ABSTRACT

FAMILY IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND CHANCE ACT OF 2007

by Polina Valeryevna Ermoshkina

In this family impact analysis, nine Program Coordinators of the Adult Demonstration Programs sponsored by the Second Chance Act of 2007 were interviewed to explore the impact of the Bill on families of recently incarcerated individuals. Participants were interviewed using open-ended questions focusing on the services provided for families in order to gauge the impact of the Second Chance Act funding on families. A deductive semantic analytical approach was utilized, as collected data were reviewed for salient themes relevant to the selected four family impact questions. The results of the study suggest that although family reunification is not an explicit or top priority (compared to employment and housing assistance) for most of the participating programs, the programs do make a significant — although indirect — impact on families, and program coordinators recognize the importance of family service expansion. Policy recommendations, study limitations, and avenues for the further research are discussed.
FAMILY IMPACT ANALYSIS OF
THE SECOND CHANCE ACT OF 2007

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of
Master of Science
Department of Family Studies and Social Work
by
Polina Valeryevna Ermoshkina
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
2012

Advisor ____________________________
(Dr. Katherine A. Kuvalanka)
Reader ____________________________
(Dr. Yvette R. Harris)
Reader ____________________________
(Dr. Kevin R. Bush)
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Introduction

The incarceration rate in the United States has grown tremendously in the past few decades; for example in 1980, 140 out of 100,000 Americans were incarcerated, while in 2007 this number rose to 509 (Sabol & Couture, 2008). The number of people released from prisons in the U.S. has been increasing as well. For instance, in 1980, approximately 170,000 offenders were released from prison, while in 2006 this number was close to 713,000 (Sabol & Couture, 2008). Upon release, this segment of population faces a number of barriers that prevent them from attaining successful reintegration to society, such as difficulty in finding a steady job, partially because of inadequate education and job skills. About 41% of prisoners (in both state and federal prisons) and 31% of individuals on probation had not finished high school, compared to 18% of the general population (Harlow, 2003). Upon release, offenders need to reintegrate not only into their community but, most importantly, into their families. Yet, due to geographic distance and cost, many prisoners report no visitation from their children during the whole period of incarceration, which is likely to negatively affect their, oftentimes, already fragile relationships (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009).

In 2004, amidst growing concern with escalated recidivism rate, President George W. Bush addressed the State of the Union with the following statement: “America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life” (Gideon & Loveland, 2010, p.23). In this atmosphere the “Second Chance Act of 2007: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention” was proposed and signed into law. This bill gave federal funding to community programs focusing on rehabilitation and reentry. Before the passage of this act, there were a number of programs available for recently released offenders to help with job interview training, job and housing searches, as well as with substance abuse. Very few, however, focused specifically on family reunification. The Second Chance Act explicitly mentioned “rebuilding ties between offenders and their families, while the offenders are incarcerated and after reentry into the community, to promote stable families and communities” as one of the aims of the Act (Second Chance Act, 2007, sec. 261, paragraph 2).

The purpose of the current research was to take an initial step toward conducting a family impact analysis of the Second Chance Act of 2007 to identify whether or not the Act strengthens and supports family functioning and stability (Bogenschneider, 2006).
family impact analysis, the researcher followed the eight steps identified in Bogenschneider (2006) and adapted from Ooms and Preister (1988); these steps are described in the Methods section of this research.

**Literature Review**

As 1,610,446 men and women are currently incarcerated in federal and state prisons (Sabol, West, & Cooper, 2009), successful reintegration into communities has become a pressing problem. In a study of 15 states, among nearly 300,000 prisoners released in 1994, 67.5% were rearrested within three years and 25.4% received a sentence in prison for a new crime (Langan & Levin, 2002). According to Greenfeld and Snell (1999), among the state prison population, 65% of women and 77% of men had a prior criminal record. Moreover, 38% of male inmates had a juvenile history, comparing to 19% of female inmates (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). Thus, recidivism is prevalent – and men tend to have higher rates of recidivism than women.

**The Changing Make-Up of the Prison Population**

While there has been a significant increase in the number of incarcerated people, there also has been a change in the composition of the prison population. In 1998, one of out every 109 adult women was involved in criminal justice system (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). In 2001, over a million of women were under correctional sanction (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2004). As a result of the “get tough on crime” movement, women’s incarceration rates increased, because longer sentences were given for minor types of violence and drug offences which women are more likely to commit (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009).

Reintegration programs historically focused on men, because they constituted the vast majority of inmates. Criminal justice policy has ignored women’s needs for a long time (Bloom et al., 2004). Researchers have begun to study women in the criminal justice system and demonstrated that men and women do have different reentry concerns. Both O’Brien (2001) and Richie (2001) found that female prisoners were very concerned with regaining custody of their children and reestablishing relations with them, while in Garland, Wodahl, and Mayfield’s (2011) study of male prisoners, issues with children were not named as a primary vital concern. Arditti and Few (2008) described a “triple threat” (depression, addiction, and violence) that is prevalent among incarcerated women and causes a challenge to adjustment and parenting. Faris and Miller (2010) identified the following unique needs and experiences of female prisoners: histories of domestic violence, disproportionate victimization from sexual and physical abuse,
economic marginality, and a greater degree of responsibility for dependent children. Moreover, because women tend to be single mothers and the only providers for their children, they are more likely to have financial challenges than incarcerated fathers. Research and interviews of 42 minority women identified seven barriers to successful reentry: substance abuse, health care, mental health, domestic violence, education, employment, housing, and family reunification (Richie, 2001). Moreover, these women noted that having relationships with their children is an “important stabilizing force in women’s lives” (Richie, 2001, p. 379). Consequently, more programs that promote mother-child relationships are needed, because 89% of currently incarcerated mothers plan to be the primary caregivers for their children once released from prison (Pollock, 2002).

**Effect of Incarceration on Families**

Children of incarcerated parents are often profoundly affected by their parents’ imprisonment. In 1999, 63% of federal prisoners and 55% of state prison population were parents of minor children, and 46% resided with their children prior to incarceration (Mumola, 2000). Moreover, 32% of all prisoners had more than one child and the majority of them (58%) were under the age of ten (Mumola, 2000). Aaron and Dallaire (2010), in their study of children aged 10-14 and their parents, found that recent parental incarceration served as a predictor of family conflict and child’s delinquency. According to another study (Wildeman, 2010), recent and prior paternal incarceration significantly increases physical aggression for boys at age five. Boys with incarcerated parents were five times more likely to be incarcerated than children who were separated from their parents for other reasons (Murray & Farrington, 2005). In a study of 58 adolescents, whose mothers were incarcerated, it was found that these children were more likely to drop out of school (36%), four times more likely to be suspended, three times more likely to be absent from school, and four times more likely to fail their classes comparing to their peers (Trice & Brewster, 2004). When a parent is put in prison a child has to cope not only with the loss of a parent, but with the social stigma associated with incarceration (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003). Having an incarcerated parent is a traumatic experience for a child, even if he was not a witness of the arrest, because a child has to deal with visitations in prison, explanations of the parent’s absence, and finally with integration back to the family once the parent is released (Comfort, 2007). According to a study of 29 children, 41% reported positive feelings towards the incarcerated parent, while 31% expressed anger and resentment, and 28%
experienced confusion and mixed feelings (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). The gender of the incarcerated parent may have an effect on children’s adjustment, for instance, adult children are more likely to be incarcerated if they had incarcerated mothers not fathers (Dallaire, 2007).

Families often heavily rely on grandparents to take care of children when a mother is incarcerated (Baker, McHale, Strozier, & Cecil, 2010). Approximately 75% of children with incarcerated mothers have fathers who are involved in criminal activity, and therefore do not actively participate in the children’s upbringing (Phillips, Erkanli, Keeler, Costello, & Angold, 2006). There is a little research available on how within-family dynamics affect maternal reunification with children upon release from prison. The literature, however, shows that working just with the incarcerated mothers without taking into consideration the primary caregiver would not increase the chances at successful family integration (Baker et al., 2010). Therefore reintegration programs should prepare both mothers and grandparents for the co-parenting challenges.

**Family Contact during Incarceration**

During incarceration, both children and parents benefit from contact. For example, parents reported more positive feelings towards their children if they visit them during incarceration (Snyder, Carlo, & Mullins, 2001). According to Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010), children who had continuous communication with their incarcerated parent experienced less anger and alienation. Moreover, adolescents who maintained frequent contact with their incarcerated mothers were less likely to drop out of school (Trice & Brewster, 2004). Research (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010) has reported that most children of incarcerated parents continue interaction through letters and phone calls; however the visitations are not frequent or regular. According to Mumola (2000), 60% of mothers had contact with their children every week either by mail or phone, while only 40% of fathers reported the same frequency. However, when it comes to visitation, 57% of fathers and 54% of mothers had no child visitation since their incarceration (The U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). These findings were supported by a study of 12,633 state prisoners, where 54% of inmates with children had not seen them since the beginning of their time in prison (Hairston, Rollin, & Jo, 2004). A more recent study examined 247 family members of male prisoners, and found that most of the participants maintained contact with their incarcerated family member - one third were in weekly contact by mail, and 70% reported sending and receiving mail at least monthly (Naser & Visher, 2006). Five percent
never sent or received mail, and 13 percent never made or received phone calls from their incarcerated family member (Naser & Visher, 2006). This study demonstrated that intimate partners compared to blood relatives were more likely to have a weekly phone contact (40%), and visit more often the incarcerated family member (8% of intimate partners visited on a weekly basis, and 11% of blood relatives visited only once or twice during the whole time of incarceration).

One of the main impediments to families staying in contact with their incarcerated relative is the distance from the prison and the cost of visitations (Naser & Visher, 2006). According to Mumola (2000) 84% of federal and 62% of state prisoners with children are located in a prison that is more than 100 miles away from their family’s current residency. Approximately 46% of prisoners located within 50 miles of their homes did not have visits from their relatives, while among those located 101 to 500 miles away, 70% of prisoners had no visits (Hairston, et al., 2004). In one study 34% of family member said that they do not have transportation to visit, while 52% identified the cost of making and receiving phone calls as an impediment to staying in touch (Naser & Visher, 2006).

**Family Reunification**

Upon release, ex-prisoners experience a number of barriers for successful integration into society, such as employment, housing, social stigma, and family reunification. While research has focused primarily on employment and public housing for offenders (e.g., Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005; Richie, 2001), much less research is available on the issues of family reunification and parenting, although they are crucial needs reported by both male and female offenders. When trying to re-integrate into the family, the ex-prisoner faces many challenges, for example, the children may have a new step-parent who is considered their “real parent”, while those who were able to save and preserve their relationships with their intimate partners may have to face the fact that many important family decisions were made while they were incarcerated (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier, & Sinha, 2008). The most frequently named obstacle was psychosocial adjustment that included experiencing difficulties with socializing and interacting with family members (Garland et al., 2011). More than half of the participants experienced it in the first days, and 40% at the third month. Moreover, one study found that during incarceration, 37% of the convicted people had a steady partner, and 64% expressed a need for help with improving their relationships with a partner (Kazura, 2001). A more recent study by Visher and
Lattimore (2007) found that 61% of violent male offenders reported the need for parenting classes upon release from prison, and 40% needed help with childcare.

**Family support.** A number of studies (e.g., Arditti et al., 2003; Klein, Barholomew, & Hibbert, 2002) examine family relations while serving time in prison and how it affects the recidivism rate. Family acceptance was associated with drug abstinence, finding a job, and being optimistic about the future (Visher & Travis, 2003). During the transition period, social support can be a stabilizing force for previously incarcerated parents (Hairston, 1998). Moreover, family support is an important factor in recidivism prevention. La Vigne, Visher, and Castro (2004) in their study of Chicago former prisoners found that 71% of the participants named family support as an important factor to help them stay out of prison. More that half of still incarcerated individuals identified family as an important factor not to commit crimes, while during the post-release interview, 80% had the same perceptions (Naser & Vigne, 2006). Newly released prisoners heavily relied on family support, for example, before the release from prison 69% expected to live with their family members, 61% expected to find a job through their family, 41% expected to get financial support from family (Naser & Vigne, 2006). Post-release interviews demonstrated that two thirds were still receiving financial support during the first month after release, and 55% were receiving it two months after release. In the qualitative study of eight African-American ex-offenders, Arditti and Parkman (2011) found that all the participants needed instrumental support from their families in the form of provision of housing, food, financial resources, and transportation in order not to reoffend. The need for the emotional help in the form of listening, encouragement, and understanding was also reported.

**Reintegration Programs**

The primary purpose of most reintegration programs is to prevent recidivism and since research has found positive family support to be a key preventive factor, more attention should be given to the issue of family reunification (La Vigne et. al., 2004). A proposed comprehensive approach to creating reunification and intervention programs for released offenders involves offenders’ family members and children, in order to preserve and develop the parent-child bond (Hairston, 1998). Focusing on family relationships during the incarceration is thought to be crucial for successful reintegration given that most recently released prisoners are likely to rely on their families (Hairston, 1998; La Vigne et al., 2004). Moreover, it is important for
reintegration programs staff to identify prisoners without family ties because they are likely to require additional support and assistance (Naser & Vigne, 2006).

**The History of the Second Chance Act of 2007**

The Second Chance Act was first introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives in April 2005 and the U.S. Senate in October 2005. Even though Republicans demonstrated a more punitive approach towards prison reform in the past, the Act was strongly supported by both the Democratic and Republican parties. Senators Arlen Specter, Sam Brownback, Patrick Leahy, and Joe Biden were among the leading sponsors of the Bill (Re-Entry Policy Council, 2008). It was supported by more than 200 organizations, and had 113 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and 34 in the Senate (Gideon & Loveland, 2010).

During the 109th congressional session, Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn objected to the Act. According to Coburn, the federal government should not play a role in prisoner reentry as each state was capable of reducing recidivism on its own. Therefore, he placed a hold on the Bill, which left the Act undecided (Gideon & Loveland, 2010). On March 20, 2007 the Second Chance Act was introduced again to the House of Representatives; however, it was postponed by the Democratic party to ensure enough votes from the Republican party to pass the bill. A number of changes were made, including the amendments introduced by Senator Jon Kyl (for example, sex offenders were made ineligible for the early release program for elderly prisoners). The Second Chance Act was passed by the House of Representatives on November 13, 2007 with a 347 – 62 vote, and by the Senate on March 11, 2008 (Gideon & Loveland, 2010). President Bush signed the Second Chance Act of 2007 on April 9, 2008. According to Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubry: “The signing of the Second Chance Act is a celebrated moment for policymakers who know that, if properly funded, this legislation will increase public safety, improve lives, and make more effective use of taxpayers’ dollars” (Re-Entry Policy Council, 2008, paragraph 2).

**Programs under the Second Chance Act of 2007**

For the fiscal year of 2009, the Second Chance Act authorized $25 million to state, local, and tribal agencies and community organizations for programs that would make a transition from prison more successful (Reentry Policy Council, 2008). Since 2009, over 300 government agencies and nonprofit organizations from 48 states have been recipients of the grant money for their programs (Reentry Council Policy, 2011). There are four provisions of the Second Chance
Act: (a) **Demonstration Grants** are given to the state, local, and tribal governments for providing employment services, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, and victims services; (b) **Mentoring Grants** are given to nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring or offer transitional services for recently released individuals; (c) **Reentry Research** is conducted by the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics; and (d) **The National Reentry Resource Center** was established under The Second Chance Act to collect information about best practices and to provide training (Reentry Policy Council, 2012).

Funding History for Second Chance Act programs (Reentry Policy Council, 2011):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget Request</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Final</th>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2009</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>$20 million</td>
<td>$45 million</td>
<td>$25 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2010</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>$50 million</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2011</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>$50 million</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>$83 million</td>
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<td>FY 2012</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$70 million</td>
<td>$63 million</td>
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In 2011, the Senate Appropriations Committee eliminated funding for the Second Chance Act in its 2012 budget, while the House Appropriations Committee suggested $70 million for funding the Bill in 2012. After negotiations, on November 14, 2011, House and Senate conferees released the conference report, which stated that $63 million would be provided for the Second Chance Act for the fiscal year of 2012 (Reentry Council Policy, 2011). Justin Jones, Director of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, reacted to this announcement:

> The Second Chance Act is having a tremendous impact nationally. It has changed the way state and local leaders think about prisoner reentry and it's demonstrating how we can reduce recidivism, which not too long ago many thought was impossible. Continued funding is a victory for every community seeking to increase public safety and to help families and neighborhoods receiving people released from prison and jail. (Reentry Council Policy, 2011, paragraph 6)

The Second Chance Act of 2007 is purported to be focused on special prison populations, namely women and parents (The Orator Network, 2008). Moreover, goals of the Second Chance Act include rebuilding ties between offenders and their families, as well as promotion of stable families; however, not all programs are family-oriented.

**Theoretical Perspective and Purpose of Study**
According to ecological systems theory, there is a relationship between an individual and the surrounding environment, such that the individual exists in embedded contexts, and these contexts impact human development throughout the life course (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Utilizing an ecological systems perspective, the researcher took a first step toward examining the impact that the Second Chance Act of 2007 is having on ex-prisoners and their families.

Released individuals are embedded in multiple contexts, which have an influence on the ex-prisoner and her/his chances of recidivism. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977) there are five systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem), and their interrelation among each other affects developmental outcomes. The Second Chance Act and its funding, as well as the “get tough on crime” movement, constitute an individual’s macrosystem, influencing the social climate in which offenders and their families face the challenge of rehabilitation. The prisons as a government agency, prison environment and culture, and the community agencies that receive funding from the Second Chance Act are a part of the offender’s exosystem. The recently released prisoner’s family members in the microsystem play a huge role in the rehabilitation of offenders, as they influence the physical and emotional health of an inmate. Relationships with family are bi-directional; for example, the interactions between incarcerated parents and their children influence both parents’ and the children’s outcomes as well. Restrictions on the quantity and quality of visitations (e.g., lack of privacy during visits) may create a barrier to the continuation of positive relationships between incarcerated individuals and their families. A macrosystem process, such as rules and policies that are focused on mass incarceration rather than on rehabilitation and prevention, is a source of these barriers that may create a break in the familial relationships of incarcerated individuals (Dyer, Pleck, McBride, 2012). Because macrosystem processes have an impact on the family-prison mesosystem, an attempt has been made through the Second Chance Act of 2007 to erase these macrosystem processes that weaken family ties (Dyer et al., 2012). Bronfenbrenner (1977) believed that ecological systems are constantly developing and an individual’s microsystem changes when a new role is obtained; therefore, convicted individuals go through expanding of their microsystem when they enter prison, and upon release they have to adapt to living in the community.

The purpose of the current study was to analyze aspects of the Second Chance Act of 2007 in order to begin examining its impact on families of released individuals, as well as
reporting how effective the reintegration programs that received Second Chance Act funding are in strengthening family ties and helping with family reunification.

Methods

Design

A partial Family Impact Analysis of the Second Chance Act of 2007 was conducted following the eight steps adapted from Ooms and Preister (1988) by Bogenschneider (2006). The first step was to select a policy, which, for the purposes of this research study, was the Second Chance Act of 2007.

Second, the researcher determined which family types might be affected. The researcher made the assumption that the policy is likely to affect families where at least one family member is incarcerated. Research shows that some racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to be incarcerated than White people. For example, in 2006 one in every 15 Black men (ages 18 and older) was in prison, one in 36 Hispanic men, and one in 106 White men (The Pew Center on the States, 2008). The area of focus for this family impact analysis was families who had a previously incarcerated family member, particularly families in which the incarcerated family member was a parent. Thus, many of these families may be members of racial or ethnic minority groups, but their focus was not limited to families of racial and ethnic minority groups.

The third step was to identify relevant family functions. Four main family functions are: family creation, economic support, childrearing, and family caregiving (Bogenschneider, 2006). For the current family impact analysis two of these functions were deemed relevant: (a) childrearing, in that children are thought to be affected by their parents’ incarceration, and (b) economic support, in that the income of the family is often reduced with the loss of an economic provider.

Fourth, the researcher examined implementation of the policy. In order to understand how the Second Chance Act funds were utilized, the researcher did an extensive Internet search to track where and how the funds were distributed. In 2009, the Second Chance Act funded 36 Adult Mentoring Grants, 15 Adult Demonstration Grants, 11 Juvenile Mentoring Grants, five Juvenile Demonstration Grants, and a National Reentry Resource Center (Reentry Policy Council, 2012). Adult and Juvenile Demonstration grants were distributed only to state, local and tribal governments; for example, Florida Department of Corrections, Stark County Court of Common Pleas (OH), and City of Memphis (TN). Two Adult Demonstration grants were given
two were given to New York (County of Monroe and New York City Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator), and each of the following states received one grant: Florida, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Juvenile Demonstration grants were given to the following recipients: City and County of San Francisco (CA), Louisiana Youth Services (LA), Baltimore City Health Department (MD), Oregon Youth Authority (OR), and South Dakota Department of Corrections (SD). Adult and Juvenile Mentoring grants were given only to nonprofit organizations to implement transitional services; for example, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware, Inc., Covenant House of New Orleans (LA), and The Kennedy Center of Louisiana (Reentry Policy Council, 2011). New York state received seven Adult Mentoring Grants, California – four, Ohio – three, Louisiana, Oregon, and Tennessee – two each. Thus, 21 states received Adult Mentoring grants. Juvenile Mentoring grants were distributed among ten states (Reentry Policy Council, 2011).

Fifth, the researcher selected family impact questions from the checklist provided by Bogenschneider (2006). There are six principles that help to identify how sensitive a policy is for the needs of families, and each principle includes family impact questions. The following are the family impact questions that were selected for the current analysis of the Second Chance Act programs.

**Principle 1: Family support and responsibilities:**
Does the Second Chance Act money support and supplement parents’ and other family members’ ability to carry out their responsibilities?

**Principle 2: Family membership and stability:**
Does the Second Chance Act allocate resources to help keep the marriage or family together when this is the appropriate goal?

**Principle 4: Family partnership and empowerment:**
Does the Second Chance Act make services easily accessible to families in terms of location, operating hours, and easy-to-use application and intake forms? Does the Second Chance Act involve parents and family representatives in policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation?
Next the researcher gathered and reviewed the data. Through interviews with nine Program Coordinators of the Second Chance Act grant recipients, the researcher examined how the grant money is being utilized by government agencies. The researcher also gathered information about the programs from their websites and from reports they had written on their activities related to the Second Chance Act funds they had utilized. For example, the Allegheny County Profile Report, Pennsylvania (The Bureau of Justice Assistance, no date provided) was available on the Internet and was used as an additional resource, as well as the Achieve 180, San Mateo County, California Report to Board of Supervisors Criminal Justice Committee (2011). Additionally, the Statement of Richmond Second Chance Act Program Manager, Michele Banks, to the U.S. House of Representatives on the hearing on Reauthorization of the Second Chance Act was used (July, 21, 2010). The relevant data was then analyzed.

For the seventh step, the researcher developed policy implications. Ways in which the Second Chance Act supports families were identified and discussed in both the Results and Discussion sections of this paper. The impact of this policy and its implementation on families were examined.

Lastly, once this final thesis has been approved, the researcher will apply the results by providing the findings of this study to the research participants and submitting them to an academic journal for publication.

**Research Participants**

According to the Second Chance Act, Demonstration Grants are given to the state, local, and tribal governments for providing employment services, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, and victims services (Section 101). Therefore, one of the goals of these programs is to help incarcerated persons reunify with their families. Only Adult Demonstration Projects that were sponsored in the first year of the Second Chance Act implementation were chosen for the current research, because: (a) these programs have already been established, and more information was likely to have been collected about the programs’ results and impact on families, and (b) adult demonstration grants, as opposed to, for example, juvenile demonstration grants, are more likely to have an impact on families in which the previously incarcerated family member was a parent. Hence, Program Coordinators of all 15 Adult Demonstration Projects were contacted via email (See Appendix A for the recruitment material sample), and nine agreed to participate in this study. The nine research participants are: City of
Memphis (TN), City of Richmond (VA), County of San Mateo (CA), Kentucky Department of Corrections, Oklahoma Department of Corrections, San Francisco Department of Public Health, South Dakota Department of Corrections, Stark County Court of Common Pleas (OH), and Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

**Procedures**

The participants were given the option to be interviewed over the telephone or to answer the interview questions via email and were asked to select the option that was most convenient for them. Four participants chose to be interviewed over the phone and five preferred to answer the questions via the email. After obtaining an agreement to participate in the telephone interviews, all four research participants received a written consent form (See Appendix B for the consent form) via email that described the purpose of my research, as well as voluntary participation in the interview and the option to withdraw from the interview or to skip any question in the interview any time. The consent form was emailed them before the day of the interview. On the day of the interview, the researcher called the participants, and then, before the interview, the researcher had asked them if they read the consent form. The researcher verbally summarized the main points of the consent form, and then asked them if they give their verbal consent. After they gave their consent, then the telephone interview commenced. For five research participants who chose the option to answer my questions via email, the researcher emailed the consent form to them, along with the interview questions (See Appendix C for specific interview questions). They returned their responses to the researcher via email, and their response was an indication that they gave their consent to participate.

Having research participants respond to interview questions in one of two different ways (i.e., over the phone or via email) had certain advantages and disadvantages. Although the interview questions were sent to all participants in advance, so that participants had time to examine and think through the questions, most of the collected written responses were lacking details and required follow-up questions. Only one respondent who replied via email provided detailed answers that contained rich factual data. During the phone interviews, the researcher was able to ask for and receive answers to follow-up questions; participants who replied over email, however, did not answer the follow-up questions that were emailed to them. Phone interviews also seemed to allow participants to easily ask for clarification when the interview question caused confusion. Email participants did not ask for clarification and answered the questions the way they
understood it, which was not always what the researcher intended to ask. The main advantage of the email interview method was that it allowed these five Program Coordinators, who otherwise would not have participated in the study if they were required to go through the phone interview, to participate, which increased the sample size and provided more data to work with.

During these interviews, the researcher gathered data about (a) the impact of the Second Chance Act funding on the services each organization provides; (b) eligibility requirements and barriers for program participation; (c) services provided specifically to the family members of incarcerated individuals; and (d) suggestions for how to make a greater impact on families. The length of the telephone interviews ranged from 11 minutes to 28 minutes, and the length of email responses ranged from 230 words to 1074 words. After the telephone interviews were transcribed verbatim, the participants were referred to as “the Program Coordinators” in the reporting of the data, and the names of the organizations were deleted. All of the data were reviewed for salient themes, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) for a deductive semantic thematic analysis, relevant to the previously selected family impact questions.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted a deductive semantic thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) on the collected qualitative data. Following the phases described in Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher transcribed collected data, read through interview responses multiple times to familiarize herself with it, then separated the data based on the important information it brought to the four identified family impact questions. For example, when answering the first family impact question, the researcher established seven codes that reflected different ways that the Second Chance Act programs helped the incarcerated individuals to carry out their family responsibilities. These codes were: acquiring job skills, job and housing search, assistance in the first 90 days upon release from prison, child support, visitation programs, female offenders’ needs, and matching funds for family programs. These codes were primarily based upon participants’ given responses. In the case of one of the codes (female offenders’ needs), however, the researcher was sensitized to the concept of female offenders as a result of the literature review and, thus, was looking for information related to this concept in the participants’ responses. These seven codes were then reviewed for more general themes based on conceptual similarities. Because of the conceptual overlap, three codes (acquiring job skills, job and housing search, assistance in the first 90 days upon release from prison) were merged into one theme:
employment assistance as a top priority. The visitation programs theme was not as prominent and was merged with female offenders’ needs to establish a new theme: focusing on mothers in prison. Thus four major themes were developed: employment assistance as a top priority; tackling the challenge of child support; focusing on mothers in prison; and matching state funds are additional help for families. The patterns were identified using a deductive approach, which means that specific research questions mapped and influenced the coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, a semantic approach was used which means the researcher did not look beyond what has been said by the research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Results**

Prior to addressing the previously selected family impact analysis questions, general overview information is first provided about the programs receiving Adult Demonstration Project funds through the Second Chance Act of 2007. The Bureau of Justice Assistance expects the following outcomes of Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects: reduction in recidivism rates, increased employment, education, and housing opportunities, increased payment of child support, and increased participation in substance abuse and mental health services (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2010). Following these expectations, all nine programs provide job search assistance and job training. For example, according to Wisconsin’s *Windows to Work* program brochure, the program focuses on enhancing employability skills such as resume writing and job search and interview techniques. Other services that are provided by eight of nine programs include housing assistance (transitional housing) and transportation. The *With Open Arms* program (San Francisco, CA) provides a number of services targeting family members of incarcerated women, such as child reunification and child behavioral health assistance. Five programs provide mental health services, and six programs provide chemical dependency treatment. One program funds the following educational services: interpersonal and social skills training, money management, and setting and obtaining goals. Based on the interviews, most programs have emergency funding and flexible funds that are used to assist, for example, with rent, utility start-up, or work clothing.

According to Section 101 of the Second Chance Act of 2007, reducing recidivism – and, therefore, enhancing public safety – is one of the main goals of Adult Demonstration Programs (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2010). The Program Coordinator of the Richmond Second Chance Reentry Program said that Second Chance Act funding allowed them to address
this goal: “The Second Chance Act has allowed our team to effectively address the root causes of a high recidivism rate and overcrowding among the disproportionate number of offenders that are returning to the Richmond Community” (Banks, 2010, p. 1, paragraph 2). One of the research participants stated that their recidivism rate was 51.2% for 2008 releases, while in 2009 after the beginning of the program implementation it dropped to 28.7%, and in 2010 – 25.9%. According to California’s Achieve 180’s Report to Board of Supervisors Criminal Justice Committee (2011), the program’s recidivism rate for the period of January 1, 2011 to March 31, 2011 was 10.53%.

It seems important to note that the number of inmates and ex-inmates participating in the programs varies widely. For example, the Achieve 180 program had screened over 429 inmates and enrolled 200 during the first year of work (Achieve 180, 2011). Meanwhile, With Open Arms: A San Francisco Initiative for Women served 115 women in two years of their program implementation (Reentry Council, 2012). Oklahoma reentry program has served 117 individuals, and of the 47 program graduates, only one has been placed under the Department of Correction custody (Justice Center, 2011). Funding priority is given to the program applicants that target high-risk offenders, even if the number of targeted participants is small. However, if the programs chose to target moderate or low-risk offenders, the number of the program participants should be higher (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2010).

**Principle 1: Family Support and Responsibilities**

*Does Second Chance Act money support and supplement parents’ and other family members’ ability to carry out their responsibilities?*

The Second Chance Act of 2007 funds a variety of program activities that serve to support families’ abilities to carry out their responsibilities. For example, the Second Chance Act sponsored programs that do direct services for families, such as RING’s (ReInvestment Neighborhood Group) bi-monthly meetings through the Shawnee Justice Reinvestment Project (KY), which provide opportunities for family members of currently or previously incarcerated individuals to share information, participate in community service projects, and social events. Another program purchases textbooks and clothes for children of recently released individuals using their flex funds. New Hampshire’s pilot reentry program collaborates with the Family Connection Center to provide parenting classes and group counseling for the participants (New Hampshire Family Connection Center Brochure, 2011).
Programs not only provide direct services for families, but also involve family members in different ways. For example, Allegheny County Reentry Program involves families in developing a transition plan, therefore, preparing them for the potential difficulties and ways to help with the reunification (Allegheny County Profile Report, 2012). One program involves families before the individual is released from prison, and one of the Program Coordinators spoke to that: “For the families we have what is called transitional meetings where the family members can come in and sit on the meetings and basically see what the offender is doing, what his plans are.” Educational services for the family members were important for two programs. One program educates families about the disease of addiction and crimiogenic risk factors. The second program “presents family members with some factual information regarding reintegration to impact realistic expectations and informs a family of available resources.”

Although only three programs out of nine had services specifically targeting families of incarcerated and recently released individuals, every program has an indirect impact on families. By keeping the individuals out of prison and by providing them with educational and case management services, the programs are helping families to become more financially independent and stable. Through satisfying the needs of the offender, the programs seem to be helping to meet the needs of the family as well. One Program Coordinator spoke to this when he stated: “The grant works directly with the offender. Families are impacted indirectly if offenders receive housing assistance allowing them to have a little extra income to stabilize their financial situation.”

**Employment assistance as a top priority.** Helping ex-offender to acquire work skills and find a job was a crucial priority for all nine programs. Since many recently released prisoners experience difficulty finding a job upon release from prison, the programs chose to tackle this issue. One Program Coordinator explained how they initially used Second Chance Act money to identify employment as an uttermost priority:

With initial money what we did is we determined that employment was a key, because in our jails, you know, when we looked at the women entering the jails in 2009, 67% were unemployed, and 40% of men were unemployed. The concern is that if individuals are not able to provide for their families, it might cause them to commit a new crime and return to jail shortly after release.

Another Program Coordinator spoke to the critical importance of job and housing search
assistance – both to the ex-prisoners and to their families: “Clients are much more concerned with housing and job search. They can’t help their families until they help themselves. And they are kind of worthless to their family until they’ve got some way of supporting their family.”

Thus, the Second Chance Act funding was utilized in unique ways by the programs to help sponsor employment and housing of the program participants. In one example, an individual is paid for the first 90 days not by the employer but by the program. If the employer is not satisfied with the skills or quality of work, then the Second Chance Act would pay for job coaching to increase the employability skills of the individual. Another program pays for the first 90 days of transitional housing, and one of the Program Coordinators mentioned how essential this help is: “The first maybe 90 days after release – that probably will be the most important days in their life. If they can’t survive, basically they are going to go back to what put them in prison in most cases.” Hence, the system of reintegration built by these programs helps to keep the individuals from recommitting a new crime by providing them with housing and job assistance.

**Tackling the challenge of child support.** One issue that was raised by two research participants was the challenge of prisoners owing child support. Given that 55% of the state prison population and 63% of federal prisoners are parents of minor children, the problem is vital for these parents who are incapable of paying (Mumola, 2000). One Program Coordinator noted an unintended impact of child support on some prisoners: “Instead of getting them to accept the fact that they have this responsibility for helping to pay for their children, it pushes them away from their family.” Upon release from prison, parents tend to owe a large amount of money in child support, and if they cannot find a steady, well-paid job, their debt grows and might cause them to reoffend or to look for a job that pays under the table. The Second Chance Act allowed funding of child support services for incarcerated parents that address the issue and help to modify parents’ collection policy prior to release.

**Focusing on mothers in prison.** In terms of focusing on women, only one out of nine participating programs was designed for female offenders (the Program Coordinator for this program did participate in the study by answering questions via email; however, he referred me to another Coordinator to discuss the family services the organization provides, and she never wrote me back). Another program expressed a strong interest in helping women more, and so far had success in increasing female offenders as clients. According to the Program Coordinator, in 2010, 33% of their clients were women, which is greater than the proportion of women in the
general prison population. Additionally this program hopes to develop a visitation program for mothers, because according to the program coordinator, there is less contact between mothers and their children than between fathers and their children: “People are much more judgmental about mothers being incarcerated than fathers being incarcerated. So what you would find is that fewer people will bring the children to the mothers who are incarcerated than to the fathers.”

Matching state funds are additional help for families. All Second Chance Act grant applicants must satisfy the matching requirement—have 50% of the proposed program budget sponsored from other sources. Out of these 50%, half should be money and the other half can be provided through in-kind services (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2010). The matching funds provided by the state or county give more resources to satisfy the needs of the families. Certain services that the programs provide are not directly funded by the Second Chance Act but through the money received from the state/county as a match. For example, one Program Coordinator explained how they have used their matching funds:

The program for pregnant women is not funded by the Second Chance Act but there will be some beds that are, as I told you, we have money, where the county has matched the Second Chance funding. So there is the money there for programs for pregnant women. So we are able to use them, it is a part of the Second Chance Act but not particularly funded by the Second Chance Act.

Thus, through addressing such needs as education and employment, housing and homelessness, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services, Second Chance Act money and matching funds help support families in carrying out their responsibilities.

Principle 2: Family Membership and Stability

Does Second Chance Act allocate resources to help keep the marriage or family together when this is the appropriate goal?

Upon release from prison, individuals face difficulty not only in finding income or substance abuse treatment but, also, with family reunification. Second Chance Act funds were utilized by three programs to hire family reunification specialists, whose services are available upon request of the programs’ clients. According to the Allegheny County Profile Report (2012), the Second Chance Act funded the services of the Reentry Team, of which a Family Support Specialist is a member, together with a Reentry Specialist and a Reentry Probation Officer. One program coordinator explained how family assistance is provided:
We ask the (client) if the family needs reunification assistance or assistance with connecting to the resources, and if they say yes then we connect the family with an agency that we contract with using the Second Chance funds. They contact the family, meet with the family and provide the resources for them.

Although all ex-offenders might face potential difficulties when returning to their families, family reunification is not the first priority or goal for all nine programs. One program, however, specifically mentioned using a holistic approach in their services, which included the notion of family being an important component: “We are interested in helping all the aspects and the needs that individuals have including family reunification and support.” Richmond Second Chance Reentry Program Manager, Michele Banks, also emphasized the importance of the holistic approach in her statement in front of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security:

While addressing the high criminality across generations, often correlated with poverty and separated families, our program has focused on treatment of the whole person. The approach has made a much wider impact, not only reducing recidivism and improving quality of life among the inmates but also among their family members, and, consequently, the larger community. (2010, p.1)

According to one research participant, family reunification becomes possible only when housing, job, mental health, and substance abuse needs are satisfied:

For example, we had this one man who was in the jail and before he was released we were actually able to get him a job, and set him up with housing, and he was able to bring his teenage daughter to live with him, and so he was able to reunify with her. So there are ways that it works out very well. But again you have a job, you have the housing, and then you have the reunification.

Thus, as previously noted, it seems that even if programs are not directly providing services to families, providing other services, such as substance abuse treatment or employment assistance to clients is pivotal to helping families.

Two programs expressed concern that what they are doing for family reunification is not enough and were actually in the process of expanding services for families. The Coordinator of one of these programs stated:
We have a reentry advisory committee, and last month we brought up the whole thing of family reunification and how could we make it stronger. What we realized is even though we have a group that we can refer people to, that group didn’t have a lot of families coming that are X program clients…We would be providing programs within the jails…to get them to be thinking more about family reunification, and also introducing people who would be doing groups outside to the clients. It is like you would go to a party if you already met the person, but you would be reticent to go to their house if you have never met them.

Thus, this program is realizing that it may be important to engage family members before the incarcerated family member is released, in order to begin building positive relationships between the families and the program.

Even though all nine programs in one way or another – directly or indirectly – attempt to help with family reunification, six research participants mentioned family resistance and lack of interest in participation on behalf of family members as a challenge. The most commonly named reason for the lack of interest was the bad relationships with the family, or as many participants called it “burned bridges.” As one program coordinator explained:

So it is hard getting the family to participate, even if the participant says that my family needs help and we have the funds to help them, it is hard getting them to agree to participate any further. And sometimes the participant doesn’t have a good relationship with the family and therefore the family wants nothing to do with any organization that is contacting them on behalf of the participant.

In addition, three participants mentioned, that, family members often have criminal records themselves. Therefore, they are not interested in participating in a program that is funded through a reentry court or a department of corrections. One program coordinator noted:

When you talk about families, a lot of times families can also be a problem, for example, I have a person incarcerated and his dad, his uncle, everybody has been incarcerated. So you’ve got family histories and a lot of individuals that are caught up in the criminal justice system.

In summary, previous research shows that interaction with family members is named as one of the most frequent obstacles that individuals experience upon release (Garland, et al, 2011). Therefore, helping fragile families to stay together is crucial for not reoffending. Even though the
research participants did not name family reunification as a priority, the Second Chance Act has 
an impact on families by funding family reunification assistance and referrals to the resources in 
the community.

**Principle 4: Family Partnership and Empowerment**

*Does Second Chance Act make services easily accessible to families in terms of location, 
operating hours, and easy-to-use application and intake forms?*

Ex-inmates may face multiple logistical barriers that may make their participation in the 
programs' services difficult. All research participants mentioned funding being used to pay for 
bus passes for the program’s clients. The provision of bus passes is important, because upon 
release, individuals do not have resources to buy or rent a car, and public transportation is costly 
if a person does not have a steady income. One program not only provides bus passes for their 
clients but also uses incentives to encourage the clients’ family members to participate in the 
family reunification sessions by giving them gas cards. The program coordinator noted the 
challenge their clients face in regard to transportation:

There is always gonna be that – getting to X City, which we do have it in a central 
location in the county, but because we are a county and we are in Y state it is easier to get 
places by car, as opposed to the public transportation. Although the service is located in 
the most accessible place in X City.

In terms of access to the program, only one program uses an application process, and it 
guarantees no barriers to the program access. The program coordinator explained: “Applications 
are also accepted at our post office box or will be mailed directly to inmates upon request. 
Initially, staff conducted a short program orientation at a local prison to initially promote 
awareness of the program.” The other eight programs do not have an application process – they 
have a parole officer or a judge to refer an individual, and then depending on the individual’s risk 
assessment, the person may be enrolled into the program.

Eligibility criteria and limited funding seem to restrict the number of potential 
beneficiaries of the Second Chance Act programs. Each program has certain eligibility 
requirements, such as gender. Although seven out of nine programs work with both male and 
female offenders, one program works only with female offenders, and one program – only with 
male offenders. Two programs mentioned age as an eligibility requirement – one program works 
with offenders 30 years and younger, while the other program targets individuals 26 years and
older. All programs have a city or county residency requirement; for instance, for one program, residency in one of two cities is required. Five programs require that clients be at a certain risk level: one program targets only high-risk offenders, three programs – moderate to high-risk offenders, and one program has two tracks: the first track targets only high-risk offenders, while for the second track a person has to be moderate to low-risk, unemployed, and without stable housing. The Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) measures ex-inmates’ risk level and is one of the most widely used assessments of criminal behavior, taking information from multiple sources into consideration, including criminal history, family conditions, substance abuse problems, emotional issues, and attitude (Andrews & Bonta, 2003).

Finally, the time inmates have left in jail was sometimes taken into consideration for eligibility, as one of the Program Coordinators emphasized:

Also we are looking at how many days they have left, because what we found out is that if you take a guy who has 3,000 days left, he will complete everything but he will still be sitting here, so the goal is to make sure that they are low enough on days so they can go to the programming and discharge.

In summary, if a person fits a program’s requirements then no barriers were identified for that client in terms of access to the program. Yet, a number of eligibility requirements automatically exclude many ex-inmates and their families from participation in program activities. Furthermore, in 2009 the Second Chance Act only funded Adult Demonstration Projects in 13 states; therefore, offenders, who do not live in these states, and their families are not served by the Second Chance Act.

Does Second Chance Act involve parents and family representatives in policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation?

None of the programs mentioned involving families in the development of their programming. The research participants also did not explicitly consider family impact for program goal setting or evaluation. According to all nine research participants, evaluation of their programs is based solely or primarily on the recidivism rate. For example, the goal of Allegheny County Reentry program is to reduce recidivism by 50% within five years (Allegheny County Profile Report, 2012). Given that the primary goal of the programs is recidivism rate reduction, they do not necessarily measure the impact they had on families or keep track of how many family members they were able to get involved or many of the ex-inmates who stay out of
prison are parents.

Participants’ Suggestions for Ways to Make a Greater Impact on Families

Adult Demonstration programs have the potential to make a great impact not only on recently released prisoners and their families but also on the community. Richmond Second Chance Reentry Program Manager, Michele Banks, asserted that: “…developing increased options for this population to become hard-working, personally responsible, tax-paying and law-abiding citizens . . . will virtually ensure stronger families and safer communities” (Banks, 2010, p.2). However, according to the research participants, some improvements should be made and new services created in order to have an even greater impact on ex-offenders and their families. One program coordinator emphasized how important the expansion of cognitive behavioral services is for the program participants: “We have cognitive behavioral change programs in our system now, but I feel offenders would greatly benefit from a higher dosage of case management and cognitive behavioral change programming.” Two programs are interested in more collaboration on the federal level, as one program coordinator said: “More can be accomplished with collaborations on the federal level with Health and Human Services, Department of Education, Department of Labor, and Department of Justice to increase funding availability, access to service and mitigating risk factors such as education, housing and employment.” Additionally, improvement in relation to networking was significant for two programs, specifically in terms of mutual promotion of the programs, and information sharing. For another organization, support from the local agencies, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Department of Economic Development, would be valuable in order “to make a concerted effort for inclusion of skilled program participants in local initiatives.” And, finally, one program suggested financial incentives for program participation, such as “stipends for ex-offenders who develop or implement an aspect of the program.”

In addition to these suggestions for improvements that would have indirect effects on family members, some study participants also suggested more direct means. One program’s goal for the future, according to the program coordinator, is to “develop a family reunification program and get families to buy into that, because a lot of families don’t want to participate.” Another program set a goal to establish family support groups for the family members. Two programs expressed interest in expansion of the existing services they were currently providing to the family members, not only because more services equal better outcomes, but also because
“we always worried with a person who is incarcerated, we don’t realize the domino effect, how it affected or decimated, in many cases, the families.” Despite the fact that a few programs currently have no family reunification component, every research participant confirmed the significance of this aspect of an individual’s life and the importance of targeting not only recently released individuals but family members as well.

**Discussion**

The present study examined the activities of Adult Demonstration Grant recipients in an effort to conduct a partial family impact analysis of the Second Chance Act of 2007. Consistent with the previous research (Garland, et al., 2011), study participants agreed that housing and employment are the core reentry obstacles for most offenders regardless of the state or the community they are released to. Consequently, all Adult Demonstration Programs chose to target these two strains, while concentrating to a smaller extent on family reunification. Even though previous research (Richie, 2001; Solomon, et al., 2001) showed that reconnecting with family is an obstacle to successful re-entry and an area of concern for offenders, this issue still does not receive the same amount of explicit attention as employment, housing, transportation, and substance abuse treatment.

Two primary findings emerged from the current research. From the analysis, the researcher concludes that Adult Demonstration Programs seem to have a positive impact on families; this impact, however, is arrived at indirectly, through the provision of services to the incarcerated or recently released individuals, rather than providing services for families directly. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) notion of reciprocity being a property of one’s microsystem, not only does the family have an impact on an individual, but an individual also has an impact on the family; thus, satisfying the needs of the released individual, the family is being helped as well. Aiming to meet ex-offenders’ needs related to transitional housing, education, employment, and substance abuse treatment, the programs help to remove the potential for individuals to reoffend and return to prison, which in turn can have a significant impact on families. The previously incarcerated family member is then better able to carry out his/her family responsibilities, such as being a provider and a role model, and spending time with children. Thus, expansion of both indirect and direct services for families is definitely needed. Following the example of one program, family reunification services should become an explicit
and essential part of each Adult Demonstration Program, and the services should be provided regardless the client’s request.

Furthermore, expansion of immediate reentry services is deemed pivotal. Study participants spoke to the vital importance of the first 90 days after release that have an impact on the person’s life and decision to commit a new crime in the future. Considering that offender-specific restrictions, bureaucratic procedures, and lack of motivation might interfere with the provision of reentry services, coordination between the correctional facilities and the community organizations is vital (Garland, et al., 2011). Following the example of one of the programs, released individuals should be provided with utilities and groceries subsidies during the first three months after the release from a prison. Additionally, as discussed by one study participant, relationship building between programs and families should begin prior to release in order to facilitate family members’ timely utilization of and participation in programs’ services.

Perhaps the most striking and compelling finding was that program coordinators described many families as uninterested in program participation even when services are available for them due to bad relationships with incarcerated family member and/or family criminal history. This finding may not be surprising given the low rates of visitation from family during incarceration (Mumola, 2000). Even though programs did provide reunification assistance upon request from the client, family reunification services should begin while the individual is still incarcerated. Working to continue or re-establish family relationships immediately upon acceptance into the correctional facility is needed, because it is possible that lack of visitation is an indicator of the families’ disinterest in preserving the relationships. While employment and housing assistance should continue being an area of focus closer to an individual’s release, reunification programs that are started once the person is admitted to the prison would better help an individual transition between settings upon release from prison and entering the community (Brofenbrenner, 1979). Consequently, Adult Demonstration Projects could work collaboratively with prisons to establish more and better quality visitation programs to foster consistent interaction between all family members. Additionally, since lack of trust of the government agencies implementing the Second Chance Adult Demonstration Projects was named as a possible reason of families’ distrust, it may be helpful to have more services provided through non-governmental community organizations as opposed to county courts or departments of correction.
A definite strength of Second Chance Act Adult Demonstration programs was that they focused on the individual needs of offenders, rather than creating one-size-fits-all programming. Although these programs attempted to create opportunities that allowed a wide range of clients to participate (e.g., inclusion of both male and female offenders, different risk levels), the programs should be sure to attend to all individual microsystem elements, such as racial and ethnic background of potential clients (Dyer et al., 2012). Mass incarceration affects certain minority groups more than others – more African Americans are in the criminal justice system today than were enslaved in 1850 (Alexander, 2010). Due to mass imprisonment of African Americans, a Black child today has less chance to be raised by two parents than a child born during the slavery (Alexander, 2010). Consequently, more resources should be aimed at program development in African American communities that have been severely affected by mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010).

Additionally, more preventive programs are needed given it may be possible to eradicate the problem of mass imprisonment by tackling the causes rather than the consequences by providing services to people before they are incarcerated. For instance, expanding the number of substance abuse treatment programs in the community; establishing free or affordable counseling services to help families with miscommunication and misunderstandings; and addressing the issue of homelessness, especially among mentally ill individuals, may help to keep individuals out of prison in the first place.

Finally, given that one of the goals of the Second Chance Act was to focus on women and parents as the target population, more Adult Demonstration Programs should work with women and mothers. Since only one participating program out of nine was designed for female offenders, women in other states do not have the services needed for their successful reintegration.

**Policy Recommendations**

Findings from this family impact analysis lead the researcher to conclude that the Second Chance Act should provide additional funding for Adult Demonstration programs, as these programs appear to be making a positive impact on the lives of ex-offenders and their families. Only 13 states received Adult Demonstration program funding in 2009, while offenders in other states are lacking the services and the benefits of these types of programs. Hence, each state should receive funding for at least one program. Additionally, eligibility requirements such as
age and residency should be expanded when possible to ensure more access to the program and, therefore, a wider range of program participants. Programs should continue using the timeline eligibility criteria for the program participation in the following services: job coaching, housing and job search, drug treatment, but family reunification services should be available to incarcerated individuals upon their arrival to the correctional institution. “Burned bridges” between offenders and their families need to be restored as early as possible rather than only immediately before release, because it is a time-consuming and complicated task. Furthermore, given that priority consideration is given to the Adult Demonstration Projects that show coordination with families of incarcerated or recently released individuals, it would be beneficial for the programs to involve families in program planning, implementation and evaluation (National Reentry Resource Center, 2010). For instance, before providing the services, programs could ask families what types of services should be offered by the program, and after their participation, the programs could ask: “how helpful were our services? What other services would help?”

Limitations

To our knowledge, the current study is the first family impact analysis that has been done in relation to the Second Chance Act of 2007, thus making a unique and important contribution to the family policy literature. Due to the fact that there is no previous research or data that links changes within incarcerated and recently-released prisoners’ families and the Second Chance Act program, it was challenging to conduct this family impact analysis. The current study has a number of limitations that must be taken into consideration. First, the sample is relatively small and includes the perspectives of only nine out of the fifteen Adult Demonstration Grant recipients. Moreover, no data were collected from other types of programs funded by the Second Chance Act: Juvenile Demonstration projects, and Adult and Juvenile Mentoring projects. Further, the study examines only the programs that received funding in 2009. Since 2010, additional programs were funded through Second Chance Act and their impact on families is not known yet. This research provided a model for how to initiate a family impact analysis of the Second Chance Act, but in order to conduct a complete family impact study, the impact of all types of programs throughout the four years of program implementation needs to be examined (Quach &Anderson, 2008).
This study had logistical limitations as well: some of the answers to the written interviews were not in-depth, and the participants did not always answer the follow-up questions, which made data more scarce than desired. Some of the questions in the interview guide were not as clear as they could have been; for instance, the question about barriers to clients’ participation in programs’ services caused confusion. Most participants answered it in relation to the eligibility requirements rather than the barriers to the facility (for example, cost, transportation). Furthermore, the interview guide did not contain a direct question about the services provided by each organization, instead a question about the services for families was asked; therefore, it was complicated to compare the general services advertised in the program brochures with the family services mentioned briefly in the interviews. Some questions arose during the data analysis; for instance, it is not clear to the researcher where the matching funds money originates. The title of the family reunification specialist was mentioned only in the written interviews, and the follow-up questions about his services and funding were not answered; therefore, the role of this figure is not fully understood by the researcher.

Despite the discussed limitations, this research is an important first step in analyzing the impact that the Second Chance Act of 2007 is having on families. In order to more fully assess the family impact of this policy, and how successfully it improves the reintegration process and enhances public safety, further examination of programs funded through the Second Chance Act is needed.
References


Committee. Retrieved April, 4, 2012 from www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/crimjustagenda


Appendix A
Recruitment Material (email)

Hello dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Polina Ermoshkina and I am a graduate student and a Research Assistant at the Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University, Ohio.

I am writing my Master's thesis “Family Impact Analysis of the Second Chance Act of 2007” under the supervision of my advisor Dr. Katherine A. Kuvalanka. The goal of my research is to find what effect the reintegration programs (sponsored by the Second Chance Act of 2007) have on families and how well they address the family needs.

You are invited to participate in an interview during which I will ask questions about the program you currently administer. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw any time.

Thank you very much in advance.

Sincerely, Polina Ermoshkina
Appendix B

Consent Form

Dear participant:

My name is Polina Ermoshkina and I am a graduate student and a research assistant at the Department of Family Studies and Social Work at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. I am working on my thesis with my advisor Dr. Katherine A Kuvalanka.

You are invited to participate in an interview about the program that you are currently coordinating and that received the funding through the Second Chance Act of 2007. I will ask you a number of questions over the telephone about the implementation of the program and how families benefit from this program. The telephone interviews will be recorded and then transcribed by the researcher, the files would be accessed only by me. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. All identifying data would be erased. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time or decline to answer any questions. You will not be asked to do anything that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. (Note: If you have chosen to submit your responses via email, rather than participating in a telephone interview, then sending me your responses is indication that you give your consent to participate in this study.)

The benefit of the study is it will help identify what impact Second Chance Act of 2007 and reintegration programs sponsored by it has on families, as well as to see how the Bill addresses the issue of family reunification and family support. After the completion of the research, the results of the study would be provided to you. The results may be published in the research journals.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact me at 513-255-7095 or via email: ermoshpv@muohio.edu or my research advisor Dr. Kuvalanka at 513-529-3639 or via email: kuvalaka@muohio.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3600 or email: humansubjects@muohio.edu.

Thank you for your participation.

Does the participant give their verbal consent?  Yes  No

Signature  Date
Appendix C

A Listing of Interview Questions

I am interested in learning about your program that has received funding through the Second Chance Act. Would you tell me a bit about it, such as what the goals of the program are, and how it has been implemented?

Potential follow-up questions:
- How long has your organization been implementing the program?
- What portion of the program does the Second Chance Act fund? What impact did the Second Chance Act grant money have on the services your organization was able to provide?
- What is the primary target population of your program?
- What are the requirements to participate in your program?
- Please describe the application process for your program?
- Did individual face any barriers to participating in the program?
- Do you involve family members (e.g. spouse, children, or grandparents) in your reintegration program or do you work only with an ex-convicted individual? If you do work with families, how do you involve them? What services do you provide to the family members, and what are your goals for the families?
- Have you evaluated the program?
- How effective do you feel the Second Chance Act has been in allowing you to make a positive impact on ex-prisoners and their families? What would help you to make an even greater impact?