Professors with Criminal Records:

Criminology & Criminal Justice Students Views on

Former Convicts as Professors

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ABSTRACT

As America's incarceration binge begins its fourth decade, one unintended consequence of this social policy has been a growing number of criminologists/sociologists who have personal experience with incarceration as many former convicts have been pursuing education as an avenue for successful re-entry. Some of these ex-convicts have begun to secure PhD's and have been conducting research as well as teaching various university courses in Sociology and/or Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Within this thesis the myths maintained by society surrounding crime and prisoners will be discussed. Using survey research, students majoring in Criminology and Criminal Justice ($n =$ 186) at ISU were asked (1) how they would feel to discover that their professor had a criminal record and (2) would they knowingly enroll in a course that an ex-con was teaching? Also, by using an attribution scale, student perceptions on causes of crime will be examined. The findings from this research suggest that most Criminology and Criminal Justice students would welcome professors with a criminal history into the classroom.

PREFACE

The faculties of many Criminology and Criminal Justice programs are dominated by former practitioners of the Criminal Justice system and/or trained academics many of whom have never visited a prison or interacted with a convict. As a result, the research they conduct is often concerned with increased social control of an already marginalized population: the prisoner. To date there is an obvious disjuncture between much of the current academic literature and the realities of those prisoners and the realities of the lives they lead (Richards & Ross, 2001). Convict Criminology is a relatively new form of criminology which consists of empirical research conducted by academics who have served prison time, as well as non convict criminologists who are sympathetic to the plight of the prisoner, which critiques the existing ideology while contributing to a new point of view within criminological thought. It is within this spirit which this thesis was written and seeks to advance.

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For Marie & Krysta;

None of this could not have been done without the two of you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, America has experienced a type of "incarceration binge" (Irwin & Austin, 1997) which has arguably been the most thoroughly implemented social program of modern times (Currie, 1998). At the start of 2008 there were 2,319,258 persons incarcerated across the nation representing a full 1% of the adult population (Pew Center on the States [PEW], 2008). Currently there are 4.3 million people on probation, and another 824,365 on parole (PEW, 2009). Jointly, these numbers reveal that over 3% of the American adult population is under some form of correctional supervision. On the other hand, each year over 600,000 individuals are released from prison back into society nationwide (Petersilia, 2004). In the State of Indiana, the Department of Correction (IDOC) released 20,896 people during 2009; in other words about 58 inmates are released each day from custody (IDOC, 2010a). Petersilia (2004) notes that for many released prisoners they remain "largely uneducated, unskilled...and now they have the added stigma of a prison record and the distrust and fear that it inevitably elicits" (p.3). According to Goffman (1963) society has a tendency to believe that

> the person with the stigma [such as an ex-convict] is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination...We construct a stigma- theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents (p. 5).

Few in American society are exposed to discriminatory practices like the former prisoner. For the ex-convict returning to society, research shows that a criminal record presents a major barrier to employment opportunities.

Research conducted in Los Angeles found that 60% of employers stated they would not knowingly hire a job candidate with a criminal background (Holzer, 1996). In addition, Pager (2003) has found "that mere contact with the criminal justice system...severely limits subsequent employment opportunities" (p. 960). It is conceivable that some of these released prisoners will someday aspire to careers in academia (Ross & Richards, 2003) as a result of these diminished opportunities. Additionally, it is also probable that many of these ex-convict academics will decide on the study criminology and criminal justice. However, the possession of an advanced degree does not magically rid a person of the stigma associated with having been convicted of a felony. The fact of the matter is ex-convicts in possession of advanced degrees often experience a variety of discriminatory practices ranging from governmental legislation (Missouri Statute § 173.392) to discrimination from university administrators (Richards, 2008).

Convict Criminology is a relatively new and controversial perspective within criminology. Over the years, numerous ex-cons have been employed at various universities in different disciplines. Previously, the majority of ex-convict academics "stayed in the closet," choosing to keep their past secret (Jones, Ross, Richards, & Murphy, 2009). Today, with the ever increasing use of background checks, it is increasingly more difficult to conceal a disreputable background.

This study seeks to discover how students studying criminology and criminal justice at Indiana State University would feel about their professor being an ex-convict and if they would knowingly enroll in a course taught by a former convict. This research is unique in that it represents the first attempt to measure student attitudes pertaining to ex-convicts as professors. It is not the primary purpose of this research to examine how students of criminology and

criminal justice have developed their preconceived notions about crime and prisoners as much as what their ideas and views are in regards to ex-convicts in the classroom.

Research indicates that not only does the general population in America not have accurate knowledge of prisons and prisoners but also this dilemma plagues criminal justice students in the form of predetermined stereo-types. As a result, many criminology and criminal justice majors may need to rethink the stereo-typical myths surrounding prisoners as well as crime. For those students who do seek employment within the criminal justice system, the choices or policies they support may be erroneous as a result of preconceived, distorted stereotypes (Miller, Tewksbury & Hensley, 2004).

One such distorted stereotype held by many in society is the image of the dangerous criminal who is often seen as "(1) permanently committed to predatory crime; (2) uncaring and unresponsive to rehabilitative efforts; (3) needing to be punished severely and held in very secure places of imprisonment" (Irwin, 2005, p.57). As a result of this stereotype, it is not unusual within our society to see the routine demonization of those people who violate the laws and are sent to prison. Oftentimes these people are frequently looked upon as "animals" or "scum" (Clear, 2003).

Ideally, criminology and criminal justice majors would possess a more accurate understanding of crime and prisoners than the general public. The fact remains, however, that social scientists are uncertain if education is effective in dispelling any of these falsehoods and myths. Furthermore, we know even less about students who are pursuing a degree in criminology and criminal justice (Farnworth, Longmire, & West, 1998). Peterson and Palumbo (1997; also see Austin, 2003) assert that academics, criminologists in particular, tend to support the preservation of the public's misconceptions of crime and prisoners, through the research they

produce. They assert that, a significant amount of this research disproportionately emphasizes violence and/or career criminals while supporting increased social control mechanisms.

Theoretical Foundation

Constructionism, the social construction of reality, argues that people actively construct the way they see themselves and their world based on the meanings they give to the objectives in their lives. These meanings, which are developed during ongoing processes of social interactions, determine how an object is seen, acted upon, and talked about (Blumer 1969; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Schutz (1953/2004) recognized that all knowledge, whether it is accepted wisdom, commonsense or scientific philosophy, involves constructs or a set of "abstractions, generalizations, formalizations, idealizations specific to the respective level of thought organization. Strictly speaking, there are no such things as facts, pure and simple" (p. 306). In other words, the reality of commonsense perception, or so called concrete facts, is not as concrete as it seems.

As the vast majority of students have never actually visited a prison, interacted with prisoners or been the victim of a crime, consequently, their knowledge of the subject is therefore socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Potter and Kappeler (1998) observe that over 90% of the American population has not experienced any form of direct criminal victimization nor ever will.

A great deal of what mainstream society believes and holds true about prisons and prisoners is often disingenuous. Research has shown that public perception about crime and those persons who commit crime, first and foremost, is obtained via the media (Barak, 1994; Surette, 2007), which, for the most part, is an inaccurate portrayal. The fallacy of crime and prisoners offered by the media unfortunately is directly considered as fact by the majority of the

public and consequently constructs society's views of crime (Barlow, Barlow, & Chiricos, 1995). The stereotypical prisoner is often based on a mixture of media representations of sensationalized crimes, politicians' rhetoric, as well as academic studies of career criminals (Irwin & Austin, 1977).

The idea that all criminals are simply bad people to be feared and loathed reinforces fears of "others" while maintaining an idealized self (Greer & Jewkes, 2005, p. 20). As a result of this "us" and "them" mentality most people, including some criminologists, hold firm assumptions or judgments concerning the moral character or behavior of persons convicted of crimes. To understand this phenomena a constructionist approach is best utilized.

Critical Criminology

Constructionism refers to a theoretical perspective which seeks to analyze the means by which social information is shaped, distributed, and verified (Rafter, 1990). For example, Becker (1963) in his landmark publication, *The Outsiders*, wrote that "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance" (p. 9). This is a prime example of a constructionist's approach and reveals that "deviance" is socially constructed and, therefore, subjective. This approach, along with other approaches, has paved the way for *critical criminology*.

Critical criminology contributes to constructionism predominantly by examining how social class influences the practice of criminal justice. Examples of constructionism can be found in the writings of Chambliss and Seidman (1982) who argue that "the legal order...is in fact a self-serving system to devise and maintain power and privilege" (p. 7) over subordinate classes of society. In the book, *Social Reality of Crime,* Quinney (1970) challenges the very idea of public policy and policing which focuses almost exclusively on the behavior of the poor. He

argued that the causes of crime were not grounded in individual choice but rather a social construction of the powerful in society to support the status quo. Quinney (1974) observed that those persons who make the laws are a ruling class who create criminal justice policy for the perpetuation of "domestic order." In *Critique of Legal Order* Quinney observed that "we begin to recognize that the legal order (that which supposedly makes for civilization) is actually a construction of the capitalist ruling class and the state that serves it" (Quinney, 1974).

Critical criminologists, utilizing a constructionist approach, have observed that as incarceration rates began to soar in the 1980s other criminologists either supported or remained silent concerning the incarceration binge within the nation (Irwin & Austin, 1997). As many researchers, who were reliant upon federal grants for conducting research, soon discovered that there was an abundance of resources available through the government for studying career criminals thereby justifying increased sentence lengths and the abolition of parole in many states (Irwin & Austin, 1997). As many academics hold negative opinions concerning criminals and prisoners, it has been argued that the scientific research which they conduct is biased (Jones, et al., 2009).

When applied to criminal justice, the critical perspective often involves "questioning, challenging and examining all sides of various problems and issues" (Welch, 1996, p.7). As opposed to simply accepting the criminal justice system as a necessary function within society, the critical approach attempts to shed light on the multitude of "myths and misconceptions...it demystifies the objectives, processes and outcomes of correctional intervention and offers alternative interpretations and solutions" (Welch, 1996, p. 7). Dispelling the myths of crime and criminals is a vital component of critical criminology.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Myths about Crime & Prisoners

There are an abundance of myths surrounding crime, prisons and prisoners. As most citizens have never been in a correctional facility or been the victim of a crime, they tend to rely on secondhand accounts of issues related to crime and prisoners. These secondhand accounts may not be outright false, but they often are exaggerated or oversimplified explanations of more complex issues.

The criminal justice system has its fair share of myths (Pepinsky & Jesilow, 1992: Freeman, 2000; Kappeler, Blumberg, & Potter, 2000; Barkan & Btyjak, 2008; Robinson & Williams, 2009; Reiman & Leighton, 2010). Kappeler, et al. (2000) observe that crime myths can have overwhelming effects upon public perceptions, which they may not even be aware of as more often than not myths "shape our thoughts about and reactions to almost any issue related to criminal justice" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p.2).

According to Pepinsky and Jesilow (1992) virtually all of our current criminal justice policy and practices are built on faulty ideology and myths which are seldom questioned. They maintain that there are 10 dominant myths within the Criminal Justice (CJ) system:

1) Crime is increasing.

2) Most crime is committed by the poor.

3) Some groups are more law-abiding than others.

4) White collar crime is non-violent.

5) Regulatory agencies prevent white-collar crime.

6) Rich and poor are all equal before the law.

7) Drug use can be ended by the police.

8) Community corrections is a viable alternative.

9) The punishment can fit the crime.

10) Laws make people behave (p. 8-11).

These crime related myths, according to Kappeler, et al. (2000), serve 6 main functions. First, myths tend to "organize our views of crime, criminals" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 3). Second, they "support and maintain prevailing views of crime, criminals" thereby supporting "the established conceptions of crime" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 3). Third, these misleading portrayals "reinforce the current designation of conduct as criminal, support existing practices of crime control" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 3). Fourth, crime myths are often used to "fill gaps in knowledge and to provide answers to questions social science either cannot answer or has failed to address" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 3). Fifth, stereotypes of crime and criminals "provides for an outlet for emotionalism and channel emotion into action" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 4). In most cases, myths "seem to follow a series of recurrent patterns. These patterns allow a disproportionate amount of social attention to be focused on a few isolated criminal events or issues" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 4). Finally, myths about the criminal justice system often prevent a rational dialogue from emerging (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 3).

For example, one common misconception concerning crime is that crime is increasing. As noted previously incarceration rates are increasing, but, is this phenomenon an applicable indicator that crime is increasing? Joel Dyer (2000) explains that there is no direct correlation

between the two. It has been observed that the increase in incarceration rates is not the result of an increase in crime, but rather an increase in the criminalization of behaviors which previously were not criminal or would have resulted in probation and not imprisonment (Dyer, 2000; Chambliss, 1999) as well as increased punitive sentencing practices (i.e. three strikes laws, elimination of parole in some jurisdictions etc.). In fact when comparing current crime rates with crime rates from the late 1960s, Reiman and Leighton (2010) observe that crime rates today are comparable to those in the late 1960s whereas the imprisonment rates today are 700% higher than the 1960s. In other words, overall crime rates are the same as they were over 40 years ago; it is just that society has become more punitive in its responses to crime compared to what it was 40 years ago.

Perhaps the most pervasive myth states that the majority of crime is committed by the poor. When we consider that the vast majority of American citizens have committed acts which could have resulted in incarceration (Bohm, 1986; Pepinsky, 1980; Pepinsky & Jesilow, 1992) this seems to be an erroneous belief. This myth however does maintain some truth. While the poor do not commit more crime, it has been observed that:

> *For the same crimes,* the poor are more likely than the well-off to get arrested and, if arrested, more likely to be charged and, if charged, more likely to be convicted and, if convicted, more likely to be sentenced to prison and, if sent to prison, more likely to receive a longer sentence (Reiman & Leighton, 2010, p. xi, emphasis in the original).

In other words, the poor are not more crime prone but rather are more prone to being incarcerated thereby supporting the myth that the greatest danger to society is the work of the poor (Reiman & Leighton, 2010; Irwin, 2005). As Barak (1994) claims, when people are exposed to select media reports or definitions concerning specific types of crime, street crime,

and not others, white collar crime, they are effectively coerced into worrying exclusively about street crime thereby perpetuating this myth.

Extensive research suggests that the myths associated with crime repeatedly portray the typical crime as violent in nature (as opposed to property crime) and that the typical criminal is an urban, minority street male (rather than a wealthy, corporate white male) (Kappeler, et al., 2000; Barkan & Btyjak, 2008; Reiman & Leighton, 2010; Surette, 2007). To a large degree, these myths serve to maintain our punitive criminal justice apparatus. These beliefs are often maintained and perpetuated through media portrayals. Research shows that media portrayals of crime tend to promote more punitiveness in criminal justice practice (Beale, 2006) as the media confirms to society that crime is disproportionately committed by people unlike "us" (the poor, and/or minorities), this helps maintain punitive and unjust criminal justice practice directed towards "them" (Chiricos, Welsh & Gertz 2004; Robinson 2004).

Media as a Means of Social Construction

As mentioned earlier, public understanding of crime and criminals is obtained primarily through the media (Barak, 1994; Kappeler, et al., 2000; Robinson & Williams, 2009; Surette, 2007). A great deal of what mainstream society believes and holds true about this topic is often disingenuous. In general, what the media presents as real portraits of criminals and crimes is disconcerting in that it places an inaccurate emphasis on violent predatory crime. Therefore, the fallacies of crime and prisoners offered by the media have a tendency to construct society's view of crime (Barlow, et al., 1995).

Official opinions regarding crime and prisoners presented in the media are regularly those of politicians, judges, police officers and business and not those of trained criminologists (Jewkes, 2004; Surette, 2007; Barak, 1995). As the debates concerning crime are framed within

the context most favorable to those in power, the consumer is "prevented by lack of comparative material from engaging in critical or comparative thinking" (Jewkes, 2004, p.18). As a result the viewer/reader is reduced to a "passive receiver", whereby their opinions, concerns and beliefs are overshadowed (Jewkes, 2004). Jewkes (2004) argues that as a result of the select discussion concerning crime presented in the media, more often than not, the "social origins" of crime are dismissed and "individual motivation" is the implicit cause of all crime (Surette, 2007; Irwin & Austin, 1997).

The stereotypical prisoner is often based on a mixture of media representations of sensationalized crimes, politicians' rhetoric, as well as criminological studies of career criminals (Irwin & Austin, 1997). Over the last thirty years in the face of numerous studies which have repeatedly shown that most prisoners are not career or even dangerous criminals, a disproportionate amount of academic attention has focused on "presisters," "super predators," and the "truly dangerous" (Austin, 2003). In regards to criminals, it has observed that, "one of the best ways of defining what we are is by pointing to what we are not" (Erckson, Baranekand, & Chan, 1987, cited in Greer & Jewkes, 2005, p.29), this then creates a sense of otherness or that "they" commit crime because they are not like "us" (Greer & Jewkes, 2005). In other words, on the topic of criminals, society constructs a clear distinction between those who are good and those who are bad. Criminals serve as the common enemy, without "them" (bad people) there can be no "us" (good people).

The separation between "us" and "them" is extremely problematic when in fact virtually all of us are lawbreakers. Pepinsky and Jesilow (1992) maintain that when reviewing over 40 years of self-report surveys the results suggest that most people within American society regularly break the law in some manner. Additionally, Bohm (1986) suggests that, "for many

people, it is comforting to conceive of themselves as law abiding citizens....[meanwhile]

evidence suggests that over 90% of all Americans have committed some crime for which they

could be incarcerated" (p. 200-201). Austin (2003) observed that what is truly freighting for

many people is to recognize that, in general, prisoners are regular people. There is no big

difference between the person labeled criminal and the average citizen (Becker, 1963; Lemert,

1967). It has been recognized that the media, above all television, has a dominant effect on

influencing perceptions of truth in this regard (Surette, 2007; Barak, 1995).

Barak (1995) notes that, the "cultural visions of crime" offered in the mass media are the

"principal vehicle by which the average person comes to know crime and justice in America"

(p.3). In particular, Zimmerman, Van Alstyne and Dunn (1988) have found that "the public

systematically misunderstands many issues related to crime and justice, and that the level of

public misunderstanding is particularly acute in the area of punishment policy" (p. 1220, cited in

Lane 1997, p. 188). Likewise, Durham (1994) argued:

> It is nothing short of astonishing that...citizens know so very little about crime and
> punishment...citizens lack systematic understanding of either the true dimensions of
> the crime problem or the severe limitations of the correctional system. Thus, an
> important step in addressing the crime problem is assuring that the public has access
> to an accurate body of current information about crime and punishment (p. 345-348,
> cited in Lane 1997, p. 188).

The influence which the media has upon popular culture as well as the socially constructed

realities of criminal justice cannot be ignored. Surette (2007) notes that what is often presented in

the media as real and of regularly occurring crime has virtually no correlation with official crime

statistics. As crimes which are represented in the media as occurring daily and with regularity are

crimes which are least likely to occur in reality. Within the medias' socially constructed reality

of crime, property crimes (the most common form of criminal activity) are vastly under

acknowledged. While the rare predatory or violent street crime, which does not occur as often, is overrepresented (Surette, 2007). Television viewers regularly are exposed to depictions of murder, robbery, kidnapping and aggravated assault (Surette, 2007). As a result, the media has successfully promoted the fallacy concerning violent predatory crime, or criminal, from a rare occurrence to one which, supposedly, lurks around every corner. This phenomenon is clearly demonstrated when considering the representation of a serial killer. Serial killers have been portrayed within the media not as a rare occurrence but rather a risk to all persons within (Surette, 2007).

Fox and Levin (1985) observe that the serial killer has become a staple of the entertainment industry. People who indulge in viewing television and/or movies are often led to believe that serial killing is a common form of homicide. Philip Jenkins (1988) argues that the "serial killer panic of 1983 – 85…was statistically unsupportable and outrageous." Though during this time virtually all media outlets produced stories or shows which had as the central figure the serial killer. This is an example of how the media can construct a rare crime event and turn it into the perception of everyday criminal reality. Accordingly, serial killers are frequently considered symbolic examples of a serious problem within society which is inundated by mindless violence perpetrated by predatory criminals. Surette (2007) points out that "with the construction of serial killers, the prior generic portrait of predators as dangerous but still human was supplanted by the portrait of animalistic killing machines more akin to gothic monsters than human beings" (p. 62-63). Overall the media often ignore social issues related to age or poverty while encouraging a social construction of crime emphasizing uncaring unsympathetic violence. Consequently, an everyday occurrence of predatory violent street crime is what the general

public, as well as students, takes away from the media constructed image of crime (Surette, 2007). As previous research has shown, these socially constructed media images are what students regularly base their perceptions of crime and prisoners upon.

Prior Student Research

Research conducted by Vandiver and Giacopassi (1997) sought to examine the perceptions of CJ students to ascertain their perceptions concerning crime within society. Their research centered on the awareness of students enrolled in introductory criminal justice courses, many of whom were non-CJ majors compared to seniors majoring in CJ, regarding several crime and justice issues, including the annual number of homicides in the U.S. Their research discovered that the typical student, CJ major or not, drastically overestimated the number of homicides in America.

This research utilized data from 1994 when there were 23,305 homicides nationwide. Close to half of their sample of entry level students believed that there were 250,000 or more homicides committed each year; roughly 15 % assumed that in excess of 1 million homicides were committed annually. Additionally, 42% of seniors majoring in CJ believed that there were over 100,000 homicides annually. These same students also revealed inaccurate knowledge regarding causes of death, as criminal causes were over-estimated while non-criminal causes were under-estimated. These students also assumed that homicide far outnumbered suicide as cause of death nationally, when in fact just the opposite is true. Additionally, students ranked car accidents as contributing to more deaths annually than tobacco use, when once again just the opposite is true. Furthermore, the student sample had an equally imprecise understanding of crime in general. The authors suggest that these distorted perceptions may be in part to media

influences and argue that educators may have a hard time dispelling many of the myths portrayed in the media.

Research conducted by Miller, Tewksbury and Hensley (2004) concluded that most university students, criminal justice or not, commonly do not have a true understanding of crime in America nor do they truly comprehend many of the problems within the correctional system. Their research with students in Kentucky, Tennessee and Florida reveal that students are seriously misinformed about crime and corrections issues corresponding with previous research. Within this study six dependent variables were utilized, (number of homicides in America, total number of prisoners in the system, number of prisoners killed by other prisoners, number of correctional officers murdered by prisoners, amount of consensual sex amongst prisoners, number of sexual assaults in prison). For all six of these variables, a majority of students appear to be misinformed as they regularly overestimated totals for all these categories. For example, when asked to estimate the total number of homicides in 2001, which was 13,752, 41% of the CJ student sample vastly overestimated this total, with some 16% of this sample believing that there were over 250,000 homicides that year (p. 318).

The findings also show that when compared to non-criminal justice/ criminology majors, CJ majors did not have a more reliable or accurate understanding of the issues. Furthermore, it does not appear that education clarifies these issues for this sample as upper level CJ students knowledge/understanding was no more accurate then the knowledge/understanding of freshman CJ students. The authors note that if educators do not address this misinformation created by myths within the classroom they "create a vacuum in which the students are never challenged to rethink the realities of crime compared to the myths" (p. 314) thereby allowing the perpetuation of myths about criminal justice and prisoners. They caution that if these myths are not addressed

by educators they could subsequently effect the decision making process once the student is working within the CJ system.

Mackey and Courtright (2000) wanted to evaluate the differences, if any, between criminal justice students with regard to their attitudes towards criminal punishment in five Northeastern colleges and universities. Their research hypothesized that CJ majors would be more punitive in their attitudes towards crime than non-majors. The research hypothesis for this project was formed after works by an ex-convict academic, John Irwin, was introduced to CJ classes. Irwin's work, in particular his book *The Jail* (1985), which the authors describe as being used as a tool to

> Illustrate the view that criminal justice interventions may not always provide a better correctional solution for the individual offender, and may also lead to the continuation and escalation of criminality by further isolating the offender from society, weakening his or her bonds to family, friends, and work (p.424).

The researchers had previously observed that when Irwin's work was introduced to several CJ Classes many students "were not only unreceptive to the ideas put forward by Irwin, but a small number of [students] displayed open hostility to [Irwins'] ideas" (p.424).

For this research, researchers define punitiveness as "an attitude toward sanctioning and punishment that includes retribution, incapacitation, and a lack of concern for offender rehabilitation" (p.430). A control group of non CJ majors was used to determine if there were any differences between majors. The data from this research suggest a liberalizing effect from education as seniors from both the control group and CJ majors were found to be less punitive than were freshman. Due to a lack of longitudinal methodology this liberalizing effect was not a conclusive finding. CJ majors held more punitive attitudes at all levels of education when compared to the control group.

Based upon the aforementioned resentment displayed by numerous students when exposed to the works of John Irwin, Courtright, Mackey and Packard (2005) hypothesized that these students were unable to empathize with disadvantaged populations especially prisoners. This research measured "emotional empathy" of CJ majors with a control group of non-CJ majors. The finding of this research does show statistical significance between the 2 groups with the CJ majors showing lower empathy levels. As their sample contained students from both private Catholic schools as well as public institutions it was revealed that students enrolled in Catholic Universities displayed significantly higher levels of empathy than their public university peers. Similarly the findings show gender has a major effect upon empathy as male CJ students displayed the lowest levels of empathy followed by males from other majors and that females from both control groups posses higher empathy levels than their male counterparts.

Another significant finding in this research is a finding of a negative relationship between law enforcement and empathy. In other words, those students who sought to pursue employment in law enforcement were most likely to possess low levels of empathy. In regards to students who plan to pursue employment as a correctional counselor, the findings reveal that these students had the highest empathy levels.

Similar research conducted by Mackey, Courtright and Packard (2006) set out to test the rehabilitative ideal among students. This research sought to test for differences, if any, amongst CJ majors in regard to the ideology of rehabilitation. This research put forth the hypothesis that there would be a difference in whether or not students would accept the ideology of rehabilitation when the independent variable of gender was introduced. The findings did support their hypothesis as there was a significant statistical difference present between females and males within their sample. In contrast, the second hypothesis that CJ majors would be less

supportive than non-CJ majors was supported but the difference was not statically significant. Hypothesis number 3 for this research sought to determine if any difference existed between students of various class standing (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). Again the findings show that lower classmen were less supportive of the rehabilitation ideal than were upper classmen but this finding was not statistically significant.

Research conducted by Farnworth, Longmire, and West (1998) examined students' attitudes in relation to the death penalty, alternatives to incarceration (i.e. probation) as well as attitudes towards the war on drugs. They hypothesized that (1) senior classmen would hold less punitive views than their freshman counterparts thereby supporting a "liberalizing effect" from education. (2) In-service students (those who currently are or have been employed in some capacity within the CJ system) would be more punitive in their views than traditional students with no in-service experience. A secondary goal of their research was to compare the attitudes of CJ majors with students of non-CJ majors theorizing that CJ majors would be more punitive in their views than non-CJ majors at all levels.

By comparing attitudes of freshman CJ majors with attitudes of senior CJ majors their findings reveal that for all variables (support for the death penalty, support for alternative sanctions and attitudes towards the war on drugs) non-CJ seniors were less likely than freshmen to hold punitive views, thereby supporting the hypothesis of a liberalizing effect of the college experience; this effect was not evident for CJ majors. At the same time just the opposite was found for non-CJ majors with seniors having *more punitive* views than non-CJ freshmen. The hypothesis that in-service CJ students would hold more punitive views than traditional students was not supported by this research.

The basic premise of this research is the idea of a "liberalizing effect" of the college experience. The findings of this research do support such an ideology, although, there does appear to some methodological shortcomings. Eskridge (1999) notes that there can be no support for the conclusions drawn from this research, as researchers compared two samples of students at the same time. In order to support such findings a pretest – posttest method, or longitudinal study, would be more appropriate to determine if attitudes changed for individual students over the course of their education.

Utilizing a pretest-posttest design Lane (1997) hypothesized that students enrolled in a corrections course at a California University, emphasizing intermediate punishments or alternatives to incarceration (i.e. house arrest, ISP and boot camp) would increase the likelihood that the sample of CJ students would accept the less punitive punishments.

Findings from this research show that after exposure to a college course emphasizing intermediate sanctions students were more likely to support alternatives to incarceration for non-violent crimes than they were when they completed the pretest. These findings did not extend to violent crimes as both before and after the corrections classes students still preferred incarceration for persons committing violent crimes. This does seem to point towards a liberalizing effect of education to some degree.

However, the author did note that during the interval between pretest and posttest media influence may have affected these results for support of incarceration for violent crimes. In-between the pretest and posttest periods of this research the State of California was in the midst of a heated debate over Three Strikes legislation, with the media giving much attention to the murder of Polly Klaas which was a current event at that time.

The prior student research literature review contained above makes clear several notions. First, media does have a profound influence upon CJ students understanding of the CJ system and crime in general which is not limited to the public at large. Second, CJ majors tend to be more punitive and less empathetic in relation to criminal conduct than students of other majors with female students showing signs of increased levels of empathy. And lastly, educating students to the realities of punishment and possible sources of criminal activity may significantly change their preconceived notions on these issues.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The research instrument utilized for this research was a six page paper and pencil survey (the complete survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix A). As several of the measures utilized for this research have previously been used by Hamm (1990) suggests validity at the construct level.

Section one of the survey instrument consists of closed ended questions seeking background information consisting of basic demographics as well as social class (age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status). Additionally, data were collected in regard to student status (grade level, full or part time enrollment). Respondents were also asked about the severity of crime where they reside when not at university: what type of environment they were raised in (rural, urban, suburban), and do they feel safe when walking alone at night in their home neighborhood, and is crime an issue there? The final part of section one seeks to measure the students contact, if any, with the criminal justice system (i.e. has the student ever been employed by any agency within the criminal justice system? Have they ever visited a correctional facility?).

In section two of the survey instrument subjects were asked if within the past year have they or any member of their family been the victim of a crime? If so what type of victimization: property (theft or vandalism) or any form of violent victimization? Students where then asked

what, in their opinion, *should* the main goal of the criminal justice system be (retribution, incapacitation, rehabilitation or deterrence).

For the third section of the survey instrument an Attribution Complexity Scale (ACS) constructed by Hamm (1990) was used consisting of 8 possible responses ranging from "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree." This was intended to evaluate student views as to causation of crime. At the same time this scale will assist in determining if project participants tend to support either the classical paradigm of crime causation (criminal behavior is the result of free will) or the positivist paradigm (criminal behavior is the result of social, biological or psychological factors) (Cole & Smith, 2010, p. 59-60).

The final part of the survey instrument consists of four open ended questions intended to obtain a quantitative/qualitative sense of students' perceptions of the subject. The respondents were asked: What they think conditions inside of prison are like? Why they have chosen to pursue a degree in criminology and criminal justice? How would they feel if an ex-con was teaching a course they were enrolled in and, if they would knowingly enroll in a class which was being taught by an ex-convict? Irwin (1987) argues that "any approach not based firmly on qualitative or phenomenological ground is not only a distortion of the phenomenon but also is very likely a corruption" (p. 42). For this reason, a random selection of 15 surveys was drawn and their responses qualitatively analyzed.

Hypothesis

Based upon prior research, the following hypotheses were tested.

Hn #1, the sample of criminology and criminal justices students will not support the positivist paradigm of crime causation; criminal behavior is the result of social, biological or psychological factors

Hn #2, students would not support the idea of an ex-convict teaching within the university setting.

Research Design

Frank Hagen (2005) comments that "[T]he ultimate purpose of all scientific investigation is to isolate, define, and explain the relationship between key variables in order to predict and understand the underlying nature of reality" (p.72). In an attempt to test the above mentioned hypothesis the aforementioned survey instrument was be distributed to a stratified random sample of students majoring in criminology and criminal justice. A stratified random sample (Hagen, 2005, p. 135) was utilized as lower level classes (100's & 200's) were not asked to participate in order to avoid participants who may be taking the course as an elective while majoring in a different field. By concentrating on only upper level courses (300's & above) the sample will better represent criminology and criminal justice majors.

An early draft of the research instrument was presented to a graduate level criminological theory class in the fall of 2008 for the purpose of conducting a pretest of the survey instrument. Pretesting of the survey instrument is essential and allows others to critique the instrument seeking clarity and cohesion of the instrument (Hagen, 2005, p. 151). Students who participated in the pretest were asked not to participate in the future survey as their knowledge of the questions might bring about biases in their responses.

Application was then made seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Upon IRB review it was determined that the research did not impose any risk nor violate any codes of research of human subjects and did not require IRB oversight. Upon approval of The School of Graduate Studies, all faculty members of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice were solicited seeking to allow the research instrument to be administered to their classes. As

noted above lower level classes were excluded from participation as were any student who does

not participate in on-campus courses. This latter issue is due in part to confidentially concerns

raised by the IRB, therefore distant education students were not asked to participate.

Data collection began in the spring of 2009 following approval of all departments. The

survey instrument was administered to 197 students either at the beginning or end of class.

Students were advised that they were being asked to participate in a voluntary research project

and that they were not obligated to participate. Furthermore, students were advised that they may

choose, at any time, to terminate their participation in the project and that they would not receive

any extra credit or consideration for their participation.

Procedures of protecting the anonymity of research participants began with the survey

instrument. No questions were asked which solicited any form of identifiers such as students'

name, date of birth, or school ID number. Upon completion of the survey instrument the returned

questionnaires were numbered sequentially, starting at one (001) and all subsequent references to

participants in this thesis are in the form of the study ID number assigned at that time.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The Sample

A total of 197 student surveys were completed. During the coding process it was

discovered that four respondents were not Criminology & Criminal Justice majors. An additional

seven respondents had not completed the open-ended questions pertaining to the dependent

variable to be tested and were therefore deemed unusable. Hence, a total of 186 completed

surveys were used for this study (*n=186*). Table #1 provides a summary of the characteristics of

the sample. Basic demographic characteristics are as follows: The vast majority of the

respondents, 70%, were between age 18 and 21, another 20% were between the age of 22 and 25,

with the remaining 10% being over the age of 25. Male respondents comprised 58% of the

sample while the remaining respondents were female. Of the respondents, 76% were Caucasian,

18% African - American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, with the remaining 3% identifying themselves as

"other."

The participants were also asked about the socio-economic status of their families.

Participants were asked: (a) "How would you best describe your families' social status? And (b)

"What would you estimate your parents' income to be? Only 4% of respondents considered

themselves as "poor"; 36% felt their family was "working class"; 41% identified themselves as

"middle class", 17% consider their family to be "upper middle class"; and an additional 2%

considered their family "wealthy". As for family income, 26% thought that their parents earned

$50,000 or less annually, 28% estimated their family income to be between $50,000 and $100,000 yearly, 12% of respondents projected their family income to be between $100,000 and $150,000 and 12% estimated their parents' income to exceed $150,000 annually.

As mentioned earlier, this study utilized a stratified random sample of criminology and criminal justice students. The intent of utilizing this methodology was to avoid administration of the survey instrument to students who may be taking the course as an elective while majoring in a different field. By concentrating on mid to upper level courses, it was deemed that the sample would better represent criminology and criminal justice majors. As a result, less than 10% (9.7) of those surveyed were freshmen; 36% of respondents were sophomores; 34% were juniors, and another 16% were seniors with 4% of respondents being graduate students. The amount of credit hours the subjects were enrolled in during the fall 2008 semester varied from a minimum of three, to a maximum of 19 credit hours with a mean enrollment of 14.55 hours.

The next section of the survey solicited information in relation to where the students are from, in particular their home environment, whether it is rural, suburban or urban. How safe they feel walking alone at night, and in their opinion how serious, if at all, is crime an issue in the environment where they grew up. Of the subjects in this study 37% were raised in an area which they considered rural, another 42% reside in a suburban area, while 20% consider their home environment to be urban. 86% of the research subjects felt that they were either very safe or reasonably safe walking alone at night in the neighborhood where they grew up, 10% believed that they would feel somewhat unsafe walking alone at night where they grew up, while only 4% (eight respondents) felt it was very unsafe to walk alone at night in the neighborhood where they were raised. Similarly, 80% of respondents felt that crime was either not a problem at all (15%)

or not a very serious problem (65%) where they grew up, 15% did feel that crime was a serious problem, while 5% felt that crime was a very serious problem where they grew up.

Among the respondents, 25 were either currently employed by or have previously been employed in some capacity within the criminal justice system. 25% of participants had never visited a correctional institution while 27% had visited a correctional institution once. Many of those visits were attributed to tours arranged through university functions. The remaining 48% had either visited a correctional institution "a few times" (33%) or many times (15%). In total, 75% of the sample had visited a correctional facility at least once. These results are similar to those discovered by Hamm (1990) who found that of a sample of Indiana legislators (those who write criminal law) only 81% had visited a prison in the past (Hamm, 1990). It is a disturbing notion to consider that the current sample of CJ students may have a better understanding of prisons than state legislators.

Students were also asked to report if within the last year they or any member of their immediate family had been the victim of any form of criminal activity. 54% of respondents report no criminal victimization within the past year. The survey reveals that 30% of respondents, or members of their family, were the victims of a property crime (theft, vandalism, or burglary). Whereas 16% assert that they or a member of their family had been the victims of a violent crime (verbal threats, physical assault, or threatened with a weapon).

In an attempt to measure students' views in regards to what the principal purpose of the criminal justice system should be: retribution, incapacitation, rehabilitation or deterrence? Students were asked to rank these 4 objectives in order of importance. 40% of the sample felt that "incapacitation" is the primary objective of the CJ system. 23% felt that "rehabilitation should be the main goal followed by "deterrence", 20%, and "retribution" 14%.

These findings are very similar to those discovered by Tewksbury & Mustaine (2008) who found that the majority of persons employed in the prison environment thought that incapacitation was the primary goal of the prison, followed by rehabilitation, retribution and deterrence respectively. Whereas Hamm (1990) found that a sample of state legislators, 42% felt that deterrence was the primary goal of the corrections system. Tewksbury & Mustaine (2008) also note that, of their sample of prison staff members, those members who were college educated saw rehabilitation as more important than those without college education (p. 227). Additionally, of those who had been on the job longer also were less likely to endorse the ideology of retribution.

Student Opinions

Crime causation.

In an attempt to measure students' perception of crime causation an attribution complexity scale designed by Hamm (1990) was implemented utilizing eight questions on the subject of crime causation. Students were asked to use an 8 point scale ranging from "Very strongly disagree" to "Very strongly agree".

Summing the total of the responses and reversing scores of four of the questions the result revealed whether students subscribed to the classical paradigm of crime causation (criminal behavior is the result of free will) or the positivist paradigm (criminal behavior is the result of social, biological or psychological factors). A minimum score of eight yet below 36 is viewed as supporting the positivist paradigm (the lower the score the firmer the belief) whereas a score higher than 36 identifies students as supporting the classical school of thought. The results of this exercise revealed scores ranging from a low of 14 to a high of 59 with a mean score of 33.81.

This scale is a replica of that used by Hamm (1990) which allows responses ranging from eight to 64. Since a score of 36 would equally divide the distribution, a mean score of 33.81 reveals that the distribution is negatively skewed, indicating that the majority of the sample tends to subscribe to the positivist school of thought. A review of the attribution complexity scale results (see table #2) shows that, for this sample of students, most do not support the classical school of thought in regards to crime causation. These findings reject the first null hypothesis.

These findings would suggest that in possible future employment capacities this sample of CJ students would support rehabilitative programming within prisons as opposed to the more punitive based policies currently in place.

Prison conditions.

Forty five percent of those surveyed considered conditions within prison to be "harsh" and/or "violent". Several of these respondents noted that more humane improvements in the form of rehabilitative programming are needed. Another 30% thought that prisons were "comfortable" or "accommodating" while offering a hospitable and welcoming environment to convicts. Many of these students felt that more punitive measures were needed within the prison, whereas 22% of respondents' offered a "mixed" response noting that conditions may vary depending on the level of security or culture within a given facility.

Basis of criminal justice knowledge.

When respondents were asked what their knowledge of the criminal justice (CJ) system is based, on responses varied to a great extent as 23% base their knowledge of the CJ system upon information obtained in class work, 9% of students base their knowledge upon the fact that they personally had been arrested themselves (3 students) or have a friend/family member who has served time in prison (14 students). The media also had a large response rate in this

measurement. Of respondents' 12% acknowledged that they base their knowledge of the system solely upon media representations. Another 19% attribute their knowledge of the CJ system on a combination of class work and media portrayals. In total, close to 39% of survey respondents identify the media as having an influence upon their knowledge of the CJ system. While another 22% of respondents attributed their knowledge of the CJ system to a friend/family member who is employed within the system.

Why criminology & criminal justice.

In response to why students were seeking a degree in Criminology & Criminal Justice, a staggering 51% plan to seek employment within law enforcement and/or corrections. When combined with other responses, nearly 80% of respondents plan to seek employment within some area of the CJ system (i.e. working with juveniles, victims' rights, assisting criminals, seeking law degree). The remaining students note they are only majoring in CJ because they enjoy the subject (11%). Others simply note that they do not know why they are majoring in CJ (2%) and another 3% assert that they are planning to pursue more advanced education.

Ex-convicts teaching class.

When asked how they would feel to discover that an ex-convict was teaching a class which they were enrolled in, 68% of respondents' did not feel that this was a cause for concern. As a result of these findings we must reject the second hypothesis.

However, 10 students, representing 5.4% of the sample, stated that they would drop the course immediately, and 27% did have some form of reservations as to having a former criminal teaching class. These concerns include the ex-con possibly having a bias towards the CJ system. Additionally, several students expressed concern noting that the nature of the criminal act for which the individual was convicted would have a bearing upon the student feeling comfortable

with having an ex-con teaching CJ courses. For example, several students noted that if an instructor was previously convicted of rape or murder they would not be comfortable having that individual teaching class.

Enrolling in a course taught by an ex-con.

Not surprisingly when asked if they would "knowingly" enroll in a course taught by an ex-convict, responses were very similar to those observed above. Of the respondents 17 students (9% of the sample) said they would "never" knowingly enroll in a course taught by an ex-con, 68% of respondents would have no hesitations enrolling in a class taught by an ex-convict and 23% did express hesitation due to concerns related to possible biases or due to the nature of the previous convictions.

Qualitative Analysis.

A random sample of 15 students was drawn for the purpose of qualitative analysis. A list of 15 random numbers was produced by "stattrek.com" using the following criteria; 15 random numbers from within the range of one to 186. Duplicate numbers were not permitted.

Upon review, when considering the dependant variables (how they would feel to discover that an ex-convict was teaching a class they were enrolled in, as well as, would they enroll in a class which they were aware that an ex-con was teaching), two very distinct themes emerge: change and experience on the former prisoners' behalf. Although the entire sample was not receptive to the idea, opinions did vary, as did responses in regards to conditions within prison. The overwhelming response, from this sample, does support the idea of having ex-convicts as teachers and reflects those responses from the quantitative section.

In regards to conditions within prison, responses range from being "the worst place to live" to "it seems like some people want to go to prison because it is nicer than their homes."

This later response was echoed by several other students who believed that the conditions inside prison were "accommodating," "relaxed" or basically "too nice. They have T.V.'s and other things that make jail too comfortable." Whereas, another student felt that "the conditions are both accommodating and rough. Prisoners get meals and recreation time at tax payers' expense. Life in prison is a fine alternative to being homeless or living on the streets."

The idea of prisons as country clubs was the dominant view on this topic. As one student remarked "prison is not fun at all it's their own little world in there so it is rough." This seems to reflect what most of this sample consider being conditions within prisons. Most felt that they were "harsh" and/or "violent" environments'. As one student stated "a prison could be rough, but you have to do what needs to be done to maintain order." Whereas, one respondent stated "I believe that they treat them people too much like animals."

When students were asked "How would you feel if an ex-convict was teaching a criminal justice course you were enrolled in?" and "Would you enroll in a class being taught by an ex-convict?" These responses were perhaps, the most diverse. One skeptical student stated that he "would reserve judgment until [after he had] come to class a few times" even though he would knowingly enroll in a course taught by an ex-con. Whereas another young man said he would not enroll in such a course and that he would not feel comfortable in a class where the instructor was an ex-con "unless another form of authority was in the room." While a third student who is studying CJ in an attempt to understand "why people become criminals" would be hesitant of an ex-con in the classroom with this concern being based on "what they did."

Within these responses two very distinct themes did come to light; the idea that the former prisoner would have had to have changed their life in order to achieve a PhD, as well as this person having a wealth of experience from which the student would benefit. One young man

whose father is a police officer felt that it would be "interesting to hear [the former convicts] side and point of view." This student was hesitant to commit to knowingly enrolling in such a course as he stated "I am not sure if I knew before hand...maybe...maybe not." The experience within the CJ system, which an ex-convict would bring to the classroom, was seen as beneficial by several students. Responses within this theme came in the form of "it would come from firsthand experience and I think it would be very helpful." As well as, "I would be happy to learn from someone who has been through it" or as another student felt, he "would probably listen to [the ex-convict] more." Another student who is seeking a career in law enforcement stated that "who else would know the criminal mind better than a criminal." It appears from these responses that these students acknowledge the wealth of knowledge and experience which an ex-convict would be able to bring to the classroom.

A second recurring theme which emerged in these responses is that of change. One female student who supports incapacitation as the primary goal of the CJ system felt that "it would be different but interesting" to be enrolled in a class taught by an ex-convict and that "it would be inspiring to see an ex-con reformed enough to actually teach a class." Other respondents also acknowledged the rehabilitation aspects necessary for a former prisoner to be teaching college courses, as one stated "he had to change and work for what he is doing so it would be pretty cool...I would feel like it was just another day in class." Another student stated "it wouldn't bother me because I would trust that he/she has their life on track."

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The findings contained within this research clearly shows that Criminology & Criminal Justice students have no better understanding of the criminal justice system, particularly prison conditions, than does the general public. The responses noted in the qualitative analysis shows student think prison conditions are either too soft or too harsh. The stark reality is that prison conditions actually lay somewhere in-between the two extremes; prisons are neither overtly violent nor country club vacations.

Prisons as discussed in university classrooms, as well as movies, are often a distortion of reality (Ross, 2003). In particular, prison movies tend to misrepresent reality as they do not portray the "boredom and drudgery" of prison reality, the truth about prison life is less frightening than stereotypes would suggest (Ross & Richards 2002; Ross, 2003).   As prisoner Simon "Sam" Gutierrez of Statesville Prison in Illinois writes "Prison life is nothing like what the press, television and movies suggest" (cited in Morris, 1995, p. 203). He goes on to write that there is no way to express or "capture the constant unhappiness of prison life and the constant sense of danger" (cited in Morris, 1995, p. 211) and that it is the "idleness and boredom [which] grinds me down" (cited in Morris, 1995, p. 203).

Similarly Eugene V. Debbs (1927/2000) observed that no one can comprehend the pain and suffering experienced by the prisoner. Debbs, who in 1920 ran for President of The United States while incarcerated in the Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta, stated that:

> Only the inmate, the imprisoned convict, actually knows the prison and what it means to him and his kind. Even the officials in charge and on the grounds, and in close personal contact with the inmates, do not know the prison. Indeed they cannot know it, for they have never felt its blighting influence, nor been oppressed by its rigorous discipline; nor have they suffered the mental and physical hunger, the isolation, the deprivation and the cruel and relentless punishment it imposes (Debbs 1927/2000 p. 95-96).

Additionally, Morris (1995) notes "unless you have been a prisoner, you don't know the deadening sameness" (p. 202 – 203). This idea of deadening sameness has been echoed by many authors who have served time in prison (see Irwin, 2005; Irwin & Austin, 1997; Ross & Richards, 2002; Ross & Richards, 2003). It is boredom which inflicts the most pain upon the prisoner; secondary to boredom is violence.

Within this sample of Criminology & CJ students, 45% of respondents thought that prison is a violent place. The reality is that violence in prison seems to have peaked in the mid 1980s. While violence may erupt at any time violence is not an everyday occurrence. As one prisoner housed in a medium security prison in California reported in 2001, "I can't remember when there was a stabbing here. The most you get is a couple guys slapping at each other and cops break it right up" (Irwin, 2005, p. 92). The reduction in prison violence during a period of unprecedented growth has been attributed to a modern prisoner classification system as well as updated prison operations.

Perhaps the classification system has more to do with stemming the frequencies of violence than any other single program (see Irwin, 2005). For example, in Indiana, of the 28,389 prisoners held in the Department of Corrections at the start of 2010, 21.2% or 6,018 are held in Maximum security (IDOC, 2010b). These maximum security units segregate those prisoners who may have a propensity for violence. This sends a message to the other 78% of the IDOC population, held in medium or minimum security housing, that if they cause problems or engage

in violent behavior they will be re-classified and transferred to maximum or a secured housing unit. While prison operations have contributed to reducing prison violence the overcrowding and inhumane living conditions do not seem to have changed over the years.

When a prisoner first enters prison the conditions are most likely "cramped living conditions, poor ventilation, poor plumbing, substandard heating and cooling, unsanitary conditions …constant noise, and a complete lack of privacy" (Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 293). For example Richards (2003) recalls that in Leavenworth, Federal penitentiary, there is no air conditioning in the cell blocks and the heating was so bad that the "cell houses were also freezing cold in winter, with ice on the floor and walls" (Richards, 2003, p. 137) This of course is contrary to what the public and some students perceive prison conditions to be. As Robert Freeman (2001) observed that the general public believes that conditions in prison are too lax and that prisoners are "being pampered through access to a wide range of recreational activities, steak and lobster meals, [and] cable television" (Freeman, 2001, p. 108, cited in Kappeler, et al., 2000, p. 295). These perceptions of a life of luxury or an accommodating world inside prisons are in stark contrast to the realities of prison life.

The findings within this research that CJ majors' possess misleading perceptions of prison life are similar to findings of previous research cited above. The finding that students would welcome former convicts as instructors is unanticipated. While most students had stated that the goal of the CJ system should be incapacitation they do, however, understand that rehabilitation is possible. As the majority of this research sample supports, the idea of former prisoners in the classroom, these findings seem to be a rejection of the dominant stereotype of a prisoner as one committed to crime and unresponsive to rehabilitation (Irwin, 2005) for many of these students. Cannon (2005) notes that at some time in their career all professors will have to

deal with a student's biases. These are indeed teaching opportunities. By introducing ex-convicts into the classroom this would force the students to face their fear of others and thereby possibly reconsider the preconceived stereotype. A university classroom is the ideal place to expose and dismiss many of the media generated myths and having ex-cons in the classroom would help in this area.

Faculties within most CJ programs tend to be a combination of practitioners, many of whom have law enforcement backgrounds, as well as academically trained professors. As many universities claim to value diversity, incorporating formerly incarcerated persons on staff will bring an added dimension of diversity which will benefit students.

This research adds to the previous literature concerning CJ students. This is the first research on the topic of CJ students' perceptions of having ex-cons as professors. This research is not without its flaws. The sample here did not include distant education students; future research should incorporate these students as many distant education students may be "in-service" or currently employed as CJ practitioners which may have a bearing upon the results. Also, utilizing a longitudinal design in future research may also display different results. As this research attempted to exclude freshman students, future research should use a pretest/posttest experiment where students are asked about their perception as incoming freshmen and asked the same questions as seniors prior to graduation.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

I. I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your personal and academic background. Please select or fill in the best response for each question.

How old are you?   18 - 21 _____   22 - 25 _____

                                             26 - 30 _____   31 + _____

What is your gender?   Female _____   Male _____

How do you describe yourself?

     1.____ African American   4. ____Hispanic/Latino

     2. ____ White   5. ____ Asian

     3. ____ American Indian   6. ____ Other _____

How would you best describe your families' social status?

     A) Poor   **B)** Working class   **C)** Middle class

         D) Upper middle class   **E)** Wealthy

What would you estimate your parents' income to be? $_____

How many hours of secondary education (beyond high school) have you completed?

               Less than 30 _____   31 – 60 _____

       61 – 90 _____   Over 90 _____   Graduate student _____

How many class hours are you enrolled in for this semester?   _____

How would you characterize the area in which you live?

(If you live on campus refer to the neighborhood where you were raised)

A) Mostly rural   **B)** Mostly suburban   **C)** Mostly urban

How safe do you feel being out alone at night in the neighborhood where you live?

(If you live on campus refer to the neighborhood where you were raised)

A) Very safe   **B)** Reasonably safe

C) Somewhat unsafe   **D)** Very unsafe

To what extent is crime a problem in the community where you live?

(If you live on campus refer to the neighborhood where you were raised)

A) Very serious problem   **B)** A serious problem

C) Not a very serious problem   **D)** Is not a problem at all

Have you ever been employed by an agency in the criminal justice system?

Yes _____   **No** _____   **If yes please specify:** _____

_____

_____

Have you ever visited any type of correctional facility (prison, jail etc.)?
A) Never   **B)** Once
C) A few times   **D)** Many times

II. Within the *past year*, have any of the following crimes been committed against you or a member of your immediate family? (If they have, check the crime in the space provided)

    A) _____ Someone broke into my house

    B) _____ Had property stolen from house or yard

    C) _____ Someone broke into my car

    D) _____ Someone damaged my car (by vandalism, not by accident)

    E) _____ Had property stolen from car

    F) _____ Someone threatened to beat me up or threatened me with a weapon

    G) _____ Someone held me up on the street and robbed me

    H) _____ Someone actually beat me up (in a fight you did not start)

I would like to know what you think *should be* the goal of our criminal justice system.

    A) ____ Retribution - to pay criminals back for the harm they have caused society.

    B) ____ Incapacitation – to protect society by putting criminals in jail so that they cannot victimize anyone.

    C) ____ Rehabilitation – to reform criminals so that they will return to society in a constructive rather than a destructive way.

    D) ____ Deterrence – to teach criminals as well as other people contemplating going into crime that in America crime does not pay.

III. Using the scale provided below, please state the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. In responding, place the number that best represents your views in the space provided next to each statement.

For instance, if you strongly agree with a statement you would respond with a 7, or if you strongly disagree your answer would be a 2.

Please not that <u>there are no right or wrong answers</u> in this survey. The purpose of the statements is only to enable us to discern what you and your fellow students think about the central criminal justice issues of today.

......1..............2...............3.............4.................5..............6..........7..........8.........

Very strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure but probably disagree	Not sure but probably agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Very strongly agree

1) ____ A main reason why we have so much crime these days is because young people are not taught to respect authority.

2) ____ A major reason why we have so much crime is because America still has too much poverty, racism, and social injustice.

3) ____ Many people are driven into crime by the frustration they feel when they fail at school or can't get a job no matter how hard they try.

4) ____ We should stop viewing criminals as victims of society who deserve our help.

5) ____ The best way to reduce crime in America is to reestablish the traditional values that made our country great: hard work, religion, respect for authority, and firm discipline.

6) ____ Crime has increased in recent times because society has become to permissive.

7) ____ Unless we do something about the root causes of crime such as poverty and unemployment, the crime rate will remain high.

8) ____ The best way to reduce crime in America is to expand social programs that will give disadvantaged people better education, job training, and equal opportunities.

IV. Briefly describe what you believe to be conditions inside a prison
        (i.e. harsh, accommodating, rough, violent, relaxed, comfy, easy etc.).

Your knowledge of the Criminal Justice system (prisons, prisoners and crime) is based on what?

Why have you decided to pursue a degree in Criminology & Criminal Justice?

How would you feel if an ex-convict was teaching a criminal justice course you were enrolled in?

Would you enroll in a class being taught by an ex-convict?

This concludes the survey. I would like to thank you for your time and participation.

THANK YOU!!

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	N	Percent	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Age						
18 – 21	130	69.9				
22 – 25	37	19.9				
26 – 30	8	4.3				
31 +	11	5.9				
Gender						
Male	107	57.5				
Female	73	39.2				
No Response	6	3.2				
Ethnicity						
African-American	33	17.7				
Caucasian	141	75.8				
American Indian	1	0.5				
Hispanic/Latino	7	3.8				
Other	4	2.2				
Soc. Economic Status						
Poor	8	4.3				
Working Class	66	35.5				
Middle Class	77	41.4				
Upper-Middle Class	31	16.7				
Wealthy	4	2.2				
Annual Income						
Under $50k	49	26.3				
$50k - $100k	52	28.0				
$100k - $150k	22	11.8				
$150k - $200k	7	3.8				
$200k +	15	8.1				
No Response	41	22.0				
Class Level						
Freshman	18	9.7				
Sophomore	66	35.5				
Junior	64	34.4				
Senior	30	16.1				
Graduate	7	3.8				
No Response	1	0.5				
Current Hours Enrolled	184	98.9	3	24	14.55	3.536
No Response	2	1.1				

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (continued)

	N	Percent	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Home Environment						
Mostly Rural	68	36.6				
Mostly Suburban	78	41.9				
Mostly Urban	37	19.9				
No Response	3	1.6				
Feel Safe at Night		39.8				
Very Safe	74	45.7				
Reasonably Safe	85	10.2				
Somewhat Unsafe	19	4.3				
Very Unsafe	8					
Crime Problem at Home						
Very Serious	9	4.8				
Serious	28	15.1				
Not Serious Problem	121	65.1				
Not a Problem at All	28	15.1				
CJ System Employee						
Yes	25	13.4				
No	161	86.6				
Visit a Correctional Inst.						
Never	46	24.7				
Once	51	27.4				
A Few Time	61	32.8				
Many Times	28	15.1				
Victimization in Last Year						
No	100	53.8				
Property Crime	56	30.1				
Violent Crime	10	5.4				
Property & Violent	20	10.8				
CJ System Goal						
Retribution	26	14				
Incapacitation	75	40.3				
Rehabilitation	43	23.1				
Deterrence	37	19.9				
No Response	5	2.7				
Prison Conditions						
Intimidating/Harsh	83	44.6				
Accommodating	56	30.1				
Mixed Response	41	22.0				
No Response	6	3.2				

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (continued)

	N	Percent	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Attribution	182		14	59	33.81	6.483
CJ Knowledge						
Class	42	22.6				
Media	23	12.4				
Class & Media	36	19.4				
CJ Employee	41	22.0				
Class/Media						
& Employee	5	2.7				
Family/Friend						
Convict	14	7.5				
Been Arrested	3	1.6				
Why Study CJ						
Employment in						
Law Enforcement	95	51.1				
Other CJ Position	52	28.0				
Enjoy subject	21	11.3				
Cont. Education	5	2.7				
Unknown	4	2.2				
Ex-Con Teaching						
Not an Issue	126	67.7				
Hesitant/Crime						
Bias	50	26.9				
Would Drop	10	5.4				
Knowingly Enroll						
Yes – Without						
Hesitation	126	67.7				
Hesitant/Crime						
Bias	43	23.1				
No	17	9.1				

Table 2. Attribution Complexity Scale Responses

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
14	1	0.5	0.5
19	1	0.5	1.1
20	3	1.6	2.7
21	1	0.5	3.3
22	4	2.2	5.5
23	2	1.1	6.6
24	3	1.6	8.2
25	2	1.1	9.3
26	3	1.6	11.0
27	3	1.6	12.6
28	8	4.4	17.0
29	7	3.8	20.9
30	11	6.0	26.9
31	12	6.6	33.5
32	15	8.2	41.8
33	8	4.4	46.2
34	17	9.3	55.5
35	14	7.7	63.2
36	13	7.1	70.3
37	11	6.0	76.4
38	8	4.4	80.8
39	7	3.8	84.6
40	8	4.4	89.0
41	3	1.6	90.7
42	2	1.1	91.8
43	2	1.1	92.9
44	4	2.2	95.1
45	1	0.5	95.6
46	1	0.5	96.2
47	2	1.1	97.3
48	2	1.1	98.4
49	1	0.5	98.9
53	1	0.5	99.5
59	1	0.5	100.0

Valid N = 182
Mean = 33.81
Std. Deviation 6.483