

2010

A Study Examining the Relationship Between High School Dropouts and Criminality at the Ojibway Correctional Facility

Scott Jette

Northern Michigan University

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A STUDY EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS
AND CRIMINALITY AT THE OJIBWAY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

By

SCOTT JETTE

THESIS

Submitted to
Northern Michigan University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

MASTERS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Graduate Studies Office

2010

SIGNATURE APPROVAL FORM

This thesis by Scott Jette is recommended for approval by the student's Thesis Committee in the Department of Criminal Justice and by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Committee Chair: Gregory Warchol Date

First Reader: Dale P. Kapla Date

Second Reader: Robert A. Hanson Date

Department Head: Dale P. Kapla Date

Dean of Graduate Studies: Terry Seethoff Date

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NAME: JETTE, SCOTT, ALBERT

DATE OF BIRTH: NOVEMBER, 22, 1969

ABSTRACT

A STUDY EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS AND CRIMINALITY AT THE OJIBWAY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

By

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The following research attempts to explain the effects of dropping out of high school on criminal behavior. Past research on the relationship between school dropout and criminal behavior is inconclusive. A survey will be used to collect the data. The survey will be administered to Level 1 inmates at the Ojibway Correctional Facility in Michigan. The primary quantitative data will come from questionnaires filled out by prisoners. The information gathered from this survey will be analyzed and then be cross referenced with past research to see if a common profile exists.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study examines the relationship between a failure to complete high school, i.e., dropping out, and criminal behavior. It addresses the question: Does the failure to complete high school lead to criminal behavior among the drop outs? After many years of research, the relationship between dropping out of high school and offending remains unclear.

Statement of Problem

The United States has two social problems that are linked, dropping out of high school and criminal behavior. Reducing the number of dropouts in this country has become a national concern (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). One reason for the concern is that dropouts cost our nation money (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Another concern is reducing the amount of criminal behavior in the United States.

Taking a closer look at the dropout problem reveals that this is not a new phenomenon. The United States has always had a problem with students dropping out of school. Although the dropout rate has remained steady in recent years, there still remains large numbers of people not graduating.

The Department of Education calculates the national status dropout rates each year. This measure provides an indicator of the proportion of young people who lack a basic high school education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In October 2004, approximately 3.8 million people aged 16 through 24 were not enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma or alternative credential such as a GED (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Criminal behavior is another problem that has always been a national concern. The number of people incarcerated in prisons is on the rise. In 1994, there were 1,053,738

prisoners in federal or state prisons or in local jails (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). According to the latest figures published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in the 2008 report available online, there were 2,299,116 prisoners held in federal or state prisons or in local jails (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). The most recent National Adult Literacy Survey shows sixty three percent of the inmate population never received a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). The overall dropout rate in the United States is approximately five percent. The inmate population has a considerably higher dropout rate compared to the general population and this researcher feels that there is a link between dropping out and criminal behavior. Also, there is a need to conduct research on this population.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two examines the theoretical explanations for the delinquency-dropout association. Prior studies have applied numerous theories; however, The Social Bond Theory and The General Theory are regarded as the best at examining the relationship of dropping out of school and delinquency. This chapter will focus on The Social Bond Theory and The General Theory and how they correlate to the research question. This chapter will also describe the historical trends of dropouts. The last part of this chapter will focus on the profile of dropouts.

Chapter Three begins by explaining the process of administering a survey to a group of prisoners. This process is very detailed so the prisoners understand the purpose of the study and to encourage participation. This is followed by a discussion of limitations of the research. The data gathered from the survey will then be used to answer the research question.

Chapter Four reviews the results of the survey. Each question will be carefully evaluated. The results of this study will show if there is a correlation between dropping out of high school and criminal activity within this prison population.

Chapter Five will look at the results of the survey and compare findings with prior research. A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of this type of study will follow. This chapter will close by discussing the limitations of the study and what is needed for a similar study in the future.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Perspective – for the study

Travis Hirschi's is highly regarded for his work in the field of criminology. His work has produced two popular theories on criminal behavior and deviance which are explained in two books. The first book, *Causes of Delinquency* (1969) introduces his theory of social bonding. His second book written in 1990 in conjunction with Michael Gottfredson is titled *A General Theory of Crime*. The focus of this book is on the theory of self-control.

Hirschi started his research career working on developing The Social Bond Theory. The first bond is attachment. It refers to a bond with a parent, teacher, or a school. While examining each of these bonds and their relationship to the individual, Hirschi found that an inability to be well-connected with these bonds could lead to delinquent acts (Hirschi, 1969).

The second bond is commitment. The more an individual is committed to an activity or group, the less likely they are to engage in crime. An example of an activity could be working toward a master's degree while an example of a group could be participating on a football team. An individual who invests time and energy in a certain activity will be less likely to engage in crime because of fear of possible costly ramifications (Hirschi, 1969).

The third bond is involvement. Hirschi argues that a person may simply be too busy doing conventional activities to engage in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). A person who is participating in activities and group functions will be busy during the day with little free time on their hands, which lead to fewer problems.

Belief is the final bond, which focuses on an individual's values. When a person's belief in morality or norms is weakened, the probability that he will commit a criminal act increases (Hirschi, 1969). In summary, Hirschi also believes that when social mechanisms

are weakened, then criminal behavior is more likely (Hirschi, 1969). The more an individual respects the law the less likely they are to commit crime.

Hirschi moved his attention from the social bond as the main focus in deviance and started focusing on self-control. The General Theory of Crime or Self-Control Theory asserts that individuals with higher self-control will be increasingly less likely at any stage in their life to participate in criminal acts whereas those with low self-control are highly likely to participate in criminal acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). His new Self-Control Theory continues forward from his Social Bond Theory, it just places more emphasis on the self-control aspect.

There are three conditions that must be met for an individual to learn self-control. Specifically, someone such as a parent or guardian must be present to monitor the child's behavior, recognize deviant behavior when it occurs, and punish deviant behavior immediately (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Children have two important places to socialize, in school and at home with their family. Attending school is a very important social institution for adolescents to acquire social skills. However, the most important place to acquire social skills is in the family setting.

Historical Trends in High School Completion

A high percentage of American teenagers have dropped out of school over the past forty years. Research shows that over the past forty years, the proportion of young people who failed to finish high school has decreased substantially (Rumberger, 1987). In 1940, more than 60% of all persons 25 to 29 years old had not completed high school; by 1980, that proportion dropped to less than 16% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Despite a long-term upward trend in school completions, each year about 5 percent of all high school students in

the United States, drop out of school (Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, & Chapman, 1999). Our current dropout rate of five percent is favorable when compared with the extremely high numbers of the past. However, as stated in the introduction, in 2004 the United States had approximately 3.8 million people from 16 to 24 years old who did not graduate from high school.

The continuing problem with dropouts has gained considerable attention recently resulting in several new government policy initiatives to curb the dropout problem. In 1990, the nation's governors and the President of the United States adopted six national education goals to be met by 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). These education goals were designed to lower the rate of dropouts and allow the United States to compete with other countries technologically. However, the consensus is that after twenty years since the adoption of these goals in 1990 there appears to be little change.

One reason for the concern with the dropout problem is the shift in the American economy from heavy industry to high technology goods and services (Cassel, 2003). This change has heightened the importance of education in this country. The emphasis for quality education is important because of the need for skilled labor. In the past, many teenagers dropped out of school to work on farms, factories, and mines. Also, jobs in the past did not require the type of education that is needed now.

As our nation advances further into the technology era, the effort to lower the dropout rate in the United States is a major concern. To gain a better understanding of this problem, researchers have addressed three questions: (1) What type of individual is likely to drop out of high school? (2) Where do these dropouts come from? (3) Why are they dropping out?

What type of individual is likely to drop out of high school?

Studies find male students to be more likely to leave school than female students (Rumberger, 1987). Researchers have also come to the conclusion that the dropout rates among racial and ethnic groups to be very lopsided. Research done by the U. S. Department of Education in 1998 revealed the dropout rates among persons 16 to 24 years old were 7.7 percent for white non-Hispanics, 13.8 for Black non-Hispanics, and 29.5 for Hispanics (U. S. Department of Education, 2006). The lopsided rate of dropping out of school within the racial groups has heightened the awareness of this problem in our country.

The high dropout rate among Hispanics has been a particular concern for the federal government, which issued a report on this problem (Secada et al. 1998). The majority of this concern deals with the foreign-born Hispanics. The dropout rates for Hispanics are indeed high, more than forty percent of all young Hispanics are foreign born and more than forty percent of foreign-born Hispanics never attended school in the United States (Secada et al. 1998).

Geographic distribution of dropouts

High school drop outs represent all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds across the United States. Large urban schools frequently have dropout rates in excess of fifty percent (Croninger & Lee, 2001). In 2004, the Michigan Department of Education determined that the dropout rate in Detroit Public School system exceeded 52 percent (U. S. Department of Education, 2006). The title of an article from the Detroit News in 2003 depicts how bad dropping out of school is in the Detroit area [“20,000 quit metro schools.”] (Cohen, 2003).

Living in a neighborhood that has a high crime and unemployment rate can be very detrimental to a youth's educational goals. Youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely than others to drop out of school (South, Baumer, & Lutz, 2003). These neighborhoods provide a fertile context in which sub-cultural values conducive to weak performance and other non-normative adolescent behaviors can flourish (South et al.).

Why do high school students dropout?

Understanding why students drop out of school is the most difficult question of the three to understand. Students can be influenced by family, school, and community factors. These factors combined with individual factors make it very challenging in the pursuit of reducing dropouts in the United States.

The variety of reasons reported for leaving school in the National Education Study prove how complex the dropout problem is in the United States. The statistics from the National Education Study of 1988 eighth graders show that dropouts have a host of reasons for not completing school. School related reasons were mentioned by 77 percent; family-related reasons were mentioned by 34 percent; and work-related reasons were mentioned by 32 percent (Berktoed, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998). The most specific reasons were "did not like school" (46 percent), "failing school" (39 percent), "could not get along with teachers" (29 percent), and "got a job" (27 percent). (Berktoed).

The above-mentioned survey suggests that there is a wide variety of reasons for dropping out of school. The wide range of reasons reported by students makes it extremely difficult to come up with programs that target students who are at high risk of dropping out. Reasons for dropping out of school can be placed into four major categories: family, social setting, student performance, and academic environment.

The first category is family, which obviously greatly influences a child's education. Families who relocate too often can be putting their children at risk for dropping out of school. Student mobility can adversely affect the final outcomes of school-test scores and dropout rates even after the effects of family background, resident mobility, and prior academic achievement have been controlled (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Swanson & Schneider; 1996, Temple & Reynolds, 1997).

Additional reasons for dropping out of school have been identified in the research. These are: the presence of other family members that did not complete high school, the student's parents did not support the child's education, the student's lacked a suitable place to study, and the student was needed at home to care for family members (Berk told, 1998).

The second category for dropping out is social setting. Children are influenced by their surroundings both at home and at school. Children who live in economically distressed environments are more often exposed to opportunities that make parental supervision difficult and that conflict with education success (Connell, & Halpern-Felsher, 2003). Children living in disadvantaged neighborhoods typically lack an environment conducive to learning. As a result, youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely than others to drop out of school, make poor grades, and not attend college because they are exposed to peer groups whose members exhibit or encourage such behavior (South et al, 2003).

The third category is student performance. In this era of educational reform, greater emphasis is being placed upon making school personnel accountable for bringing all students to high levels of academic performance (South et al, 2003). The big reason of concern within the student performance category is standardized testing.

Standardized testing was implemented to help fight the problem of dropping out. However, researchers often disagree with the standardized test in helping students' complete school. Some contend that it does just the opposite. According to an article in the USA Today, the most recent studies reinforce the conclusion that graduation tests increase the dropout rate, the harder the test, the more that dropout, across the USA, high-stake test push at least 40,000 young men and women out of school each year (Neill, 2006). Despite all of the testing and attention given to the dropout problem, the most recent national data show limited gains over the past quarter century (Hayes, Nelson, Tabin, Pearson, & Worthy, 2002). Some other reasons for dropping out within the student performance category are poor grades; poor reading skills; and absenteeism (Berktoold, 1998).

The final category is academic environment. Numerous studies have found that poor academic environment is a strong predictor of dropping out (Ekstrom, 1986; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Swanson & Schneider, 1999; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Past research has identified four characteristics that influence student performance: student composition, resources, structural characteristics, and process and practices (Hanushek, 1989). Students are influenced greatly by their fellow classmates, teachers, and administrators. The daily routine of the school along with the everyday schedule affects students differently. Other reasons for dropping out were poor teaching, students who simply did not like school, students who found work too easy and students who reported they were bored with school.

Dropout factors

The past three decades have seen more interest in improving the quality of U.S. public education, especially related to increasing high school graduation rates (Hayes et al.

2002). The importance of a high school education in the United States is evident by the adoption of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 and the mandatory standardized testing all across the country. Why is there so much concern? This question is influenced by three factors: economic, demographic, and educational.

Economic Characteristics

Economics is the first factor for all of the concern over dropouts. Current statistics show economically how each individual dropout is affected. First, a high school dropout can expect to learn at least \$260,000 less over a lifetime than a high school graduate, and will pay about \$60,000 less in taxes (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Additionally, the average 45-year old high school dropout is in worse health than the average 65-year old high school graduate (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

High school dropouts have higher rates of unemployment, are more likely to receive public assistance, and earn less money when employed than high school graduates (U. S. Department of Education, 1999). The average yearly income of a high school dropout is \$12,400, compared to \$21,000 for a high school graduate (U. S. Census Bureau, 2002). According to the 2002 Current Population Survey, median annual earnings for individuals at least 25 years of age with no high school was \$15,800, the median annual earnings for high school dropouts was \$18,445 and for high school graduates, including General Education Diplomas (GED) holders, the median annual income was \$24,656 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2002).

Not finishing school hurts the individual, and also negatively affects the United States. In fact, each year's class of dropouts will cost the country over 200 billion dollars during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985). It is

estimated that the number of dropouts between the ages of eighteen and sixty seven to be around twenty three million; state and federal governments lose more than fifty billion dollars a year in taxes (National Dropout Prevention Network, 2000). The United States also loses more than one hundred and ninety two billion dollars (1.6% of GDP) in combined income and tax revenue for each group of 18-year olds who never complete high school (National Dropout Prevention Network, 2000).

Demographic Characteristics

As stated previously, a large majority of dropouts are ethnic or racial minorities from large urban areas. The numbers of students who are generally at greater risk of school failure are students from poor and low-income households, racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities and they are increasing in the nation's schools (Levin, 1986). This demographic information assists in formulating new programs for dropouts.

A study done by Rumberger and Thomas examined rates of student dropouts among urban and suburban high schools in the United States. One of the results of their study identified the problem with minorities dropping out at a high rate. They found that schools with high concentrations of minority students had substantially higher turnover rates than did those with low concentrations even after differences in student background and the academic makeup of the student body were controlled (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000).

Education Characteristics

Americans have always taken pride in their system of free, universal public education. Through the years, it has served many as a means of individual, social, and economic advancement, and has contributed significantly to our progress as a nation. But these days, few would disagree that there are significant problems in American education.

The growing push for accountability in the nation's public schools that has produced policies to end social promotion and to institute high school exit exams, both of which could increase the number of students who fail to complete high school (Heubert, & Hauser, 1999). More testing doesn't always get the desired results. The advent of more testing was designed to lower the rate; numerous researches support just the opposite.

Criminal behavior

After nearly 40 years of research, the relationship between dropping out of school and law-violating behavior remains unclear (Drapela, 2005). While the research does not show a direct cause-effect relationship, it does show a mild association between the two.

Crime has historically been a major issue on the United States policy agenda, despite its significant fall in the nineties (Gould, Weinberg, & Mustard, 2002). Although crime rates have declined, the number of people incarcerated each year is on the rise. In 1994, the population in state and federal prisons alone was 1,053,738 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). As of 2007, the most recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the population was 1,525,924. Our prison population is increasing each year and these increases are placing a major strain on states' budgets.

Eighty percent of prisoners in America are high school dropouts (National Dropout Prevention Network, 2000). In comparison, only 13 percent of 25 to 34 year-olds nationwide are dropouts (United States Department of Education, 2004). Estimates indicate that approximately 30% of federal inmates, 40% of state prison inmates, and 50% of persons on death row are high school dropouts (U. S. Department of Justice, 2002). Research shows that prisoners drop out of school at a much higher rate than the nation's average.

So what does this have to do with the relationship between high school dropouts and future criminal behavior? In my opinion, the large number of dropouts in our nations' large prison population would suggest an association between dropping out of high school and criminality. Michigan's prisons for example, mirror these numbers. Of the nearly 50,000 inmates in this state, about half of them are high school dropouts.

This research will examine the association between criminal behaviors and dropping out of school. The study will be done using a survey to gather data on prisoners locked inside a level one minimum security prison in Ojibway Correctional Facility in Marenisco, Michigan. The survey will be administered to each student enrolled in the education program. This study will be unique because the information collected will come directly from incarcerated prisoners. The information gathered will be used in conjunction with past research to look at the relationship between dropping out of school and criminality.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Data

Data for this research were gathered from a survey administered to inmates enrolled in an education program. The entire population was surveyed. There are two reasons which made this population an ideal setting to collect valuable information. This population consists of high school dropouts and convicted felons.

The first step in producing a survey was to develop questions that the inmates will understand and will be relevant to the hypothesis. Some of the questions in the survey derived from talking to inmates informally in the classroom. The survey will be broken down into four sections with a total of 40 questions. The first section will be a brief set of questions on demographics. The following three sections will ask education, criminal behavior, and criminal background questions.

The initial goal was to obtain a random sample of the entire state. Unfortunately, working inside a correctional setting poses many obstacles. The most important obstacle is the issue of security; therefore a local study seems like the logical choice. The Ojibway Correctional Facility (OCF) in Marenisco, Michigan was the site of the survey. OCF is a secured level I facility. A secure Level 1 as Defined by the Michigan Department of Corrections is any institution that has a secure perimeter (i.e. double fences, concertina wire, and a perimeter detection system) and has an armed alert response vehicle patrolling the perimeter of the institution.

The survey was chosen as the mode of data collection. There are two reasons for this choice. The first reason is the researcher can collect the data in the classroom. The second

reason is because of the relationship the researcher has with the students in the education department. Prison environment can be stressful and volatile and often time's inmates are reluctant to divulge personal information. Teachers in the prison school system provide a service to inmates. This service helps foster a better relationship between the inmate and staff. Using a survey in this type of environment can help deflect some of the stresses that inmates have with staff, and make them more willing to participate in this study.

Procedure for Gathering Data

The survey was administered to the entire education population and covers the time period from (November 16, 2009 through November 19, 2009). The entire education population consists of every student enrolled in a GED class at the time of the survey. The success rate of gathering data through surveys in this type of setting is quite low. So therefore, the goal of the questionnaire is to gather as much information as possible with a minimum amount of questions.

The researcher gave detailed instruction before the questionnaire was handed out to the prisoners. These instructions are important for several reasons. The first reason was to inform the subjects of the importance of the survey. The next was to motivate and encourage them to participate in the survey. The last reason was to inform subjects of confidentiality of the questionnaire.

The education level of the prisoners in the classroom ranges from kindergarten all the way up to twelfth grade. To ensure the quality of answers, the researcher read each question to the class and gave an explanation.

The education department at Ojibway Correctional Facility has five academic teachers, and each teacher has five classes with approximately eleven students in each class.

There are a total of twenty five classes involved in this study. The survey took four days to complete.

A large envelope was placed in the front of the classroom. I instructed all participants whether they choose to participate in this study or not, to place the surveys in the envelope as soon as they are finished. When the surveys were returned, they were coded. This was done simply by placing a number on top of the questionnaire. The numbers served two purposes. The first purpose is to give each survey a number for accountability. Secondly, the numbers will help maintain the inmate confidentiality. The survey is available in the appendix.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Table 1

AGE AND HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED						
	Age <20	Age 20-29	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50-59	Age >59
Mean Grade Level	9.83	9.95	10.02	9.55	9.35	6.00
N	6	81	41	38	26	2

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for age and highest grade completed. The range for age in this particular study is twenty three to forty seven, with an average of thirty five. The middle student (median) in this population is thirty one years old. The three age groups that fall in the standard deviation range are all within a half grade of each other, with the 30-39 years being the highest at the second month of their tenth grade. The less than 20 years old and older than 59 years age groups are exceptions because they make up a small percentage of the population surveyed, therefore, their findings are not reliable.

Table 2

RACE AND HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED						
	Black	White	Native	Multiracial	Hispanic	Asian
Mean Grade Level	10.03	9.47	8.50	9.17	9.67	10.00
N	110	51	8	6	15	2

Table 2 shows statistics for race and highest grade completed. It shows that the survey is dominated by Black and Whites making up 84% of the population. The remaining four racial groups make up the remaining 16%. Out of the six major races, blacks have the highest grade attained at 10.0, while the Native Americans have the lowest at 8.5 years.

Table 3

SCHOOL LOCATION AND HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED			
	City	Rural	Suburb
Mean Grade Level (years)	9.72	9.88	9.85
N	152	24	13

Table 3 shows the combination of highest grade completed and school location. Eighty percent of the population surveyed attended school in the city, leaving twenty percent between rural and urban schools. The average grade level attained for the three main areas is relatively the same. The statistics for the three areas are as follows: rural students had the highest grade level attained in this study with a 9.9 grade level average, students who attended school in the suburbs had an average of 9.9, and students from the city had an average of 9.7.

Table 4

EMPLOYMENT AND CONVICTIONS			
	Unemployed	Part Time	Full Time
Total Convictions	53	32	102
Total Convictions (Mean)	6.94	7.06	9.21
Total Convictions (Median)	6.00	6.50	6.00
Felony Convictions	51	32	101
Felony Convictions (Mean)	2.94	2.65	3.15
Felony Convictions(Median)	2.50	2.00	2.00

Table 4 shows the relationship between employment and convictions. There are more full time workers than both part time and unemployed workers. The full time workers committed the same amount of felonies; however, they had almost twice as many total convictions as the part time and unemployed workers.

Table 5

ENJOYMENT OF SCHOOL AND CRIMINAL ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS				
	Total	Total	Felony	Felony
	"Convictions	"Convictions	Convictions	Convictions
	Yes"	No"	"Yes"	"No"
Mean	7.73	8.80	3.07	2.96
N	107	81	106	79

Table 5 looks at student enjoyment in school and its relationship with criminal arrests and convictions. The prisoners surveyed who said they enjoyed school, on average, had one less total conviction compared to the prisoners who stated they did not enjoy school. However, the same is not true for felony convictions. Prisoners who enjoyed school committed the same amount of felonies as the prisoners who did not enjoy school.

Table 6

DAYS SKIPPED AND TOTAL CONVICTIONS			
	Skipped 1--10	Skipped 11--20	Skipped 20 or More
	Total Convictions	Total Convictions	Total Convictions
Mean	7.09	9.46	9.48
N	88	35	62

Table 6 shows the relationship between days skipped from school and total convictions. The data shows a correlation between days skipped at school and total convictions. The people who skipped 11-20 or 20 and more days had more than two total convictions compared to the people who skipped less than ten day of school each year.

Table 7

DRUG USE AND HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED		
	Highest Grade	Highest Grade
	Drug User	Non-Drug User
Mean	9.82	9.70
N	78	113

Table 7 shows drug use and highest grade completed. One hundred and thirteen people surveyed stated they did not have any drug use while in school. On the other hand, seventy eight people reported that they did have drug use in school. The average level of high school completion for drug users and non drug users is statistically the same for both groups. The drug users had a 9.8 grade completion level compared to a 9.7 grade level for the non drug users.

Table 8

DRUG USE AND TOTAL CONVICTIONS		
	Drug Use "yes"	Drug Use "no"
	Total Convictions	Total Convictions
Mean	10.17	7.34
N	78	109

Table 8 shows the relationship between drug use and total convictions. The data shows that seventy eight people said they did have drug use in school and one hundred and nine reported they had no drug use. The drug users had almost three more convictions compared to the non drug users. Drug users had 10.2 total convictions and the non drug users had 7.34.

Table 9

FIGHTING AND TOTAL CONVICTIONS		
	Fighting "yes"	Fighting "no"
	Total Convictions	Total Convictions
Mean	9.27	8.00
N	86	101

Table 9 shows the breakdown of people who said did and did not fight in school. The total number of people who said “yes” was 86 and the people who said “no” are 101. The people who said they fought in school had one more total conviction compared to the people who said they did not fight.

Table 10

FRIENDS WHO ENCOURAGED BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AND HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED		
	Highest Grade	Highest Grade
	Friends Encourage "yes"	Friends Encourage "no"
Mean	9.46	9.93
N	84	108

Table 10 shows little statistical difference between highest grade completed and friends who either did or did not encourage behavior problems. There are eighty four people who said they had friends encourage bad behavior and their mean highest grade completed is 9.5 years. There are one hundred and eight people who said their friends did not encourage behavior problems and their mean highest grade completed is 9.9 years.

Table 11

FRIENDS WHO ENCOURAGED BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AND CRIMINAL ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS		
	Total Convictions	Total Convictions
	Friends Encourage "yes"	Friends Encourage "no"
Mean	9.78	7.68
N	82	105
	Felony Convictions	Felony Convictions
	Friends Encourage "yes"	Friends Encourage "no"
Mean	3.36	3.12
N	81	103

Table 11 shows the total felony convictions are relatively the same for people who had friends who did encourage behavior problem compared to the people who did not have friends encouraging these types of behaviors. Also, the felony convictions are far less than the total overall convictions, which seem logical, since felony convictions are more serious offenses and typically have longer sentences.

The total convictions in relationship to friends encouraging bad behavior are not the same as the felony convictions. People who had friends who encouraged this type of behavior committed on average two more convictions compared to their counterparts who did not have friends encouraging this type of behavior.

Table 12

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND HIGHEST GRADE				
	Family Structure	Family Structure	Family Structure	Family Structure
	Highest Grade	Highest Grade	Total Convictions	Total Convictions
	"Yes"	"No"	"Yes"	"No"
Mean	9.8	9.7	6.00	6.00
N	102	89	98	88

Table 12 breaks down the correlation of having a nuclear family and highest grade level attained. The data shows, that at least in this study, people with nuclear families drop

out at the same grade level compared to those who do not have a nuclear family. The average grade attained for people having nuclear families is 9.8 years and 9.7 years for those who do not have nuclear families.

Table 13

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND CRIMINAL RECORD		
	Family Structure	Family Structure
	"yes" Total Convictions	"no" Total Convictions
Mean	9.69	7.51
N	98	88

Table 13 shows the relationship between family structure and total convictions. The group that said “no” they did not have a nuclear family had two less total convictions compared to the group that said “yes” they did have a nuclear family.

Table 14

PARENTAL INTEREST IN EDUCATION		
AND HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED		
	Highest Grade	Highest Grade
	Parental Interest "yes"	Parental Interest "no"
Mean	9.73	9.22
N	149	43

Table 14 shows 78% of the population said they did have parental interest in their education. There is a half grade difference in average grade completed in favor of the people who had parents who actively supported their education as compared to the people who did not have support from their parents. People with support had an average grade completion rate of 9.7 and the people with no support had an average of 9.2.

Table 15

PARENTAL CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND TOTAL CONVICTIONS AND FELONY CONVICTIONS		
	Parents Involved In Crime	Parents Involved In Crime
	Total Convictions "yes"	Total Convictions "no"
Mean	7.73	8.77
N	26	161
	Parents Involved In Crime	Parents Involved In Crime
	Felony Convictions "yes"	Felony Convictions "no"
Mean	3.36	3.20
N	25	160

Table 15 shows the relationship between parental criminal activity and felony/total convictions. Eighty six percent of the population said their parents were not involved in criminal behavior.

There was little to no difference in the number of felony convictions when combined with parents either involved in crime or not. People who had parents involved in crime had an average of 3.4 felony convictions and the people who did not have parents involved in crime had 3.2. The total convictions were less for the people who had parents involved in crime. They had an average of 7.7 total convictions compared to 8.8 for the people who said their parents had no criminal past.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study examined a sample of 212 male prisoners who are high school dropouts and currently enrolled in a GED program at the Ojibway Correctional Facility (OCF). The primary focus of this research is to find if a common profile for high school dropouts and criminal activity exists in this population. A common profile was not found. However, study has a lot of valuable and useful information.

The students in this study were very willing to participate in the survey. Even though the information collected is accurate, there are negative aspects about the results. First, the validity of the participants' responses can be questioned. Inmates as a whole are hesitant in providing personal information about their background and criminal history.

Secondly, inmates with low education levels may or may not understand the questions fully. Their low education levels may affect their question responses. In my opinion, this is to be expected given the background of my study group. Even though there are negative factors; I feel the information gained in this study is valuable because of the setting and its participants'. I truly feel that the information gathered in this setting easily outweighs any negatives.

As stated earlier in this paper, Hirschi has two theories as to why people commit crime. Some of the findings in my study agree and disagree with his ideas on social behavior. The data shows that the more days a person skipped school, the more criminal behavior occurred. Skipping school relates to Hirschi's Social Bond theory of commitment. This confirms Hirschi's beliefs that the more a person is committed to an activity or group (less days skipped), the less crime he will commit.

The second bond is belief, which is also from the Social Bond Theory and this deals with an individual's value system. The study group that reported having drug use while in school; had more overall convictions compared to the ones that reported no drug use. The people who did use drugs had a breakdown in moral judgment and this can lead to increased criminal activity.

The data shows that people who said they had friends who encouraged criminal behavior wound up committing more crimes compared to the people who did not have friends encouraging this type of behavior. This type of behavior demonstrates a need for self control. This directly relates to Hirschi's second theory.

However, with all this said, some of the findings in this study contradict Hirschi's ideas on social behavior. One could assume from one's own personal opinion, that a full time worker would have less opportunity to commit crime compared to part time and unemployed people. This study demonstrates just the opposite. Full time workers committed over two more total convictions compared to part time and unemployed people. This is one outcome that goes against Hirschi's Social Bond Theory and his belief in involvement.

Another surprising finding involves family structure. Family structure had no affect on the amount of convictions or grade level completed. Participants in this study who have a nuclear family committed just as many crimes compared to the participants who did not have a nuclear family. The grade level completed also was not affected by having a nuclear family. These findings contradict Hirschi's ideas on Self-Control and Social Bonding.

The last outcome from this study that does not support the involvement aspect of Hirschi's beliefs is parental support and education. The participants who stated they had

parental support in their education while growing up committed more crime in relation to the participants who did not have parental support.

Another finding that is interesting but may not be valid is the large drop in grade level for the oldest group in the study. The over 59 age group only had two participants; however, their grade level completed is well over three grades lower than the other study groups. Statistically this information is not valid, but it does raise interesting questions as to why it is so low. In my opinion, these students could have been apart of the industrial movement of the late 60's and they were needed to drop out of school to work on a farm or just get a job to help out their family.

Having the chance to conduct a study in a correctional setting is a great chance to gather data that is relative to two major social problems we have in this country. The data collected from this unique setting is extremely conducive to any researcher who wants information on these two topics. I feel that the positive of gaining access into a correctional facility and gathering valuable data easily outweighs any negatives in this study.

If someone wanted to replicate this study, they would not have a difficult time administering my survey and collecting the data. The difficult part in replicating this study would be gaining access inside a correctional facility. If a future researcher can gain access inside a correctional facility, just as I did, they could replicate my study with little to no problem

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APPENDIX A

Student Contact Information

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

If you are interested in participating in the study, please fill out and return the attached survey and return it to the envelope at the front of the classroom. If you would like any further information or have any questions please feel free to contact Teacher Jette at Ojibway Correctional Facility – N. 5705 Ojibway Road, Marenisco, MI 49947. If you have any questions regarding your involvement as a research subject, I will provide you with a self addressed envelope so that you may contact Dr. Cynthia Prosen, Dean of Graduate Studies of Northern Michigan University.

APPENDIX B

Sample Questionnaire

Scott Jette
Academic School

SURVEY

Please do not identify yourself directly on the survey. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please fill out and return the attached survey and return it to the envelope at the front of the classroom. If you would like any further information or have any questions please feel free to contact Teacher Jette at Ojibway Correctional Facility – N. 5705 Ojibway Road, Marenisco, MI 49947. If you have any questions regarding your involvement as a research subject, I will provide you with a self addressed envelope so that you may contact Dr. Cynthia Prosen, Dean of Graduate Studies of Northern Michigan University.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 1.) What is your age? ____
- 2.) What is your ethnicity (race)?
____American Indian or Alaskan Native ____Hispanic or Latino
____Black/African American ____Asian ____White
____Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 3.) Where do (did) you live? ____City ____Suburb ____Rural Town
- 4.) What was your employment history prior to your incarceration?
____Part time job ____Full time job ____Unemployed
- 5.) What type of high school did you attend? ____Public ____Private

EDUCATION

- 6.) What is your highest level of education? ____5 ____6 ____7 ____8

___9 ___10 ___11

- 7.) Did you enjoy being in school? ___Yes ___No
- 8.) What kind of grades did you receive in school? ___A's ___B's
___C's ___D's ___F's
- 9.) How would you rate your performance in school? ___Excellent
___Very Good ___Average ___Below Average ___Failure
- 10.) How many days a year did you skip high school? ___1-5 ___5-10
___10-15 ___More than 15 days
- 11.) Were you involved in activities such as sports, clubs, and/or social events?
___Yes ___No
- 12.) Did you feel an attachment toward school? ___Yes ___No
- 13.) Did you feel an attachment toward your high school teachers?
___Yes ___No
- 14.) Did you have a close bond with your friends in high school? ___Yes ___No
- 15.) Did you have an attachment toward any social groups in high school?
___Yes ___No
- 16.) Did your friends encourage behavior problems in high school?
___Yes ___No
- 17.) Did you have problems with drugs while in high school? ___Yes ___No
- 18.) Did you have problems with fighting while in high school? ___Yes ___No
- 19.) Why did you dropout? ___Family Reasons ___Social Reasons
___Academic Reason ___Student Performance
- 20.) How old were you when you first dropped out of high school? ___
- 21.) What year in high school were you when you first dropped out? ___
- 22.) Did you drop out more than once? ___Yes ___No
- 23.) If you answered yes to Question 22, how many times did you dropout? ___
- 24.) What did you do when you dropped out? ___Work ___Crime ___Other

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND

- 25.) What age were you when you were first arrested for a misdemeanor or felony?

- 26.) How many times have you been convicted for a misdemeanor or a felony?

- 27.) Did you commit any misdemeanors or felonies while in school?
____ Yes ____ No
- 28.) Were you ever suspended or expelled from school? ____ Yes ____ No
- 29.) Did you have any friends convicted for a misdemeanor or a felony?
____ Yes ____ No
- 30.) Did anyone in your social group (friends or family) encourage you to commit crime? ____ Yes ____ No
- 31.) Did anyone in your social group (friends or family) have a criminal history?
____ Yes ____ No

FAMILY

- 32.) Did you have a two parent household growing up? ____ Yes ____ No
- 33.) Did you have a close bond with your mother? ____ Yes ____ No
- 34.) Did you have a close bond with your father? ____ Yes ____ No
- 35.) Were your parents interested in your education? ____ Yes ____ No
- 36.) Did your parents play a role in your decision to drop out of school?
____ Yes ____ No
- 37.) Did anyone in your family discourage you from dropping out of school?
____ Yes ____ No
- 38.) Were any of your parents actively involved in crime while you were attending school? ____ Yes ____ No
- 39.) Do any of your parents have a criminal record? ____ Yes ____ No
- 40.) Does anyone in your immediate family have a criminal record of either misdemeanors or felonies? ____ Yes ____ No