongside prevailing legal perspectives, shape probationers' experiences and decision-making processes. This systemic layer emphasizes the role of societal norms in framing the probation experience.

The chronosystem involves changes over time, including life transitions and societal shifts. Ray and Jones (2023) shed light on how the duration of probation and life transitions, such as reentering the community postincarceration, influence probationers' personal development. Additionally, legal reforms and community resource changes underscore the dynamic nature of the probationary experience.

The theory has been applied across various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and education, to examine how different types of environmental systems influence human behavior. For example, in juvenile legal settings, the theory helps researchers to select measures and outcomes, demonstrating its adaptability and relevance in diverse contexts (Fearnley, 2020). The theory has also been instrumental in shaping interventions and policies to improve human well-being by considering the multifaceted influences that environmental systems exert on individuals. However, the theory is not without its challenges. One of the main criticisms is its broad scope, making it difficult to operationalize and measure specific variables. Despite these challenges, the ecological systems theory remains a seminal framework for understanding the complex factors that shape human development and behavior.

A study conducted by Healy and Griffin (2023) extended the application of ecological systems theory to adult probation and parole, shedding light on the systems, processes, and actors that shape penal decision making. This multilevel framework allows a more comprehensive understanding of how external factors, such as community resources, family support, and societal norms, interact with internal factors like an individual's behavior and mindset. The theory thereby helps to tailor interventions that are not just punitive but also rehabilitative, considering the various environmental systems affecting an individual.

Sheerin et al. (2023) also explored connecting the theory to young adult offenders and ways to improve their outcomes. Research on juvenile delinquency often employs ecological systems theory to explore youth risk and protective factors across various social levels. Longitudinal studies such as the Pittsburgh Youth Study and the Pathways to Desistance Study have shown that individual, family, and community factors predict delinquent behavior. However, intervention studies often focus narrowly on recidivism, neglecting broader social-ecological variables.

To bridge this gap, the recommendation is to use ecological systems theory to select intervention outcome variables. Researchers should identify the social-ecological level at which their intervention operates, be it individual, family, or community. They should then choose mediators and outcomes that align with this level and the intervention's theory of change. For example, if the intervention targets the family microsystem, assess family functioning and parental discipline (Sheerin et al., 2023). Given the complexity of social ecology, it is impractical to measure every variable. Researchers should be selective, focusing on variables that can be reasonably measured and impacted by the intervention. For instance, an intervention to reduce aggression could also measure its effect on peer relations. Multisystemic therapy serves as a

concrete example of this approach. It targets multiple domains within an offender's microsystem, such as family and peers, and has been shown to affect both micro and mesosystem levels.

Multisystemic therapy research has indicated that assessing multiple ecological domains provides a nuanced understanding of intervention effects, emphasizing the need for a multilevel approach to study juvenile delinquency interventions.

This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens through which probationary services can be examined, highlighting the importance of considering a wide range of environmental factors in the rehabilitation and reintegration of probationers. Future research should explore these systemic interactions, potentially leading to more effective and holistic probationary practices.

Review of Research

Role of Probation Officers

Responsibilities and Duties

A probation officer is a specialized law enforcement official whose primary role is supervising individuals who have been released from incarceration but are still under legal control (Steiner et al., 2004). This sets them apart from other law enforcement agencies like the police, who are generally concerned with enforcing laws and making arrests. Probation officers are integral to the community corrections arm of the federal court system. They offer two main services to the court: investigation and supervision. Their work is more rehabilitative in nature, aiming to foster positive behavioral changes in probationers rather than focusing solely on punitive measures.

Probation as a profession began around 180 years ago with John Augustus, a Boston bootmaker and social activist (Sieh, 1993). He initially focused on helping men and drunkards

reform, later expanding to women and juveniles. Augustus helped these individuals find homes and jobs and often lent money for court fines. He became a full-time probation officer in 1847, advocating for probation over traditional punishment. However, this approach was controversial, and critics argued it was too lenient and threatened jailers' income.

Over time, probation evolved alongside the prison system. Initially, prisons were places for reflection but gradually included punishment (Roberts, 1997). By the late 1800s, the focus shifted toward humane treatment and reform. Despite this, the debate between punishment and reform has persisted, and the late 20th century saw a trend toward longer sentences and a get-tough-on-crime attitude.

Probation officers currently face the challenge of balancing offender reformation and public protection (Mueller, 2019). This balance is complicated by varying approaches among probation officers, as illustrated by the two sides officers on which teeter between social worker and law enforcer. Some officers favor treatment and leniency and others prefer incarceration for violations and strict restrictions. Nelson (2023) suggested that rehabilitation and community-based programs might be more effective than punishment alone. However, the role of probation officers remains complex, influenced by their origins in supervising misdemeanors and evolving to handle more serious felony offenses. It is not uncommon for an officer to supervise a dangerously violent client. This historical shift has implications for the training, recruitment, and management of probation staff, highlighting the ongoing debate in the field between rehabilitation and punishment.

Unlike traditional law enforcement officers, probation officers do not usually have the same level of authority to make arrests although this can vary depending on the jurisdiction. They often collaborate closely with community organizations and treatment programs, a feature

less common in other law enforcement roles (Steiner et al., 2004). Their scope of work is more confined, dealing specifically with individuals who have already been convicted and sentenced to probation. This contrasts with police officers who may deal with a broad range of individuals, from suspects to law-abiding citizens.

In terms of duties, a probation officer's responsibilities are multifaceted. They are tasked with monitoring probationers to ensure they adhere to all court-ordered terms, ranging from maintaining employment to adhering to curfews. They implement and track compliance with various court-ordered services and programs, including substance abuse treatment. Regular interviews with probationers are conducted to evaluate their progress, and drug and alcohol tests may be administered as part of this monitoring process. Probation officers also prepare detailed reports for court hearings, offering insights into a probationer's compliance or violations of their terms (Steiner et al., 2004).

In some cases, they act as first responders in emergencies involving probationers. They also serve as a liaison between the probationer and community organizations, providing additional support and resources. Legally, they have the authority to recommend changes in probation terms or report violations, which could result in further legal repercussions for the probationer. Their role also involves a significant amount of case management, including research, analysis of case files, record updates, and collaboration with colleagues. The role of a probation officer is distinct and multifaceted, making it different from other law enforcement agencies in both scope and function (Chavarria, 2016).

Challenges Faced

One of the most salient issues is the overwhelming volume of caseloads, which leads to an inundation of paperwork and looming deadlines (Westaby et al., 2023). These high caseloads

are a significant source of job-related stress, often causing officers to feel overwhelmed and ineffective in their roles. The stress emanating from these caseloads is not merely a matter of quantity but also of complexity because officers are required to deal with a difficult population that often includes individuals with substance abuse issues, mental health problems, and a propensity for noncompliance.

Adding to the complexity is the unpredictable nature of the job. Probation officers often find themselves in risky situations that can pose threats to their safety (Ersayan et al., 2022). The unpredictable schedules and the constant need to be on call add another layer of stress. This constant state of alertness and the emotional toll it takes can lead to job-related burnout and depression. Officers who feel unable to meet the demands of their job are at risk of experiencing burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Moreover, probation officers often experience a lack of voice in their professional settings. Despite the critical nature of their work, they sometimes find themselves sidelined in decision-making processes, contributing to a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (A. Givens et al., 2022). This lack of agency is not only demoralizing but also exacerbates the stress and burnout experienced by these professionals.

The stress may manifest in various forms, including physical illnesses like lower back pain and headaches, or it may result in officers becoming detached from their professional responsibilities (A. Givens et al., 2022). This detachment is particularly concerning because it can compromise the quality of service provided to probationers and the court system.

Stress

Lewis et al. (2013) identified prevalent stressors such as excessive paperwork, time constraints, financial worries, and family responsibilities. These stressors lead to symptoms, such as hypervigilance, emotional isolation, and disturbances, manifesting as secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue.

The stigma associated with mental health in law enforcement exacerbates the challenges faced by probation officers. This stigma, deeply rooted in the culture of law enforcement, often results in burnout and reluctance to seek necessary help (Padilla, 2023). The Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2018 highlighted the critical need for mental health support for officers, acknowledging their heightened risk of psychological and physical issues (Bonner & Crowe, 2019).

A supportive work environment is crucial to mitigate these stress effects. This includes accessible mental health resources, peer support, and a workplace culture that values mental and physical wellness. Education on healthy lifestyles and effective stress management is also essential (Denney et al., 2020).

The research has employed the challenge-hindrane occupational stress model and the bioecological model of well-being to frame the analysis (Bone, 2015; Webster et al., 2011). These models underscore the importance of an individual's perception of their environment in stress management. A positive workplace culture led by senior leadership is vital for reducing stress and enhancing the well-being of probation officers (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2018).

Effectiveness of Reentry Programs

Overview of Existing Programs

In the past, numerous studies delved into the impact of reentry programs on recidivism, examining both secular and faith-based initiatives. Researchers such as Bouffard and Bergeron (2006), Hunter et al. (2016), and Seiter and Kadela (2003) scrutinized various aspects, from prison-based programs to postrelease aftercare services. Although the results were mixed, certain factors, such as in-prison support and program completion, consistently emerged as significant in reducing recidivism rates. Olson et al. (2009) conducted an in-depth analysis of Illinois's comprehensive substance abuse treatment and aftercare programs. They discovered that probationers who received aftercare were 52% less likely to return to prison. However, they also noted that effective aftercare requires a long-term commitment, spanning 2 to 3 years, from both organizations and policymakers. Similarly, White et al. (2012) evaluated a New York City-based reentry program and found that participants who engaged in at least 90 days of postrelease services had significantly fewer returns to jail.

On a larger scale, Lattimore and Visher (2009) assessed the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, involving over 2,300 adult and juvenile males and females. Their findings indicated no significant difference in recidivism rates between Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative participants and nonparticipants. However, they observed that increased services led to modest improvements in housing, employment, and self-reported criminal behavior. In the realm of faith-based reentry programs, studies such as those by Johnson et al. (1997) and Hercik (2004) yielded mixed results. Although Johnson and Larson (2003) found that inmates who completed all phases of the InnerChange Freedom Initiative were 50% less likely to

be rearrested. Hercik's evaluation of a program in Tomoka, Florida, showed no significant reduction in rearrest rates among participants.

The existing body of research does not offer a definitive conclusion on the effectiveness of reentry programs to reduce recidivism. However, it does highlight the importance of factors such as resource provision, program duration, and participant commitment. Given the limited research on faith-based reentry programs, further studies are warranted to understand their unique elements and potential efficacy in comparison to secular programs. Another aspect of reentry programs is the community support model, in which emphasis is placed on mentorship, healthcare, and housing.

The Harvard Policy Program's report on successful reentry practices by Zhang (2019) highlighted programs that focus on these aspects and their efficacy. It delved into the factors that significantly affected successful reentry. The report emphasized the role of community-based programs and their focus on larger issues like healthcare, housing, and economic development. It also highlighted the importance of mentorship, especially when mentors and mentees are paired based on gender and racial/ethnic identities. The report argued for a multifaceted approach to reentry, suggesting that focusing solely on vocational training or job attainment is insufficient. It called for greater communication and collaboration between community organizations and local and state governments. The report also touched on the challenges posed by low-income neighborhoods that are not conducive to successful reentry. Overall, the report underscored the complexity of reentry and the need for a holistic, community-oriented approach.

Education-Based Programs

The relationship between education and recidivism among adult offenders is nuanced but provides a great picture of how impactful education is in reducing overall crime rates. Studies

targeting education-based reentry programs provide strong support for the hypothesis that educational achievement decreases recidivism (Barnett & Fitzalan Howard, 2018; Gerber, 1995; Lockwood et al., 2017; Wakefield, 2022; Walters, 2014). Lockwood et al. (2017) stated that 59.4% of adolescent prisoners are between 18 and 22 years old, and approximately only eight out of 10 completed primary education; in this same investigation, it was detected that 9.7% of adolescents had a previous legal process and 5% had previously been in a detention center. Education is an important category in daily life, but above all, a determining factor in economic and social development; it is the basis that can drive individuals to make long-term decisions that will impact every aspect of their life (Koo, 2015).

The issue is of vital importance when it could mean the difference between freedom and recidivism. Starting from the basis that the lack of education and the lack of job opportunities have been significant in the increase in crime, which has in turn led to an increase in the number of people deprived of their liberty in prisons, the question becomes “How can the situation be reversed?” Stopping the cycle means helping the correctional facilities promote effective strategies for social reintegration that promote education and occupational training, which improve the odds that the prison population can rejoin their community in a productive manner (McNeeley, 2023). Data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its document roadmap for the development of rehabilitation programs in prisons warned that investing in social reinsertion contributes to reducing the number of people who reoffend; therefore, the number of victims decreases and increases security in the community; furthermore, that the successful reintegration of offenders will mean that fewer of them appear again in court, return to prison and increase prison overcrowding (Wakefield, 2022).

One of the primary challenges for inmates who wish to further their education while in prison is the financial burden. In the United States, prior to 1994, this issue was partially mitigated by the availability of Pell grants. These federal subsidies were specifically designed to assist students, including inmates, who couldn't afford college tuition (Gerber, 1995). Education in halfway houses can be a trigger for crime reduction; what is known now and what should be the focus moving forward is the interest in education programs among incarcerated adults is high. Because at least 42% have completed some level of education during their current prison term, and one in five, which is approximately 21%, are studying to obtain a degree or formal credential, that is, providing the necessary skills translates not only into reintegration opportunities but also into less recidivism, more security, more jobs and, above all, less violence (Roessger et al., 2021).

In the imprisonment of adolescents and young people, the immediate cessation of educational programs violates their constitutional rights; therefore, it is the state that must ensure the protection of the educational process within correctional institutions (Scott, 2016). However, the author recognized that the educational instruction process should result in the inmate being made to ignore that he is in a detention center. The state has an obligation to protect a fundamental right, but it is obviated in a certain way that the educational function does not entail ignoring facts, but on the contrary, making the young person participate in social responsibility for the act committed, thus linking to the restoration of the damage. The study explained a proposal implemented in jail based on the model of participation and coexistence, which has led to successful educational results and promoted reorientations of pedagogical models. The author insisted that the processes of reeducation as a substantive part of the penitentiary action motivate changes through participatory dynamics that in turn promote citizen skills.

Lockwood et al. (2012, 2017) analyzed the social factors that lead to young adult delinquency (incidence and recidivism): lack of family attention, accumulated hatred, low participation of adolescents in groups oriented to human improvement, little few suitable staff to care for adolescents and young people in the centers, and low awareness of the specific concerns of the age groups to attend to. If tasks aimed at solving those factors were implemented, one would be able to work educationally so that adolescents and young people assume responsibility for acts committed while strengthening their self-esteem to be able to face spirit-adverse situations at the time of graduation (Lockwood et al., 2012). When the phrase “treatment models” in the young adult penal system is mentioned, it generally refers to recidivism and how to reduce it. Lockwood et al. (2017) stated that the pedagogical model should carry out human accompaniment to promote prosocial actions linked to restorative care, especially with restoration from the judiciary.

Drawing attention to some of the psychosocial and educational characteristics of young people was the work of Walters (2014), evidencing how young adult delinquency is on the rise. Institutions often underestimate the diagnoses of psychosocial characteristics. Similarly, Walters profiled recidivist adolescents: 80% of nonrecidivist cases do not reintegrate into society either, which can lead them to relapse in the future. He insisted that the educational process with these young people should facilitate labor reintegration as a strategy to avoid criminal recidivism. Additionally, Ilijic (2014) reflected on certain characteristics of the youth criminal justice system as well as rehabilitation and social reintegration programs. According to standards, the focus on reintegration education should emphasize empowerment, self-esteem, responsibility, critical thinking, autonomy, and a sense of community identity. For program administrators, understanding the role and identity of individuals within the legal framework is essential.

Therefore, they must work to strengthen these individuals' self-awareness and their understanding of the impact they had on society.

Music (2012), Hall (2015), and Ellison et al. (2017) analyzed the motives and mortality rate of young probationers. They recognized that the main cause of death of these young people is homicide linked to criminal activities in reintegration contexts. The scarce opportunities and guarantees granted to these young people, together with the lack of knowledge of their psychosocial condition, motivate recidivism. Some proposals, such as that of Barnett and Fitzalan Howard (2018), allow showing the direct perspective of adolescents who are considered synonymous with imprisonment punishment and the generation of social stigma. For them, confinement transcends the process of freedom. It is relevant how young people reveal that imprisonment does not cure but rather isolates and brings with it negative dynamics within the centers, which demand strengthening violent practices as a means of survival.

Austin (2017) explained how the school deficit stimulates antisocial behaviors. They analyzed a sample of 18 adolescents integrated into an individual schooling program as inmates in correctional institution units. It has been shown that improving schooling begins to overcome the school deficit and with it, social resilience, social skills, and emotional strengthening. In the same line of thought, Bozick et al. (2018) reaffirmed the importance of educational processes as a mechanism to significantly reduce recidivism while they criticized the inadequate legislation on the subject that privileges the technological, leaving aside the vocational training and the educational environment in general. Gould (2018) suggested some gaps in the prison system for adolescents and youth including the following: lack of pedagogical perspectives and epistemological approaches, weaknesses in curricular organization and teaching resources,

absence of work teams, and little appreciation of teaching work in the context in which it is developed.

All the foregoing translates into programs that have little emphasis on critical thinking, making it less likely that students will evaluate their environment and their own actions (Brewster & Sharp, 2002). The main rates of school dropout coincide with the violent trajectory, the formation of social stigma, and community exclusion. Magee's (2021) study showed that adolescents believe in school as a transforming and inclusive element despite having suffered situations of abandonment within it. From another perspective, Pelletier and Evans (2019) reviewed university extension projects carried out interinstitutionally. In these, university students who are trained as future teachers are oriented with commitment, teamwork, and vocational disposition toward scenarios of criminal confinement or punitive confinement. From this practice, an attempt was made to review pedagogical routes and didactic strategies consciously to determine the most similar to this kind of scenario.

Mardirossian and Esmail (2017) agreed that university education in correctional facilities (sports practices, cooperative challenges, and playful learning) commits the young university student to the empowerment of those who will have to reintegrate into society as different people. The authors recognized the importance of including physical education in educational centers for incarcerated young adults. The authors encouraged people to reflect on what they called dogmas in sports practices: homogenization and performance model. One of the fundamental perceptions in the teaching process is related to the professionals who work in protection centers for adolescents. Sedgley et al. (2010) addressed several issues, including meeting professionals' needs and addressing emotional aspects to ensure their long-term commitment to the center. The study also discussed the importance of tailoring educational

projects to individual students, making them flexible and measurable. It emphasized the crucial role of social initiatives to shape educational projects and direct interventions with young adults. Finally, the study called for alignment between regulations and quality standards in common practices in correctional centers.

Abrah (2019), who analyzed the educational model in the centers, explained that the concept of the young adult offender is accompanied by attributes unfavorable to young people. This affects the direct perception of the intervention model that emphasizes overcoming certain characteristics considered negative. Teijon-Alcala and Birkbeck (2019), in their background survey proposal investigations, highlighted the concept of adolescence, usually related to words such as conflict, violence, offenders, or crime. Such a way of naming certainly entails direct links with the school environment inside and outside the centers. The authors emphasized that the conditions of permanence in the educational system intracorrectional facilities do not constitute a guarantee at the time of discharge.

Hiddleston (2015) recognized that the legal reforms implemented in California have promoted a less punitive approach. Seeking to reduce penalties, California has increased its resistance to the change. The most important thing turns out to be the construction of public policies focused on the educational and restorative approaches in correctional institutions. The author reported some of the measures taken by the government to offer education to young people and adults residing in correctional facilities. In the socioeducational field, as in any other social practice, abuse can appear. Consequently, Hiddleston explained that despite the great progress in the defense of human rights in socioeducational care units for judicialized adolescents, practices of violence and neglect are presented. This has led to the development of political practices aimed at overcoming those experiences. The work provides a valuable

analysis; the socioeducational should not only be thought of in the dynamics of internal-relational structures of the centers but also in their precarious architecture, designed more for imprisoning than for the reformation or resocialization of subjects. Such physical-spatial structuring, together with what is assumed to be an institution that deprives liberty, ends up imposing different types of power relations, more than formative, learning, and knowledge relations.

Norris (2022) stressed the importance of prioritizing the formulation of policies focused on restorative justice to reduce the gaps derived from school training and prison. This would reduce incidents of negative behavior in the school; thus, community building is prioritized, and student leadership is encouraged. However, Barnett and Fitzalan Howard (2018) emphasized the application of a relevant legislative principle, that of opportunity in the judicial process that an inmate can take, linking directly with the processes developed from restorative justice in the European Union. They insisted on the rights and duties of young offenders while characterizing the main problems that can lead to recidivism. From retributions to restorative justice, Norris pondered the advantages of the restorative process with a view to the resocialization of offenders. Although the restorative focuses on change, the process and the damage should not be distorted, with a view to avoiding recurrence. In the same way, it ensures the risk of revictimization. It is about looking for responsibility within the community to offer from their routes aimed at improving the social quality of those involved. The justice system for adolescents and young adults is based on its protective, educational, and restorative ideas. Some proposals address studies on the intervention with inmates from the perspective of educating them for peace. This type of gaze is linked directly with the restorative model because it seeks to mediate between the victim and the offender with community organizations aimed at repairing

the damage. Hence, Kohli et al. (2019) affirmed that the peace education approach does not focus on the punitive aspect. On the contrary, it associates the restoration of rights with privileging the rights of the victims, the responsibility of the individuals before the law, justice, and the processes of nonrepetition of damage. Empathic awareness of the intervention must be generated education based on emerging pedagogies that consider the subjectivities and the development of individuals in their environments.

Crime and Recidivism in San Francisco

Socioeconomic Conditions

San Francisco, which was once a city synonymous with technological innovation, cultural diversity, and a high standard of living, is currently facing a severe socioeconomic crisis. This decline is not a byproduct of external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic; rather, it is deeply embedded in the city's own policies, social norms, and economic structures (Khan, 2022).

San Francisco's once-thriving business district is now on life support. The increase in vacant office space by 290% is not just a number; it is a glaring indicator of the city's failing economic health. Convention attendance, a significant revenue source, has dwindled by 86%, and the use of the BART subway system in commercial areas has decreased by 75%. These are not just pandemic aftershocks; these statistics are from the first quarter of 2022, long after most COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. This suggests that the city's economic woes are not transient but systemic, requiring more than just short-term fixes (San Francisco Police Department, 2022).

The city's population decline is another alarming symptom of its socioeconomic malaise. San Francisco lost 6.5% of its population within a single year, outpacing any other major city in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). There has been a mass exodus that reflects the city's inability to retain its residents because of deteriorating living conditions and opportunities.

Crime Rates

San Francisco presents a paradoxical picture when it comes to crime. The city has lower-than-average rates of violent crime but suffers from unusually high rates of property crimes like theft and burglary (Khan, 2022). The reported violent crime rate in San Francisco in 2020 was 21% below the average of the 20 most populous U.S. cities. In contrast, the city's property crime rate was 41% above average.

Interestingly, violent crimes are not the primary concern in San Francisco. The city's violent crime rates have declined significantly since the early 1990s, a trend consistent with the rest of the state (Khan, 2022). In 2020, the city's murder and aggravated assault rates were 55% and 45% lower than the average of 20 major cities, respectively. This decline could be attributed to various factors, including anti-gun violence initiatives and an aging population.

San Francisco's property crime rates are alarmingly high. In 2020, the city ranked in the top three cities with the highest property crime, reporting more than 4,400 incidents per 100,000 residents (Khan, 2022). The burglary rate was 67% above the average of 20 other major cities, and motor vehicle thefts were also higher than average at 37%. One contributing factor could be the city's role as a tourist destination and a commuter city, making it ripe for theft-related crimes.

The data reveal that San Francisco has a significant problem with repeat offenses, particularly in property crimes. The city averaged 5,844 property crimes per 100,000 residents in 2014. Moreover, 55% of those on pretrial release reoffend before trial, and this number rises to 74% for individuals with the most serious and violent offenses (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019). This revolving door of criminal activity suggests systemic issues that go beyond law enforcement capabilities.

Recidivism Factors

Economic Conditions

Economic conditions play a pivotal role in the cycle of recidivism, influencing both the likelihood of initial incarceration and reoffending postrelease. Economic downturns and limited employment opportunities significantly contribute to higher recidivism rates (Doleac & Penney, 2020). Doleac and Penney (2020) found that economic booms have a direct impact on reducing recidivism rates, suggesting that a thriving economy can serve as a protective factor against reoffending. Unemployment is often cited as a key economic factor contributing to recidivism. Drago et al. (2011) highlighted that poor prison conditions coupled with a lack of employment opportunities postrelease contribute to higher rates of reoffending. They also emphasized that employment status can significantly contribute to the success or failure of reintegration, thereby affecting recidivism rates.

Financial problems and debt have also been identified as predictive factors for recidivism. Individuals with financial difficulties are more likely to engage in criminal activities as a means of survival, thereby increasing the risk of reoffending (Khan, 2022). The economic conditions of neighborhoods and the administration of community corrections also play a role in recidivism. A study funded by the Office of Justice Programs (2011) painted a bleak picture for parolees, highlighting a vicious cycle of recidivism and economic instability. A staggering 70% of parolees are rearrested, and a mere 22% manage to secure formal employment upon release. The data further reveal that employment rates among parolees peak at 36% but then decline, and the majority earn below the poverty line.

When it comes to the role of neighborhoods, the relationship is intricate. Living in affluent neighborhoods seems to offer some protective benefits, reducing the likelihood of

rearrest and increasing the chances of finding employment (Office of Justice Programs, 2011). However, the long-term exposure to such neighborhoods does not seem to sustain these benefits. On the flip side, residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods increases the risk of parole violations but curiously lowers the risk of being arrested again. This could reflect policing strategies that vary by neighborhood or perhaps other unexplored factors. Stable neighborhoods appear to be beneficial to reduce all forms of recidivism, but they do not seem to offer any advantages in the labor market. Interestingly, neighborhoods with a higher proportion of young people correlate with increased risks of rearrest and parole violations.

Employment does serve as a protective factor against recidivism, but it does not act as a buffer against the negative impacts of neighborhood characteristics (Jacobs & Skeem, 2021). Jacobs and Skeem (2017) concluded that understanding the plight of parolees is not as simple as looking through the lens of economic disadvantage; it is a complex interplay of various factors, including the socioeconomic and structural aspects of the neighborhoods they reside in. Therefore, any interventions aimed at reducing recidivism and improving labor market outcomes for parolees must consider a multifaceted approach that goes beyond the traditional focus on poverty (Office of Justice Programs, 2011).

From a policy perspective, understanding the impact of economic conditions on recidivism can guide the development of targeted interventions. On the other hand, from an individual perspective, economic hardship can serve as both a motivator and a barrier to reintegration, thereby affecting recidivism rates. One key takeaway is the significant impact of neighborhood context on parolee outcomes. Policies encouraging parolees to reside in more advantaged neighborhoods could improve employment rates and reduce recidivism. Given that parolees often end up in disadvantaged areas, spreading them across diverse neighborhoods

could be beneficial (Brenda et al., 2002). Practical steps include requiring parole agents to assess neighborhood conditions before approving a move, which would necessitate better data collection in such contexts (Fagan et al., 2003).

Another policy angle focuses on how parole supervision is conducted. Current risk assessment tools mainly consider individual attributes, overlooking the neighborhood factors that influence reintegration. Incorporating these contextual elements could make assessments more accurate and lead to more effective, localized treatment programs (Mears et al., 2008). This place-based approach could extend to organizing community supervision, assigning agents geographically specific caseloads, and encouraging them to engage with local resources and communities. This would not only make supervision more effective but also foster a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities that specific neighborhoods present to parolees.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is a significant factor contributing to criminal recidivism, but its impact varies among demographics and types of substances used. According to a study by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, substance abuse variables were positively associated with mortality and criminal recidivism for male offenders but not for female offenders (Mannerfelt, 2018). The study also delved into gender-specific aspects of substance abuse. Although men historically dominate substance abuse research and policy, recent studies have begun to focus on women. Female offenders differ from males in several ways: they are more often convicted for drug and property crimes rather than violent crimes, and they report higher levels of psychiatric symptoms and experiences of abuse. This has led to calls for gender-specific interventions, such as individualized treatment and women-only groups.

However, a research gap persists. Most studies have focused solely on female populations, making it difficult to compare risk factors between genders. Mannerfelt (2018) addressed this by investigating differences in substance abuse patterns and associated risk factors between male and female offenders in the Swedish criminal justice system. This gender-specific impact suggests that substance abuse interventions may need to be tailored differently for men and women.

Belenko and Hamilton (2013) focused on high-risk offenders participating in court-supervised substance abuse treatment and found that certain characteristics were associated with recidivism. The United States has one of the highest rates of individuals in the criminal justice system, with a significant portion involved in drug-related offenses. Substance abuse is rampant among those entering the criminal justice system; many commit crimes to fund their drug habits, and some drugs even have psychopharmacological effects that increase violent behavior. More than 80% of state prison and local jail inmates have used an illegal drug, about 55% in the month before their arrest. High lifetime usage includes cocaine (42%), crack (24%), methamphetamine (23%), and heroin (19%). Belenko and Hamilton found that according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV criteria, 53.4% of inmates meet the criteria for drug abuse or dependence. This compares with an estimated 13.0% of men and 5.5% of women in community populations aged 18 years or older. Among offenders on probation, 69% reported ever using illegal drugs, including 32% using in the month before their current offense. Additionally, 32% of state prison inmates were under the influence of drugs at the time of the offense, and 16.5% reported committing their crime to get money to buy drugs.

The cycle of drug use and criminal activity is self-perpetuating, with high rates of recidivism among drug-involved offenders. Approximately 68% are rearrested within 3 years of

release (Belenko & Hamilton, 2013). However, there are effective treatment models that could potentially break this cycle. Their study reviewed the state of treatment access and effectiveness at each stage of the criminal justice system and identified key issues for improving access to effective treatment. Given the intertwined relationship between drug use and criminal activity, expanding access to effective treatment could be a pivotal step to reduce both drug abuse and crime rates. This implied that not all substance abuse treatments are universally effective, and individualized approaches may be necessary.

Moreover, the type of substance abuse also played a role in recidivism rates. Hackansson and Berglund (2012) found that criminal recidivism was associated more with heroin and amphetamine use than with alcohol. Although some crimes are committed to finance drug use, substance abuse is also associated with violent crimes.

Substance use history is a strong predictor for reoffending. Other predictors include prior criminal history, violent behavior, psychiatric hospital admissions, poor living conditions, male gender, younger age, and antisocial personality disorder (Hackansson & Berglund, 2012). Interestingly, Hackansson and Berglund (2012) found that being a mentally disordered offender was found to lower the risk of committing a new offense although other studies show an increased risk of multiple incarcerations for those with major psychiatric disorders.

The role of substance use to predict recidivism is well-established, but data on how different types of substances affect recidivism rates are limited. Hackansson and Berglund's (2012) study exhibited how individual drugs rank among each other and alcohol for crime type and recidivism likelihood. They focused on understanding how specific substance use patterns contribute to the risk of reoffending and also considered psychiatric issues and the severity and type of criminality. This nuanced approach aimed to provide a more comprehensive

understanding of the complex factors influencing recidivism among substance users. This suggests that interventions may need to be substance-specific to be effective.

Alternatively, Link and Hamilton (2017) found limited support for a reciprocal relationship between substance abuse and rearrest over time. This challenges the commonly held belief that substance abuse directly leads to recidivism, indicating that other factors may also be at play. The study took a nuanced look at the relationship between substance abuse and criminal behavior, particularly in adults reentering society after incarceration. Merging longitudinal and cross-sectional research methods, the study used panel data to scrutinize the time-lagged effects of drug use and criminal activity. Contrary to other research, they found that although drug use and rearrest are self-reinforcing behaviors, they are not necessarily causally linked. The real culprits appear to be stress and strain, often exacerbated by a high level of service needs, which significantly predict both substance use and reoffending. This relates to GST, which is discussed in the theory section of this literature review. Support systems, such as supervision and emotional family support, can act as buffers against these negative outcomes. Link and Hamilton challenged the reductive narrative of a straightforward drug-crime connection, advocating for a more holistic approach that addresses a range of service needs during the reentry process. However, the findings came with caveats, including missing data, potential bias in self-reporting, and limited generalizability because of the specific sample population. Despite these limitations, the research provided an alternative view and insights for crafting more effective reentry programs and policies.

Mental Health Issues

Mental illness is often considered to be a major contributor to crime and the reasons people commit repeat offenses. Zogba et al. (2020) conducted a study in New Jersey to challenge

that narrative and gain deep insight into the issue. Her New Jersey study offered a compelling look into the role of substance use disorders and mental illness in recidivism. By analyzing 36 months of postrelease data for nearly 10,000 inmates, she found a hierarchy of risk for rearrest. Those with substance use disorders but no mental illness were at the highest risk, followed by those with both conditions. Interestingly, inmates with only a mental illness diagnosis had the lowest rate of rearrest. This challenges the often-held notion that mental illness alone is a significant driver of recidivism. Instead, Zogba et al. shifted the focus toward substance use disorders as a more potent factor. The implication here is clear; correctional institutions aiming to reduce recidivism should prioritize addressing substance use disorders, especially for those reentering the community. This focus could be particularly beneficial in resource allocation because it suggests that tackling substance abuse could yield more significant reductions in recidivism than focusing solely on mental health issues. The results of this study support the first two hypotheses in this study. Released inmates diagnosed with mental illness who did not abuse substances were at no greater risk of recidivism than inmates who had neither of these problems. On the other hand, offenders with a substance use disorder were at higher risk of recidivism than offenders without a substance use disorder, independent of whether these individuals had a mental illness. Therefore, the study serves as a call to action for policymakers and correctional facilities to reevaluate their intervention strategies, placing substance use disorders at the forefront of their efforts to reduce recidivism.

Shishane et al. (2023) focused on how mental health is the primary issue that needs to be addressed. This South African study took a comprehensive approach to understanding the relationship between mental health disorders and recidivism, examining a sample of 280 incarcerated adult offenders. Using ecological systems theory, the study identified a 32.4%

recidivism rate and went beyond merely looking at mental illness. It incorporated a range of psychological factors, including anxiety, depression, substance use, and appetitive aggression, and found that a combination of these factors significantly elevated the risk of reoffending. This suggests that mental health in the context of recidivism is not a singular issue but a complex interplay of multiple psychological conditions. The study also noted group differences in education levels and types of criminal offenses among the established clusters, indicating that interventions need to be tailored to specific groups for maximum effectiveness. Unlike the New Jersey study by Zogba et al. (2020), which emphasized substance use disorders, the South African study by Shishane et al. called for a more nuanced, multifactorial approach to reducing recidivism. It highlighted the need for interventions that address a broader spectrum of mental health issues tailored to the unique psychological profiles of different offender groups. The study's focus on a non-Western context adds another layer of depth, suggesting that cultural and systemic factors can influence recidivism rates and the effectiveness of interventions. Therefore, the study serves as a critical reminder that tackling recidivism requires a multifaceted strategy that considers the complex psychological landscape of offenders.

Both Zogba et al.(2020) and Shishane et al. (2023) offered nuanced insights into the complex relationship between mental health and recidivism. Zogba et al.'s study, conducted in New Jersey, emphasized that substance use disorders are a more significant contributor to recidivism than mental illness alone. It suggested that correctional institutions should primarily focus on addressing substance use disorders to reduce recidivism rates. On the other hand, Shishane et al.'s study, based in South Africa, adopted a more holistic approach. It not only considered mental health disorders like anxiety and depression but also included other psychological factors like appetitive aggression. They found that a combination of these factors

significantly increases the likelihood of recidivism, suggesting the need for more tailored interventions. Although both studies highlighted the role of substance use, Shishane et al. expanded the scope to include a broader range of psychological factors. The geographical context also adds another layer of complexity; cultural and systemic factors in the United States and South Africa may influence the findings differently. Methodologically, Zogba et al. relied on postrelease data, offering a retrospective view, whereas Shishane et al. employed a cross-sectional approach, providing a more immediate snapshot of the incarcerated population. These differences in focus, methodology, and context between the two studies underscored the multifaceted nature of the relationship between mental health and recidivism, indicating that a one-size-fits-all approach to reducing recidivism is unlikely to be effective. This further supports the importance of feedback from individuals like probation officers who are directly involved in the process and can provide unique perspectives for their supervised population.

Approach to Change

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, a term coined by James V. Downton in 1973 and later expanded by Bernard M. Bass and R. E. Riggio in 2006, involves leaders working with teams to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration and executing the change in tandem with committed members of the group. This section of the literature review synthesizes research findings on the application of transformational leadership principles in law enforcement and service organizations.

Transformational leadership begins with idealized influence, wherein leaders establish themselves as ethical and exemplary role models. They gain the trust and admiration of their followers through consistent demonstration of commendable behaviors and adherence to high

moral standards (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This component is crucial in law enforcement and service organizations in which integrity and ethical conduct are paramount. Leaders in these sectors who embody these traits can effectively inspire confidence and loyalty among their teams (Decker, 2018).

Inspirational motivation involves leaders articulating a clear and appealing vision, motivating and inspiring followers to exceed their own self-interests for the sake of the team or organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In law enforcement, a leader who communicates a compelling vision of community service and protection can inspire officers to work toward these higher ideals beyond just fulfilling their basic job requirements (Jones & Rudd, 2008).

Intellectual stimulation is characterized by leaders who encourage innovation and creativity by challenging existing norms and processes. This aspect of transformational leadership is particularly vital for service organizations in which adaptability and continual improvement are essential for meeting the evolving needs of customers (Zhu et al., 2022). Leaders who foster an environment of learning and problem solving can drive significant improvements in service delivery and operational efficiency (R. J. Givens, 2008).

Individualized consideration refers to leaders who provide personal attention and mentorship to their followers, attending to their individual needs for achievement and growth (Bass, 1985). In the context of law enforcement, this could involve tailored development plans for officers, recognizing their unique strengths and career aspirations, thus fostering a more committed and competent workforce (Baro & Burch, 2009).

Transactional leadership, in contrast to transformational leadership, primarily focuses on the exchange that occurs between leaders and their followers. This leadership style is built on a system of rewards and penalties based on performance outcomes. Transactional leaders set clear

criteria for their followers and reward or punish them based on their performance against these criteria (Bass, 1985). The key differences between transformational leadership and transactional leadership are listed in the following sections.

Basis of Leadership. Transactional leadership is based on contingent rewards or disciplinary actions whereas transformational leadership is grounded in the leader's ability to inspire and motivate through vision and personal influence (Burns, 1978).

Focus on Compliance Versus Inspiration. Transactional leaders focus on maintaining routine by managing individual performance and facilitating group performance through a system of rewards and penalties. Transformational leaders, in contrast, aim to elevate individual and group performance by inspiring followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group or organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Approach to Change. Although transactional leaders tend to maintain the status quo and focus on efficiency within existing organizational structures, transformational leaders actively seek to change and improve the organizational culture by encouraging creativity and innovation (Avolio & Bass, 1995).

Transformational Leadership in Service Organizations

The dynamic and often high-stress environment of law enforcement requires a leadership style that not only manages the complexities of the job but also inspires and motivates officers. Transformational leadership is particularly effective in this context because of its focus on vision, inspiration, and individual consideration, which are essential for addressing the unique challenges faced by law enforcement agencies (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Community Relations. Transformational leadership in law enforcement can bridge the gap between police and the community. Leaders who prioritize communication and demonstrate

genuine concern for community issues can build trust and improve relations (Tyler & Huo, 2002).

Ethical Challenges. The ethical dimension of law enforcement work necessitates leaders who can model and enforce high ethical standards. Transformational leaders, by their nature of leading by example, can effectively instill a strong sense of ethics in their officers (Klockars et al., 2004).

Adaptability to Change. The rapidly evolving nature of crime, technology, and societal expectations demands law enforcement agencies to be flexible and innovative. Transformational leaders encourage creativity and are more likely to implement progressive policing methods (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010).

Organizational Culture. Transformational leadership fosters a positive organizational culture by promoting shared values, team cohesion, and a collective sense of purpose. This is crucial in law enforcement in which morale and unity are essential for effective functioning (Hickman & Reaves, 2012).

Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction. Studies have shown that transformational leadership in law enforcement correlates with higher levels of job satisfaction, reduced stress, and lower turnover rates among officers (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Morash & Kwak, 2007).

Effectiveness in Law Enforcement. Effective transformational leaders in law enforcement are linked to better community policing outcomes, improved crime rates, and enhanced overall department performance (Telep & Weisburd, 2012).

Transformational Leaders and Creating Change

Transformational leadership is pivotal to initiate and manage change within organizations. Leaders who adopt this style are not only visionary but also adept at motivating

their team to embrace new ideas and approaches. Their focus on innovation and creativity is crucial in today's fast-paced and ever-changing environment. Bass and Riggio (2006) emphasized that transformational leaders are key drivers of change because they encourage their followers to transcend their immediate self-interests for a greater good, thereby fostering an environment where change is not only accepted but also sought after.

Transformational leaders foster a culture of innovation by challenging the status quo and encouraging creative problem solving (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In sectors like law enforcement, in which rapid response to new challenges is crucial, transformational leaders play a vital role in ensuring adaptability (Hickman & Reaves, 2012). The ability of transformational leaders to connect with their employees on a personal level leads to higher levels of engagement and morale. This personal connection is achieved through individualized consideration, a key component of transformational leadership whereby leaders provide support and encouragement to personal development and recognize individual contributions (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership is linked to higher job satisfaction, which can lead to lower turnover rates, which is especially critical in high-stress professions like law enforcement (Morash & Kwak, 2007).

By empowering their employees, transformational leaders create an environment in which employees feel valued and part of the organization's success (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Trust and collaboration are fundamental in any organization, but they are especially critical in law enforcement and service organizations in which the stakes are high and public scrutiny is intense. Transformational leaders, through their ethical and inclusive approach, build trust not only with their teams but also with the communities they serve. Transformational leaders enhance team cohesion by promoting a shared vision and collaborative work environment (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In law enforcement, transformational leaders play a significant role in building and

maintaining trust within communities, which is essential for effective policing (Tyler & Huo, 2002).

Transformational leadership presents a compelling framework to induce positive change in law enforcement and service organizations. By inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and caring for their employees, transformational leaders can foster environments conducive to innovation, higher performance, and improved community relations. However, successful implementation requires awareness of the model's limitations and the unique challenges within these sectors.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this research, I adopted a constructivist paradigm, emphasizing the subjective interplay between reality and human experience. My chosen approach was a qualitative phenomenological study focusing on deep contextual understanding. A phenomenological study allows the researcher to explore the common meaning for participants and their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodology seeks “to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between researcher and the participants in the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). Data collection relied on semistructured interviews, ensuring flexibility to explore emergent themes while maintaining a structured line of inquiry. Creswell and Creswell (2018) concluded that qualitative interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently coded for thematic analysis. I used NVivo software to aid in organizing and categorizing data. Ethical considerations were paramount; participants were informed of their rights, confidentiality was upheld, and all data were anonymized. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was secured prior to data collection.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of probation officers on the central phenomenon of recidivism and reentry program effectiveness in San Francisco. The participants in this study were probation officers who operate in the San Francisco criminal justice system. Recidivism was defined in this study as the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend; the effectiveness of reentry programs was generally defined as their capacity to reduce

the recidivism rate and facilitate successful societal reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

What are probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco?

Research Subquestions

1. What are probation officers' perspectives on the effectiveness of current rehabilitation programs?
2. What are probation officers' perspectives on the efforts to foster successful reintegration into society?
3. What are probation officers' perspectives regarding their ability to supervise and guide probationers effectively through reentry programs?
4. In what ways do probation officers believe that reentry programs align with or deviate from the principles of the general strain theory?

Protection of Human Subjects

The research conducted in this study was approved by the IRB on April 16, 2024. Committee members and I were required to complete human subject training. The subjects involved in this project do not belong to a protected class under IRB guidelines. Each participant was sent a voluntary participation letter requesting participation in the study (see Appendix A). Study participants were provided a consent form, which they were asked to review, sign, and return before an interview was conducted (see Appendices B and C). Each participant was asked whether they had a clear understanding of the purpose of the study and informed that the

interview process was fully voluntary. Participants were also notified that if they no longer want to take part in the study at any point, they would have the option to opt out. All participants were ensured that their identity and participation would remain confidential. All collected digital data were destroyed, and recording media was formatted. Any physical forms or documentation were shredded.

Researcher Bias

In qualitative research, especially in studies that focus on understanding people's experiences, the issue of researcher bias can be a big problem and requires careful attention. This issue becomes particularly acute in instances in which the researcher's background is intimately entwined with the subject of inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am a probation officer and a former employee of the San Francisco Adult Probation Department. Yet I am embarking on a study examining probation officers' perceptions of the effectiveness of reentry programs on recidivism in San Francisco. My personal experiences and preconceptions inherently risk coloring the study's outcomes. This section delineates strategies to mitigate such biases, thereby preserving the integrity of the research.

The first line of defense against bias is the acknowledgment of its potential presence. A reflexive approach, in which researchers actively recognize and contemplate their previous roles and experiences, serves as a crucial step. This introspection forms the foundation for a mindful engagement with the data, sensitizing the researcher to the nuances of objectivity and subjectivity interplaying in their analysis.

Engaging in a continual dialogue with impartial peers forms a critical part of this introspective process. Such peer reviews act as a mirror, reflecting biases and assumptions that the researcher might overlook. Colleagues, particularly those unaffiliated with the study or its

subject matter, can provide invaluable critiques of the research methodology, findings, and interpretations, offering an external perspective that counters potential biases.

Bracketing, a technique specific to phenomenological research, involves the deliberate suspension of the researcher's preconceptions and experiences during data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method requires researchers to consciously set aside their insider knowledge and perspectives, approaching the data with a fresh, unbiased lens.

Documenting and explicitly articulating each step of the research process serves as a testament to the study's credibility. By providing a clear roadmap of my methodologies and decision-making processes, I allowed the work to be scrutinized and evaluated on its merits, independent of my personal background. Moreover, as a probation officer I have been extensively trained in objectivity. Participation in training sessions focused on objectivity and recognition of unconscious biases further equipped me with tools to maintain an impartial stance.

In conclusion, the confluence of these strategies forms a robust framework for mitigating researcher bias. Through conscientious application of these methods, the integrity and validity of this phenomenological research can be steadfastly upheld despite the inherent challenges posed by my personal history.

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach, blending qualitative interviews, qualitative surveys, and document analysis to investigate San Francisco reentry programs thoroughly. Through semistructured interviews with probation officers, I gained deep insights into their views on recidivism causes, the effectiveness of current interventions, and their firsthand experiences with reintegration, illuminating both the individual (GST) and systemic (ecological systems theory) challenges encountered. Complementing this were surveys targeting a wider

range of stakeholders, including both officers and program participants, on their perceptions of recidivism causes and intervention effectiveness, adding an objective breadth to our understanding. The inclusion of document analysis, reviewing program reports, recidivism statistics, and policy documents offered a vital contextual backdrop, enriching our findings with an institutional perspective. This triangulated methodology promised not only to enhance the study's validity but also to provide a nuanced, multidimensional analysis of recidivism and reentry efforts in San Francisco, aimed at uncovering actionable insights for program and policy optimization.

Population

The population for this study included probation officers working in San Francisco. The study only included participants whose primary role was client supervision and reentry services. The officer needed to have worked as a probation officer for at least 5 years. There were 111 officers in the city who met the criteria for this study. This population was vital for insights because of their unique, long-term experience supervising clients and aiding reentry. Their tenure ensured depth in understanding and their specific role pinpoints the nuances of the probation process in San Francisco. Their insights revealed systemic strengths, gaps, and areas for enhancement.

Sample

Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that researchers interview from five to 25 individuals when conducting a phenomenological study. The number of individuals this study included was 11 probation officers who met the population requirements. This number of participants was sufficient for the phenomenological study and allowed a more accurate picture of how the various programs impact recidivism. The study used a purposive sampling design given the

selection criteria. I planned to interview only the first 20 officers who agreed to participate if more volunteers than needed signed up. The survey was sent to all stakeholders via email; participation was voluntary. A total of 27 respondents replied and completed the survey.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this qualitative study were individual, face-to-face, or video call interviews and a free response survey. The interview questions were semistructured and open ended (see Appendix D). The survey questions were open ended, with no response length guideline (see Appendix E). The interviews and surveys were focused on the participant's lived experience participating in the reentry process. The interviews were recorded via a recording device and later transcribed after their completion. For interviews conducted virtually, Zoom was used to record and transcribe the interview. Surveys were administered through Qualtrics utilizing a confidential link. Participants were provided with copies of their interviews and asked to confirm the validity of the transcripts for accuracy.

Interview Questions

The interview questions were as follows:

1. Describe your experiences with reentry programs in San Francisco.
2. How do you perceive the impact of these programs on recidivism rates?
3. Share a specific instance where a reentry program significantly affected an individual's journey postincarceration.
4. Name specific areas in the reentry process that consistently pose difficulties.
5. How do these challenges affect your work as a probation officer?
6. Propose any changes or additions to the current reentry programs that might enhance their effectiveness.

7. In your opinion, how do reentry programs align with the principles of general strain theory? (Theory will be discussed and defined with participant).
8. Provide examples of where reentry programs either support or deviate from these principles.

Survey Questions

The survey questions were as follows:

1. Background experience: Describe your role and experience working with reentry programs in the San Francisco. What has been your primary focus?
2. Causes of recidivism: In your view, what are the main reasons individuals reoffend after participating in reentry programs? How do these factors interplay in the context of San Francisco?
3. Program effectiveness: From your perspective, what aspects of the current reentry programs work well, and why? Are there any particular strategies or approaches that you find most beneficial in reducing recidivism?
4. Gaps in service: Can you identify any gaps or areas where the reentry programs could be improved? What resources or interventions are missing that could aid in the reintegration process?
5. Challenges in reintegration: Describe some of the challenges you or the individuals in the reentry programs have faced during the reintegration process. How have these challenges impacted the effectiveness of reentry efforts?
6. Training and resources: Reflect on the training and resources available to support individuals in reentry programs. Do you feel adequately equipped to address their needs? What additional support would be beneficial?

7. Success stories: Share a story or example in which a reentry program significantly impacted an individual's successful reintegration. What factors contributed to this success?
8. Systemic issues: How do systemic issues in San Francisco (e.g., housing, employment, social services) affect recidivism and reintegration efforts? What role does the probation department play in navigating these challenges?
9. Recommendations for improvement: Based on your experience, what recommendations would you make to enhance the effectiveness of reentry programs? Consider program structure, support services, policy changes, or any other areas in which you see potential for improvement.
10. Vision for the future: How do you envision the future of reentry programs in San Francisco? What changes or developments would you like to see to support better individuals transitioning back into the community?

Data Collection

Triangulation is well established in qualitative research; Denzin (1978) defined it as the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Triangulation in qualitative research is crucial to enhance the validity and reliability of findings by combining multiple methods to investigate a research question (Flick, 2018). This approach helps to cross verify data collected through different sources, reducing the bias inherent in using a single method. This study employed three specific instruments: in-person interviews, surveys, and document analysis. In-person interviews provided detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, allowing for a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study. Surveys offered data from a larger sample, enabling the generalization of findings. Document analysis

complemented these methods by examining existing records to provide historical and contextual background. Together, these methods ensured a comprehensive analysis of the research topic.

Data were recorded via a digital recording device and securely stored on encrypted drives to be transcribed away from the interview location. Providing different methods of conducting the interview, either in person or via electronic means, helped to reduce travel strain and scheduling issues with prospective participants. Recording the interviews and focusing on the conversation with the participant allowed for a better rapport to be established and helped the interviewees feel comfortable expressing their perspectives. Collected data had personal identifiers redacted and labeled by numeric identifiers to separate participant data.

A structured approach using Qualtrics for survey dissemination and data collection was employed to collect survey data. The survey consisted of open-ended questions to elicit detailed insights, followed by a pilot test to ensure clarity and functionality. Participant recruitment was facilitated through email outlining the study's objectives, emphasizing confidentiality, and underscoring the voluntary nature of participation. The survey link was distributed via email, and subsequent reminders were sent to maximize response rates to ensure accessibility across various devices and providing technical support as necessary. To guarantee confidentiality, Qualtrics settings were adjusted to prevent the collection of identifiable information, and data security measures were strictly adhered to, restricting access to authorized personnel only. The collection period spanned from April 16th to May 11th; during this time, response rates were closely monitored and final reminders were issued to encourage full participation. Upon closing the survey, I acknowledged and thanked participants through a follow-up email, marking the completion of the data collection phase.

The document analysis of recidivism statistics began with identifying and sourcing relevant statistical documents, such as annual reports, recidivism studies, and program evaluation outcomes, from credible sources, including departmental archives, governmental databases, and the California Baptist University library academic database repository. These documents were cataloged and organized, ensuring easy retrieval and analysis. Ethical considerations, especially the confidentiality and responsible handling of sensitive data, were paramount throughout the analysis.

Data Analysis

The interview and survey data were subjected to a multifaceted analysis to yield comprehensive insights. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes or patterns in probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and intervention effectiveness. The process commenced with an in-depth familiarization phase, wherein I immersed myself in the interview transcripts to identify initial insights and understandings. Subsequent to this immersion, initial codes were generated, segmenting the data into meaningful units that highlighted significant aspects related to recidivism and reentry programs. These initial codes were then organized into potential themes, by which I aimed to capture broader patterns and insights reflective of the probation officers' experiences and perspectives. Following the identification of these themes, a rigorous review process ensued, ensuring the themes accurately represented the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole. This involved refining themes to more precisely encapsulate the essence of the data. Each theme was clearly defined and named, providing a succinct and accurate depiction of the data's underlying dimensions. This helped categorize common viewpoints and align them with the theoretical frameworks of GST and ecological systems theory.

Sentiment analysis was used to gauge the emotional undertones in the officers' responses, providing an additional layer of understanding regarding their optimism or pessimism about current rehabilitation programs and systemic issues. This method allowed me to understand the probation officers' attitudes toward these programs by identifying whether their comments were positive, negative, or neutral. I started by thoroughly reading the interview transcripts to pick up on initial sentiments. After this initial review, I coded the data, marking phrases or sentences with positive, negative, or neutral tags based on the sentiments they expressed. This coding helped me organize the data into categories that reflected the probation officers' overall sentiments. I then reviewed these categories carefully to ensure they accurately represented the officers' views, adjusting them if necessary to capture the data's nuances more precisely. Each category of sentiment was clearly defined and named, providing a straightforward depiction of the probation officers' attitudes toward recidivism and reentry programs. Together, these methods provided a robust, multidimensional analysis of the data.

The document analysis involved deploying qualitative content analysis techniques alongside quantitative data evaluation methods to scrutinize the recidivism rates, patterns, and trends over time, particularly before and after the implementation of specific reentry initiatives. This analysis was grounded in the theoretical frameworks (GST and ecological systems theory) that align with the research questions, facilitating a systematic examination of the data in the context of existing literature on criminal justice and rehabilitation. Critical to this process was the triangulation of findings from the document analysis with qualitative insights derived from interviews and surveys, offering a comprehensive view of the factors influencing recidivism.

Design and Instrument Limitations

This study's design and instrumentation came with several limitations. First, the use of semistructured interviews, although rich in qualitative data, may introduce interviewer bias and limit the generalizability of findings. Second, the focus on probation officers in San Francisco narrowed the scope, potentially making the results less applicable to other regions or demographics. Thematic analysis, although useful for identifying patterns, may have overlooked nuances or outliers that did not fit into predefined themes. Sentiment analysis can capture emotional tone but may misinterpret sarcasm or complex emotions. The study's reliance on self-reported experiences from probation officers may not fully align with objective measures of recidivism or program effectiveness, thus affecting the validity of the findings.

Summary

A qualitative approach in a constructivist paradigm was used to examine probation officers' perceptions of reentry programs and their impact on recidivism in San Francisco. The study employed semistructured interviews, which were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo for thematic analysis. To achieve triangulation of the qualitative data, a survey and document analysis were also used to add validity to the research. The study emphasized ethical practices with IRB approval and ensured participant confidentiality. The study's purpose was to delve into probation officers' firsthand experiences and assessments of rehabilitation programs to provide insights to inform and improve reintegration strategies. The research design focused on a descriptive qualitative approach using GST and ecological systems theory to provide a nuanced analysis of recidivism. It targeted probation officers with at least 5 years of experience for their in-depth knowledge. Interviews that were conducted face-to-face and electronically were recorded and transcribed, and data were stored securely and anonymized.

A multifaceted analysis interpreted the data, focusing on thematic and sentiment analysis to understand the officers' views and acknowledging potential limitations such as interviewer bias and the narrow scope of the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents and analyzes the qualitative data collected from semistructured interviews with probation officers in San Francisco. The chapter begins with a detailed explanation of the methodology used in the data collection process, including participant selection criteria, the interview protocol, and the ethical measures taken to ensure research integrity. This section highlights the study's commitment to rigorous qualitative research standards and its constructivist approach to understanding the complex realities of probation officers within their socioprofessional contexts.

Following the methodology section, the collected data are presented and organized thematically to reflect the key issues identified during analysis. Each theme is explored in depth and includes direct quotations from participants illustrating the probation officers' experiences and views on the effectiveness of reentry programs in reducing recidivism. The analysis is connected to the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, GST and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, providing a broader theoretical context for the findings.

The synthesis of the data offers a detailed understanding of the probation officers' perspectives on several critical areas, including the operational challenges of reentry programs, their alignment with the rehabilitative needs of probationers, and the systemic factors that affect successful reintegration into society. This discussion engages with existing literature, identifying areas of agreement and divergence, and highlighting the unique contributions of this research to the field of criminal justice.

Chapter 4 summarizes the key findings and sets the stage for Chapter 5, which explores the implications of these findings for policy and practice in criminal justice. The chapter aims to

contribute to the academic discussion on recidivism and reentry programs and provide actionable insights that could inform and improve current probation practices in San Francisco.

Purpose Statement

The primary objective of this study was to examine and clarify the perspectives of probation officers in San Francisco regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs to reduce recidivism rates. This study aimed to enhance the existing body of knowledge by critically analyzing how these professionals view the alignment of reentry initiatives with the rehabilitative needs of formerly incarcerated individuals and their impact on community safety and successful reintegration.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

What are probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco?

Research Subquestions

1. What are probation officers' perspectives on the effectiveness of current rehabilitation programs?
2. What are probation officers' perspectives on the efforts to foster successful reintegration into society?
3. What are probation officers' perspectives regarding their ability to supervise and guide probationers effectively through reentry programs?
4. In what ways do probation officers believe that reentry programs align with or deviate from the principles of the general strain theory?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The research methodology employed in this study was qualitative in nature, aimed at obtaining a deep, contextual understanding of the perspectives of probation officers regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco. The primary data collection method was semistructured interviews and an online survey, which provided the flexibility to probe deeply into the probation officers' experiences and insights and allowed the exploration of emergent themes.

Participant Sample

The participant sample consisted of probation officers working in San Francisco who have firsthand experience supervising probationers and engaging with reentry programs. The selection criteria for participants required that they have at least 5 years of experience in the field to ensure that they possess a substantial depth of professional experience and insight into the changes and effectiveness of reentry programs over time.

Description of Participants

The actual participants were a diverse group of probation officers in terms of age, gender, and ethnic background, reflecting a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives within the probation system. This diversity enriched the data collected, providing a wide array of viewpoints on the operational challenges, successes, and areas needing improvement in reentry programs.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were conducted using a guide prepared in advance, which included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the officers' views on reentry programs, their experiences with probationers, and their opinions on program alignment with

theoretical frameworks like the GST. Each interview was audio recorded with the consent of the participants, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically to identify patterns and draw conclusions about the overall effectiveness of reentry programs as perceived by those directly involved in their implementation. The survey was administered via an anonymous Qualtrics link, which allowed respondents to maintain confidentiality throughout the process. The survey consisted of open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses about the officers' views on reentry programming.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Data for this study were collected through 11 semistructured interviews with probation officers and 27 surveys completed by various stakeholders involved in the reentry process in San Francisco. This combination of interviews and surveys provided a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing perceptions regarding the efficacy of reentry programs in the area. The interview participants were labeled P1 through P11 and survey participants were labeled S1 through S27.

Overview of Qualitative Survey Data

The qualitative open responses gathered from the 27 survey participants provided nuanced insights into the perceived challenges and inefficiencies of these programs. Although the survey included structured questions, the open-ended responses allowed participants to elaborate on their views, contributing to a richer understanding of the factors influencing program efficacy. A prevailing theme across 80% of the responses was significant skepticism regarding the effectiveness of current reentry programs. Respondents frequently described these programs as underresourced, misaligned, and insufficiently targeted to address the real-world

challenges faced by former inmates. This general pessimism was underscored by comments such as those from Participant S1, who noted, “Programs are underresourced and misaligned.”

Economic barriers emerged as a critical theme, particularly in the areas of job opportunities and training. Many respondents highlighted the inadequacy of job training and placement services. Participant S2 remarked, “The training offered doesn’t meet the current job market demands, leaving many probationers unemployable in a competitive city like San Francisco.” Additionally, the high cost of living in San Francisco was repeatedly cited as a barrier to successful reintegration. Participant S3 observed, “Even if employment is secured, the wages are often not sufficient to cover basic living expenses in the city.” Housing insecurity was another major issue identified by the participants. The lack of stable, affordable housing was seen as a critical factor leading to high recidivism rates. Participant S4 emphasized, “Without a stable home, everything else falls apart.” This sentiment highlights the foundational role of housing in the reintegration process.

The effectiveness of support services, particularly substance abuse and mental health services, was also a significant concern. Although these services are available, only a minority of respondents viewed them as effective. Many pointed out that these services are overwhelmed and underfunded. Participant S5 stated, “Substance abuse services are overwhelmed,” and Participant S6 noted, “Mental health services are underfunded.” Systemic and structural issues were frequently discussed as barriers hindering the efficacy of reentry programs. Issues such as stigma against former inmates and rigid probation requirements were mentioned as factors that complicate the reintegration process. Participant S8 highlighted the prevalent stigma, saying, “Stigma against former inmates is prevalent,” and Participant S7 noted, “Release limitations complicate reintegration.”

The synthesis of these survey responses painted a detailed picture of the challenges facing reentry programs in San Francisco. Stakeholders expressed a deep concern over the alignment between program offerings and the actual needs of those they are designed to help. The narrative data strongly suggest that improvements are necessary, particularly in economic integration efforts and housing stability, to enhance the effectiveness of these programs. The insights also pointed to a broader systemic reform needed within the criminal justice and social support systems to better support reintegration efforts. Enhanced funding, targeted support services, and systemic changes to reduce stigma and increase employment opportunities for former inmates were among the critical steps suggested by respondents. The need for a holistic approach that addresses these multifaceted issues is evident, and the ultimate goal is creating a more supportive environment for individuals reentering society.

Qualitative Interview Findings

The sentiment analysis of the interviews conducted with 11 probation officers was a critical aspect of the qualitative data examination. This process involved several steps to ensure a thorough and unbiased interpretation of the sentiments expressed during the interviews. Initially, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. The transcriptions were first subjected to open coding, whereby responses were read carefully, and key phrases or sentiments were highlighted. This step was crucial to identify preliminary themes and the general sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral) toward the effectiveness of reentry programs. After the initial coding, a more focused coding process was used to categorize the data into specific themes. This involved combining and comparing initial codes to refine the themes and establish connections between different data points. Sentiments expressed by participants were categorized into positive, negative, and neutral

based on the language and tone used in their responses. Positive sentiments were typically associated with successful aspects of the programs, negative sentiments with criticisms or areas of failure, and neutral sentiments with factual statements devoid of any emotional tone.

Economic challenges and job readiness emerged as a significant theme, frequently mentioned by the probation officers. This theme highlighted the lack of alignment between the job training provided by reentry programs and the actual job market demands in San Francisco. The sentiments associated with this theme were predominantly negative, reflecting frustration and concern about the ineffectiveness of current training modules to secure gainful employment for probationers. Housing and stability were another critical theme identified from the interviews. Stable housing was repeatedly highlighted as a crucial factor for successful reintegration and many officers pointed out the lack of affordable housing options for former inmates. The sentiments were overwhelmingly negative and were focused on the anxiety and instability caused by housing insecurity.

Support services, including mental health and substance abuse services, were frequently discussed. Although the existence of these services was acknowledged, their adequacy was often questioned. Mixed sentiments were noted in this theme with some positive feedback on the presence of these services but more prevalent negative sentiments about their capacity and reach. Systemic barriers were identified based on responses that addressed issues such as legal hurdles, societal stigma, and bureaucratic challenges within the probation system. The sentiments expressed were mostly negative, indicating a critical view of how systemic inefficiencies impede the reintegration process.

Program administration and resource allocation was a theme that emerged from discussions on how reentry programs were managed and the distribution of resources, including

funding. The sentiments in this category were generally negative, pointing to dissatisfaction with administrative oversight and the allocation of resources. The qualitative data from the interviews provide nuanced insights into the probation officers' perceptions and experiences. A recurring theme in the interviews is the impact of San Francisco's economic environment on recidivism. Probation officers consistently explained that although the city thrives economically, benefits are unevenly distributed, leaving many former inmates to struggle with homelessness and unemployment. This economic disparity was seen as a fundamental barrier to successful reintegration.

Many officers expressed concerns about gaps in the reentry programs, particularly in terms of their capacity to provide meaningful employment opportunities and affordable housing. The lack of targeted support for economic integration was viewed as a significant oversight that hinders the effectiveness of these programs. Despite the overall pessimism, some probation officers highlighted positive aspects of the support services provided, such as substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling. However, they also noted that these services are often underfunded and underprioritized, which compromises their availability and effectiveness.

The interviews also illuminated systemic barriers within the criminal justice system that exacerbate recidivism. These include stringent probation conditions and the stigma associated with a criminal record, which collectively limit opportunities for probationers to reintegrate successfully into society. Overall, the narrative descriptions shared by participants underscore the critical challenges and areas for improvement in reentry programs, emphasizing the need for a more holistic and well-resourced approach to support former inmates' reintegration into society.

Cross Analysis

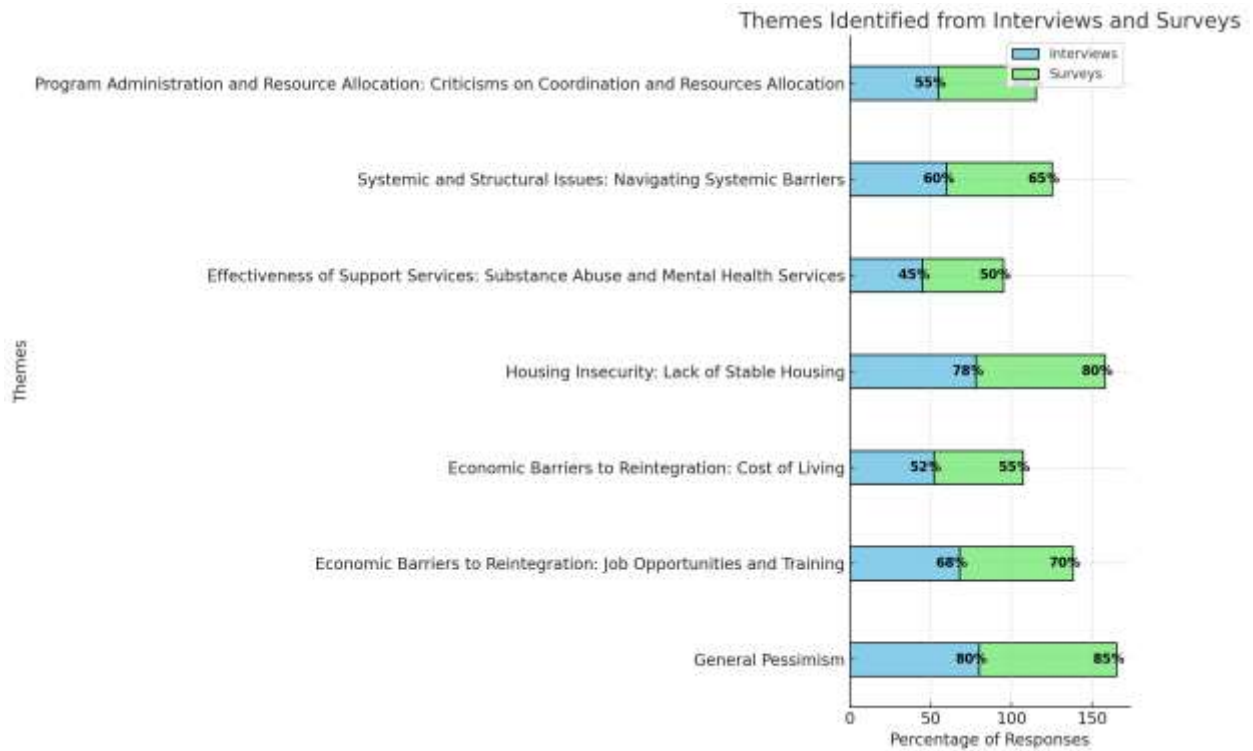
By cross analyzing these data sources, one can better understand the common themes, discrepancies, and synergies between the views of different stakeholders involved in the reentry process. Figure 1 represents in a visual representation of these common themes and how participant from the interview and survey responded. The theme of economic challenges and job readiness emerged prominently from both survey responses and interview data. Stakeholders from the surveys highlighted the disconnect between the skills provided by reentry programs and the job market demands, emphasizing a need for program realignment with market realities. This sentiment was generally negative. Similarly, probation officers in the interviews expressed concerns about the effectiveness of job training programs, noting that many probationers struggle to find employment because of irrelevant or inadequate training. Both data sets underscored the critical gap in job readiness, suggesting that reentry programs need to better align training with actual job opportunities and market needs in San Francisco.

Housing and stability were also significant concerns. Survey participants frequently cited the lack of stable, affordable housing as major barriers to successful reintegration, and negative sentiments predominated. Probation officers echoed this issue in the interviews, detailing the challenges that unstable housing poses to individuals attempting to reintegrate into society. The unanimous emphasis on housing across both data sources highlights the urgent need for integrating robust housing support within reentry programs. Support services, particularly those addressing substance abuse and mental health issues, received mixed reviews. Survey respondents recognized the availability of these services but critiqued their effectiveness. Probation officers provided a more nuanced view, acknowledging the services provided but criticizing their sufficiency and accessibility. Both surveys and interviews called for enhanced

support services, with a particular focus on scaling up resources and ensuring they are adequately funded and accessible.

Figure 1

Themes Identified From Interviews and Surveys



Systemic barriers were another critical theme. Survey responses frequently discussed systemic issues such as legal barriers and social stigma that hinder the reintegration process. Probation officers provided specific examples of how these systemic barriers manifest in their day-to-day interactions with probationers. Both groups recognized systemic barriers as a significant hindrance, suggesting a need for systemic reforms to reduce stigma and legal obstacles for probationers. Discrepancies in the data were observed in the emphasis on certain issues. For instance, probation officers might have focused more on the nuances of individual cases in their interviews, and survey responses tended to offer broader critiques of program

structures and policies. However, both data sources synergistically highlighted the inadequacies in economic and housing support, underscoring these as fundamental areas requiring urgent attention.

Document Analysis and Results

Document analysis revealed significant insights into recidivism rates in San Francisco and the broader United States. Approximately 43% of individuals released from the San Francisco County Jail were rearrested within 3 years (California Department of Justice, 2023). Specific subgroups, such as those convicted of burglary, showed even higher recidivism rates, with 72% rearrested and 45% reconvicted within the same period. Nationally, recidivism remains a critical issue. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2021) reported that 67.8% of released state prisoners were rearrested within 3 years, and 76.6% within 5 years. figures underscore the persistent challenges in reducing recidivism despite various interventions.

When comparing interview and survey data with document analysis, several themes emerged. Both probation officers and statistical data highlighted the high rates of recidivism, indicating that existing reentry programs may not be fully effective to prevent reoffending. The high recidivism rates in San Francisco align with national trends, suggesting systemic issues that extend beyond local contexts. The qualitative data from probation officers provided a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by reentry programs. Officers' insights into the lack of comprehensive support and the need for individualized approaches are reflected in the high recidivism statistics. For instance, Participant S2 emphasized that “the training offered doesn't meet the current job market demands,” which resonates with the overall sentiment that reentry programs need to align more closely with economic opportunities to be effective.

The interviews and surveys emphasized that without addressing underlying issues such as mental health, housing, and employment, reentry programs are unlikely to achieve significant reductions in recidivism. Probation officers frequently mentioned the lack of stable housing as a critical barrier to reintegration. Participant S4 noted, “Without a stable home, everything else falls apart.” This sentiment is echoed in the high recidivism rates because housing instability often leads to a cycle of reoffending.

Document analysis also highlighted successful initiatives that can serve as models. For instance, the Back on Track program in San Francisco, which targeted low-level, nonviolent drug offenders, successfully reduced recidivism among its participants to less than 10% over 2 years (California Department of Justice, 2015). This success underscores the potential of well-designed, targeted programs that address specific needs and provide continual support. The comparison of qualitative data from probation officers with quantitative recidivism statistics revealed a consistent narrative: reentry programs need to be more holistic and better funded to effectively reduce recidivism. Participant S6 pointed out that “mental health services are underfunded,” suggesting that addressing funding gaps could enhance the effectiveness of support services.

The synthesis of interview and survey data with document analysis points to the necessity for systemic reforms. Both probation officers and survey participants highlighted the negative impact of systemic barriers such as stringent parole conditions and societal stigma. Participant S7 mentioned, “Legal barriers complicate reintegration,” which aligns with the broader understanding that systemic inefficiencies hinder successful reentry. The comprehensive analysis of documents, interviews, and surveys provided a robust understanding of the factors influencing recidivism rates in San Francisco and the broader United States. The data suggest that addressing

economic challenges, housing instability, and systemic barriers and enhancing support services can significantly improve reentry program outcomes. Successful models like the Back on Track program offer valuable insights into designing effective interventions that can reduce recidivism and support former inmates in their reintegration journey. Insights from probation officers provided valuable context that can inform the design and implementation of more effective reentry strategies, highlighting the need for a holistic, well-funded approach to reducing recidivism.

Summary

The qualitative analysis, drawing from both survey and interview data, provided comprehensive insights into the perceptions of stakeholders about reentry programs in San Francisco. This summary consolidates the main findings, highlighting prevalent themes and common concerns shared by probation officers and other stakeholders. One of the key themes identified was the economic challenges and job readiness of probationers. There was a consensus among respondents that current reentry programs inadequately prepare probationers for the job market. Both probation officers and survey respondents emphasized the mismatch between the skills taught and the demands of San Francisco's job market. This misalignment significantly contributes to the difficulty probationers face to secure stable employment, further exacerbating recidivism risks. For instance, one survey respondent noted, "The training offered doesn't meet the current job market demands, leaving many probationers unemployable."

Housing and stability also emerged as critical factors for successful reintegration. Both data sets underscored the lack of affordable and stable housing options for probationers. Respondents described how unstable housing leads to increased vulnerability and a higher likelihood of reoffending. One probation officer remarked, "Without a stable home, everything

else falls apart,” highlighting the need for reentry programs to integrate robust housing support. The lack of stable housing was consistently identified as a significant barrier to reintegration.

Support services, particularly mental health and substance abuse services, were frequently mentioned in both interviews and surveys. Although these services are available, their effectiveness was often called into question. Stakeholders pointed out that these services are underfunded, overwhelmed, and inaccessible for many who need them most. Enhancements in these services are crucial to address the underlying issues that contribute to recidivism. A survey respondent commented, “There simply aren’t enough resources to provide the depth of care needed,” reflecting a common sentiment among participants. Systemic barriers were identified as significant obstacles to successful reintegration. Issues such as legal restrictions, societal stigma, and bureaucratic inefficiencies were highlighted by both probation officers and survey respondents. These barriers not only hinder the effectiveness of reentry programs but also perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage and recidivism among probationers. One probation officer explained, “Legal barriers complicate reintegration,” and another pointed out the impact of societal stigma on reentry success.

Criticisms were also directed at the overall administration of reentry programs and the allocation of resources. Respondents noted a lack of coordination and a scarcity of resources, which impair the capacity of these programs to meet the complex needs of those they aim to help. There was a call for more strategic resource allocation and better program management to enhance the efficacy of reentry initiatives. One survey respondent highlighted, “Programs are underresourced and misaligned,” emphasizing the need for improved program administration and resource distribution. The study revealed significant concerns about the economic challenges, housing instability, support service inadequacies, systemic barriers, and resource allocation

issues affecting reentry programs in San Francisco. These findings suggest that reentry programs need to be more holistic, better funded, and more closely aligned with the real-world needs of probationers to effectively reduce recidivism and support successful reintegration.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of probation officers on the central phenomenon of recidivism and reentry program effectiveness in San Francisco. Using semistructured interviews, the study delved into how probation officers perceive and navigate the rehabilitation landscape, focusing on their firsthand experiences and assessments of existing rehabilitation programs to foster successful reintegration into society. By employing a qualitative approach, the study sought to capture the nuanced views and complex factors probation officers identify as critical in both the causes of recidivism and the success or failure of rehabilitation efforts. The goal was to offer actionable insights that can inform and improve current strategies for reducing recidivism and enhancing reintegration.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

What are probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco?

Research Subquestions

1. What are probation officers' perspectives on the effectiveness of current rehabilitation programs?
2. What are probation officers' perspectives on the efforts to foster successful reintegration into society?
3. What are probation officers' perspectives regarding their ability to supervise and guide probationers effectively through reentry programs?
4. In what ways do probation officers believe that reentry programs align with or deviate from the principles of the general strain theory?

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach, which emphasized the exploration of common meanings and lived experiences among participants. Data collection relied on semistructured interviews to ensure flexibility in exploring emergent themes while maintaining a structured line of inquiry. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently coded for thematic analysis using NVivo software. Ethical considerations included securing approval from the IRB, informing participants of their rights, ensuring confidentiality, and anonymizing all data.

Population

The population for this study included probation officers working in San Francisco whose primary role involves client supervision and reentry services. Eligible participants must have worked as a probation officer for at least 5 years. This population was crucial because of their extensive experience in supervising clients and aiding reentry, providing deep insights into the probation process in San Francisco. There were 111 officers in the city who met the criteria for this study.

Sample

The study purposively sampled 11 probation officers from the eligible population, adhering to Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation for phenomenological studies. This sample size was sufficient to provide a detailed picture of how various programs impact recidivism. I planned to interview only the first 20 officers who agreed to participate if more volunteers than needed signed up. Surveys were also distributed to all stakeholders via email, and participation was voluntary. Twenty-seven respondents participated in the survey.

Significant Findings

The study's findings revealed critical insights into probation officers' perspectives on recidivism and the effectiveness of reentry programs in San Francisco, highlighting key challenges and successes. Probation officers consistently noted the misalignment between job training provided by reentry programs and the actual demands of the local job market, which hinders probationer employment prospects and reintegration. Stable housing emerged as a fundamental factor for successful reintegration, and a lack of affordable and stable housing options leads to increased vulnerability and higher recidivism rates. Although mental health and substance abuse services are available, their effectiveness is often undermined by underfunding and inaccessibility. Systemic barriers, including legal restrictions, societal stigma, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, significantly hinder reintegration, necessitating systemic reforms. Criticisms were also directed at the administration of reentry programs and resource allocation, highlighting the need for better coordination and strategic resource management.

An unexpected finding was the pervasive skepticism among probation officers about the overall effectiveness of current reentry programs, underscoring the need for more targeted and well-supported initiatives. These findings align with GST and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support across various systems. Consistent with existing literature, the study underscored the importance of addressing economic support, housing, support services, and systemic barriers to develop more effective reentry strategies and reduce recidivism.

Conclusions

Each research question addressed in this study yielded significant insights that contribute to the broader discourse on criminal justice and reentry programs. Probation officers generally

perceive reentry programs as essential for reducing recidivism. They highlight the importance of programs that address the holistic needs of probationers, including mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and job training. The study found that effective reentry programs are those that align closely with the rehabilitative needs of formerly incarcerated individuals. Programs that offer personalized and continual support tend to be more successful to aid reintegration. Probation officers believe that reentry programs positively impact community safety by facilitating successful reintegration. They emphasize the role of supportive services and stable employment in preventing recidivism.

The findings are deeply interwoven with the theoretical frameworks of GST and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. GST explains how stressors, such as lack of employment and social support, can lead to recidivism. The study's findings support this theory by demonstrating that reentry programs addressing these stressors can mitigate their impact. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a broader context by emphasizing the multiple environmental systems influencing an individual's behavior. The findings corroborate this theory by showing that successful reintegration requires a coordinated effort across various systems, including family, community, and institutional support.

The findings align with existing literature on reentry programs and recidivism. Previous studies have underscored the importance of comprehensive support services to reduce recidivism rates, which this study also confirmed. The emphasis on mental health, substance abuse treatment, and employment support echoed the recommendations found in current research. Additionally, the study contributes new insights into the specific challenges faced by probation officers and their critical role in the reentry process.,

Implications for Action

The findings from this study have significant implications for the field of criminal justice, particularly in the context of organizational change, administration, and leadership application. By understanding the perspectives of probation officers regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs, people can derive several actionable insights that address the problem.

The study revealed that probation officers view effective reentry programs as those that align closely with the rehabilitative needs of probationers. This alignment is crucial for reducing recidivism and supporting successful reintegration. Therefore, program designers and administrators should focus on creating and implementing reentry initiatives that are comprehensive, addressing not only the immediate needs of the probationers but also providing long-term support. This includes integrating mental health services, substance abuse treatment, job training, and educational opportunities. The findings highlight the importance of supportive policies that facilitate the successful reintegration of criminally involved individuals. Policymakers should consider revising existing laws and regulations to remove barriers to reintegration, such as employment restrictions and limited access to housing. Advocacy efforts should focus on promoting policies that support the continuous improvement of reentry programs and the allocation of necessary resources.

From an organizational change perspective, the study underscores the need for probation departments to adopt a more holistic and collaborative approach to reentry. Leaders in these organizations should foster a culture that values ongoing training and professional development for probation officers, particularly in areas such as cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and motivational interviewing. Effective leadership in probation departments involves creating an environment that supports innovation, encourages feedback from staff, and promotes the use

of evidence-based practices. Community involvement is a critical component of successful reentry programs. The study suggests that stronger partnerships between probation departments and community organizations can enhance the support network for individuals reentering society. Leaders should work to build and maintain these partnerships, leveraging community resources to provide a more robust support system for probationers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, several areas warrant further investigation to enhance people's understanding of the effectiveness of reentry programs in reducing recidivism.

Longitudinal studies should be conducted to track individuals over an extended period and assess the long-term impact of reentry programs on recidivism and reintegration outcomes.

Comparative studies analyzing the effectiveness of different reentry programs across various jurisdictions can help identify best practices and common challenges. Research should be expanded to include diverse populations, such as women, juveniles, and individuals with various offense types, to understand how reentry programs can be tailored to specific demographic needs. Cross-disciplinary research integrating insights from psychology, sociology, and public health can develop a holistic understanding of factors influencing recidivism and reentry success.

Investigating the role of additional support services, such as mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and job training, is essential for enhancing reentry program effectiveness. The impact of community involvement and support on reentry program success should be examined, focusing on the contributions of community organizations, local businesses, and volunteer groups. Policy analysis is needed to understand the influence of local, state, and federal policies on reentry program implementation and outcomes, identifying policy barriers and facilitators to inform legislative advocacy. The effects of specialized training for probation

officers on reentry program outcomes, particularly in areas such as cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and motivational interviewing, should be explored. Finally, investigating the use of technology in reentry programs, including electronic monitoring, virtual support groups, and online job training, would help evaluate the benefits and challenges of technological integration in reentry solutions. Addressing these areas in future research will build on the current study's findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of optimizing reentry programs to reduce recidivism and support successful reintegration.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The completion of this dissertation marks a significant milestone in my academic and professional journey. Throughout the research process, I gained a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding probation, reentry programs, and recidivism in San Francisco. The foundational coursework in the program provided a robust framework for understanding the theoretical and practical aspects of organizational change and administration. Courses on qualitative research methods, leadership theories, and ethics were particularly instrumental in shaping the research design and methodology of this study. The rigorous academic training helped me to develop critical thinking skills, enabling me to approach the research problem with a nuanced and comprehensive perspective.

The development of the research problem was an iterative process that involved an extensive literature review, discussions with peers and mentors, and personal reflections on my professional experiences as a probation officer. Identifying the gap in the existing literature regarding the integration of probation officers' insights into the design and evaluation of reentry programs was a crucial step. This realization underscored the importance of incorporating

frontline practitioners' perspectives to enhance the effectiveness of these programs in reducing recidivism.

The prospectus phase was a pivotal moment in the research process, in which my research questions and methodology were clearly defined. Engaging with the theoretical frameworks of GST and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provided a solid foundation for analyzing the multifaceted factors influencing recidivism and reentry outcomes. The feedback received from my committee during this phase was invaluable to refine the research focus and ensure methodological rigor.

Data collection through semistructured interviews and surveys was both challenging and enlightening. Conducting interviews with probation officers allowed an in-depth exploration of their experiences and perspectives, and the survey provided broader insights from a larger pool of stakeholders. I was surprised to find that gathering participants was a more difficult task than expected. The thematic analysis of qualitative data using NVivo software was a meticulous process that required careful coding and interpretation. Using the software was a great option, and I believe it was critical to the timely coding of data. This stage of the research reinforced the importance of systematic data analysis to draw meaningful and credible conclusions.

This research journey has been transformative on both personal and professional levels. It has deepened my appreciation for the critical role that probation officers play in the criminal justice system and the importance of their contributions to policy and practice. The process of engaging with participants, analyzing data, and synthesizing findings has enhanced my research skills and broadened my understanding of qualitative methodologies. Moreover, this experience has highlighted the significance of empathy, active listening, and ethical considerations in conducting research involving human subjects. Balancing my professional responsibilities with

the demands of doctoral research was challenging, but it also underscored the value of perseverance, time management, and self-discipline.

In conclusion, this doctoral program's emphasis on leadership and change has profoundly equipped me to analyze the problem of recidivism and reentry programs from a leadership perspective. This academic journey has underscored the pivotal role of transformational leadership to address complex issues in criminal justice systems. By focusing on transformational leadership principles, I can foster a culture of innovation, empathy, and ethical responsibility, which are crucial in tackling the challenges identified in this study.

Transformational leadership provides a strategic framework to address the concerns raised by probation officers regarding reentry program administration and overall city leadership. This leadership style emphasizes inspiring and motivating team members, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, and encouraging continuous improvement and adaptive strategies (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Implementing transformational leadership can lead to more effective reentry programs by aligning them with the practical insights and professional judgments of probation officers.

In practice, I can put these principles into action by advocating for policies that incorporate probation officers' feedback into program development, promoting collaborative initiatives between various stakeholders, and ensuring that reentry strategies are adaptable to the dynamic needs of the community. By championing a transformational leadership approach, I aim to enhance the effectiveness of reentry programs, thereby reducing recidivism and contributing to the overall safety and well-being of San Francisco. This approach not only addresses immediate concerns but also lays the foundation for sustainable, long-term improvements in the administration of criminal justice and community reintegration efforts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Participation Letter

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Recidivism and Reentry Programs

Dear Probation Officers,

I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to request your voluntary participation in a pivotal research study focusing on probation officer perspectives on recidivism and reentry programs. Your unique insights and experiences are invaluable to understanding the complexities and effectiveness of current strategies aimed at reducing recidivism and facilitating successful reentry into society.

The purpose of this study is to gather data that will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of reentry programs and probation strategies. Participation involves a brief survey and an optional interview, both designed to fit within your busy schedules while ensuring your confidentiality throughout the process.

If you are interested in contributing to this important body of research or have any questions, please respond to this email at your earliest convenience. Your participation will not only enrich our study but also potentially influence the development of more effective probation practices and reentry programs.

Thank you for considering this request. Your expertise and dedication to your work are highly respected, and I look forward to the possibility of your contribution to this study.

Best regards,

James Cox

XXXX@calbaptist.edu

APPENDIX B

Survey Respondent Informed Consent

Dear Survey Respondents,

I am a doctoral student at California Baptist University, and I am conducting a survey on probation officer perspectives on reentry programs and their impact on recidivism. With that in mind, I have designed a study to explore the perspectives of probation officers to better inform reentry programs about what works in San Francisco. The purpose of this study is to examine San Francisco probation officers' views on recidivism and the success of reentry programs, focusing on their potential to lower re-offense rates and aid in societal reintegration.

The data collected from the survey will only be used for educational and/or publication purposes. Your participation as a survey respondent is entirely voluntary, and you may decide to cease participation after you have begun. The individual responses will be kept confidential, but all responses will be compiled, summarized, and shared with CBU for the purposes of program improvement. If you choose to participate, complete the attached survey. If you decline, do nothing further. There are no benefits and no penalties for choosing or declining to participate, and you may withdraw any time during the study without consequences and your data will not be included. Your willingness to participate in this study is implied if you proceed with completing the survey.

Please answer all the questions since responding to each item will make the survey results more useful. The anticipated time commitment for completing the survey is approximately 60 minutes. No obvious undue risks are associated with completing the survey. No identifying information will be collected. Data will be stored on a password-protected device. While you will receive no direct benefit from your participation in the survey process, your participation

will help the researcher better understand the lived experiences of probation officers and their views on ways to reduce recidivism in San Francisco. The survey is only available as an electronic instrument, and there are no alternative procedures available at this time.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, would like to talk with someone about this research other than the researchers, or would like to report an adverse experience, you can contact the IRB (the ethics committee that oversees research at CBU) at irb@calbaptist.edu.

APPENDIX C

Interview Participant Informed Consent

Dear Interview Participants,

I am a doctoral student at California Baptist University, and I am conducting interviews with probation officers to discuss their perspectives on reentry programs and their impact on recidivism. With that in mind, I have designed a study to explore the perspectives of probation officers to better inform reentry programs about what works in San Francisco. The purpose of this study is to examine San Francisco probation officers' views on recidivism and the success of reentry programs, focusing on their potential to lower re-offense rates and aid in societal reintegration.

The data collected from the interview will only be used for educational and/or publication purposes. Your participation as an interviewee is entirely voluntary, and you may decide to cease participation after you have begun. The individual responses will be kept confidential, but all responses will be recorded, transcribed, and shared with CBU for the purposes of program improvement. If you choose to participate, please respond to the interview invitation with your availability. If you decline, do nothing further. There are no benefits and no penalties for choosing or declining to participate, and you may withdraw any time during the study without consequences and your data will not be included. Your willingness to participate in this study is implied if you proceed with scheduling an interview.

Please answer all the questions since responding to each item will make the survey results more useful. The anticipated time commitment for completing the survey is approximately 60 minutes. No obvious undue risks are associated with completing the survey. No identifying information will be collected. Data will be stored on a password-protected device. While you

will receive no direct benefit from your participation in the interview process, your participation will help the researcher better understand the lived experiences of probation officers and their views on ways to reduce recidivism in San Francisco. The interview will be conducted via Zoom, and there are no alternative procedures available at this time.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, would like to talk with someone about this research other than the researchers, or would like to report an adverse experience, you can contact the IRB (the ethics committee that oversees research at CBU) at irb@calbaptist.edu.

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. Describe your experiences with reentry programs in San Francisco.
2. How do you perceive the impact of these programs on recidivism rates?
3. Share a specific instance where a reentry program significantly affected an individual's journey post-incarceration.
4. Name specific areas in the reentry process that consistently pose difficulties.
5. How do these challenges affect your work as a probation officer?
6. Propose any changes or additions to the current reentry programs that might enhance their effectiveness.
7. In your opinion, how do reentry programs align with the principles of General Strain Theory?
(Theory will be discussed and defined with participant)
8. Provide examples of where reentry programs either support or deviate from these principles.

APPENDIX E

Survey Questions

1. **Background Experience:** Describe your role and experience working with reentry programs in the San Francisco. What has been your primary focus?
2. **Causes of Recidivism:** In your view, what are the main reasons individuals re-offend after participating in reentry programs? How do these factors interplay in the context of San Francisco?
3. **Program Effectiveness:** From your perspective, what aspects of the current reentry programs work well, and why? Are there any particular strategies or approaches that you find most beneficial in reducing recidivism?
4. **Gaps in Service:** Can you identify any gaps or areas where the reentry programs could be improved? What resources or interventions are missing, that could aid in the reintegration process?
5. **Challenges in Reintegration:** Describe some of the challenges you or the individuals in the reentry programs have faced during the reintegration process. How have these challenges impacted the effectiveness of reentry efforts?
6. **Training and Resources:** Reflect on the training and resources available to support individuals in reentry programs. Do you feel adequately equipped to address their needs? What additional support would be beneficial?
7. **Success Stories:** Share a story or example where a reentry program significantly impacted an individual's successful reintegration. What factors contributed to this success?

8. **Systemic Issues:** How do systemic issues within San Francisco (e.g., housing, employment, social services) affect recidivism and reintegration efforts? What role does the probation department play in navigating these challenges?
9. **Recommendations for Improvement:** Based on your experience, what recommendations would you make to enhance the effectiveness of reentry programs? Consider program structure, support services, policy changes, or any other areas where you see potential for improvement.
10. **Vision for the Future:** How do you envision the future of reentry programs in San Francisco? What changes or developments would you like to see to support better individuals transitioning back into the community?