

Changing Times? Public Perceptions and Knowledge about Parole

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Criminology

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Abstract

In Canada, parole has become increasingly difficult to obtain over the last several decades. This resistance is arguably rooted – at least partially – in a number of high-profile parole violations and changes to both the laws and practices governing parole that are almost certainly a reflection of wider fear of crime and the rise of the risk society. This increased difficulty in obtaining parole should be seen as a concern (rather than the correct or most appropriate response) given that parole is believed to be a major step in the successful reintegration of offenders into the community (Parole Board of Canada, 2016).

Within this context, it is intriguing to note the very recent increase in the use of parole in Canada. However, there has been very little academic research conducted to explain or understand this new phenomenon. Given that actual policies and practices governing parole are often influenced by public opinion/attitudes (Roberts, Stalans, Indermaur, & Hough, 2003), one possible explanation may reside in the current knowledge/perceptions of parole held by Canadians. Unfortunately, despite earlier research (Roberts, 2004), our understanding of public attitudes regarding parole is still very limited. In particular, little is known about recent public knowledge of this correctional release procedure and perceptions regarding its use.

Through the use of a survey questionnaire, this study presents an updated view of public perceptions and knowledge about parole. Further, it examines potential correlations between these two constructs. The results reveal little public knowledge of parole and generally ‘negative’ perceptions of it. Further, little evidence was found to support the notion that these current attitudes differ in any significant way from findings reported in earlier polls. In conclusion, the recent increase in the use of parole does not seem to be rooted in changes in Canadians’ knowledge or perceptions of it.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Cheryl Webster, for her continuous support, patience, and guidance throughout these past few years. I truly am thankful for her enthusiasm in my research. The level of quality I have achieved in this work would not have been possible without her support and guidance. I truly would not have been able to complete this thesis without her.

I would also like to thank my external reviewers – for their thoughtful feedback and considerations. Thank you for making this an enjoyable experience for me.

I would also like to thank my family, friends, and peers for their support during the MA program. In particular, my mom and dad, for their patience and support while my thesis has consumed my life over these past few months. I am grateful for their support and continuous words of encouragement during these times. I would also like to thank my kitty Scarlett for keeping me company and always giving me the cuddles I need to get through the past year.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support and financial assistance received from the University of Ottawa in the form of additional Teaching Assistantships over the course of the MA program. The experience and income gained were very helpful in allowing me to continue and complete my studies.

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1. Introduction

i. What is Parole?

Parole is the release of a prisoner temporarily, for a special purpose, or permanently before the completion of a sentence, on the promise of good behaviour. In Canada, there are two variations of parole: day parole and full parole. Day parole is a form of limited release that permits an offender an offender, while living in a correctional facility, a community-based facility or halfway house, to participate in the outside community. Offenders are usually granted day parole in order to prepare for full parole or statutory release. Full parole is a form of conditional release that allows an offender to serve part of his/her prison sentence in the community. The offender is placed under supervision and is required to abide by conditions designed to reduce the risk of reoffending, and to foster reintegration into the community (Correctional Service Canada, 2014). Most offenders are eligible for full parole after having served one-third of their sentence, or seven years, whichever is less. Offenders serving a life sentence for second-degree murder are eligible to apply for full parole anytime between 10 and 25 years as deemed by the court, while first-degree murder carries an automatic ineligibility period of 25 years. Provincial offenders are eligible to apply for day parole after serving 1/6 of their sentence. In contrast, federal offenders are eligible for day parole after six months or six months prior to their full parole eligibility date, whichever is greater. If they are serving life or indeterminate sentences, they are eligible to apply for day parole three years before their full parole eligibility date or after three years, whichever is greater (except those serving life sentences for murder) (Correctional Service Canada, 2014).

The Parole Board of Canada (PBC)¹ is an independent administrative tribunal that makes conditional release and record suspension decisions, as well as clemency recommendations (Parole Board of Canada, 2018). This contributes to the protection of society by facilitating, as appropriate, the reintegration of offenders as law-abiding citizens. The PBC operates under the authority of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA)², which is an Act that regulates corrections and the conditional release and detention of offenders as well as establishes the office of Correctional Investigator. Parole decisions are made by PBC members either

¹ Henceforth, the abbreviation – PBC – will be used.

² Henceforth, the abbreviation – CCRA – will be used.

through in-office file reviews or face-to-face hearings with the offender and his/her parole officer (Parole Board of Canada, 2018). Board members refer to risk assessment tools, as well as all relevant and available information in assessing an offender's risk to reoffend. When conducting the risk assessment, the PBC must take into consideration an offender's social and criminal history, any progress made by the offender through participation in programs, any victim impact statements, actuarial assessment and risk assessment tools, as well as his/her release plan and community supports (Parole Board of Canada, 2018).

Although the structure of Parole Boards and the objectives and purpose of parole have changed over the years, they continue to allow convicted offenders to serve a portion of their custodial sentence under the supervision of an officer, subject to conditions (Parole Board of Canada, 2018). Under the CCRA, the PBC has the authority to grant, deny, and revoke parole for offenders serving custodial sentences of two years or more (Parole Board of Canada, 2016). However, the PBC also makes parole decisions for offenders serving less than two years in all provincial and territorial prisons with the exception of Ontario and Quebec, which have their own parole boards. The purpose of parole is to contribute to a "just, peaceful, and safe society" by means of decisions on the timing and conditions of release that will facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community (Parole Board of Canada, 2016). The protection of society is the parole board's most important consideration.

ii. Current Issues about Parole

A relatively recent study on the use of parole in Canada concluded that the number of prisoners being released on both federal and provincial parole has been declining for decades (Doob, Webster, & Manson, 2014). In fact, parole is currently used very rarely – a finding that most Canadians would likely find shocking. Indeed, a common public misconception is that parole is not only too lenient but also alive and well. That is, Canadians believe that parole is still being used frequently. More importantly, the Canadian public has traditionally reported little confidence in the parole system in several polls conducted during in the 1990s and early 2000s (e.g., Angus-Reid, 2002, and the General Social Survey, 1999). Equally notable, of the four criminal justice agencies (including prison, parole, police, and courts), parole has repeatedly been seen in the least favourable light (i.e., with the least public confidence) by public polls (Roberts, 2004). In fact, while 86% of respondents in a 1997 poll reported being very or

somewhat confident in the police, only 52% and 42% reported the same degree of confidence in the courts and the prison system (respectively). Notably, a mere 25% declared themselves as being very or somewhat confident in the parole system (Roberts, 2004).

These negative attitudes toward parole have arguably emerged as fertile ground for politicians looking to politicize criminal justice issues in order to garner votes. Perhaps not surprisingly, Harper government (in power between 2006 and 2015) introduced and passed several pieces of legislation aimed at making parole more difficult to obtain based on the idea that the parole system had become too lenient. For instance, Bill S-6 (40th Parliament, 3rd session) repealed the Faint Hope Clause, eliminating the possibility of full parole before 25 years for those serving life sentences for first-degree murder (LEGISinfo). This legislative change essentially restricted the use of parole by increasing the number of years that lifers had to spend in prison before being eligible for parole. Similarly, Bill C-48 (40th Parliament, 3rd session) proposed possible sequential parole ineligibility periods for certain multiple murderers (LEGISinfo). As a result, Canada has seen – for the first time in its history – parole ineligibility periods of 50 or 75 years (Dormer, 2018; O'Regan, 2014).

Clearly, one might suggest that public attitudes towards parole can play a significant role in influencing criminal justice legislation. In particular, negative views surrounding parole can be, and have been, co-opted by governments for political purposes. One of the dangers of this type of political pandering is that we end up with the “worst of all possible worlds” (Doob et al., 2014, p 327). Indeed, we have none of the advantages of parole (Doob et al., 2014, p 327). With so few prisoners being granted parole, successful reintegration becomes even more difficult to achieve. In addition, we continue to have all the challenges of parole (Doob et al., 2014). That is, Canadians continue to believe that the criminal justice system is not severe or harsh enough, underestimating the length of time served before parole as well as overestimating the parole grant rate and the number of offenders on parole who commit new crimes (Doob et al., 2014).

If nothing else, this current state of affairs highlights the need to be more aware of Canadians' views of parole. In fact, a better understanding of Canadians' knowledge and perceptions of parole may suggest ways of successfully intervening to change them. By extension, more positive views of parole might actually lead to a safer society through increased support for the use of this correctional release procedure. Indeed, parole can enhance public safety as offenders not only spend less time in prison (an institution widely recognized as having

criminogenic³ properties), but are also gradually reintegrated into the community with supervision and support. Studies (Correctional Service Canada, 2014; Visser, 2006) have shown that gradual, supported, supervised reintegration from prison into the community reduces the likelihood that offenders will reoffend.

The problem is that we know very little about Canadians' perceptions and knowledge of parole as they are held today. Most obviously, recent opinion polls have not focused on parole. In fact, the most recent information on Canadians' attitudes toward parole dates back to 2002 in which Roberts (2004) conducted a review on the major opinion polls. Broader surveys of Canadians' opinions (Environics, 1998; General Social Survey, 1999; Ipsos-Reid, 2002) have included only a few general questions about parole. Further, at least one of the traditional sources of data on the attitudes of Canadians regarding parole, The General Social Survey (GSS)⁴ has more recently excluded questions specific to parole (General Social Survey, 2013). This study proposes to begin to fill this gap.

iii. Thesis Roadmap

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework in which this thesis is located. It begins by providing a historical examination of the purposes of parole, how they have evolved and ultimately the ways where parole has been shaped since its inception in 1899. To this end, three specific eras are examined in which the principal objective of parole has changed. These periods are informed by a number of reports and commissions that examined relevant laws, policies and practices surrounding parole in Canada. More broadly, this section examines the various ways in which parole has been conceptualized as a balance between the protection of society and the rights of the offender.

The second part of this theoretical framework describes the broader socio-political context in which parole has developed. It includes consideration of risk theory, the politicization of parole, the importance of public opinion, as well as our current understanding of public perceptions and knowledge surrounding parole. In particular, the rise of the risk society will be discussed as a potential cause of the changing views and conceptualization of parole. Legislative

³ A system, situation, or place, likely to cause criminal behaviour (Public Safety Canada, 2015).

⁴ Henceforth, the abbreviation – GSS – will be used.

and administrative repercussions for parole are also explored as a part of the emergence of the ‘risk society’.

The final section of this study’s theoretical framework provides a discussion of why we might want to change the way in which parole is presently viewed in Canada. It examines the negative impact of the restricted use of parole as well as the role that the public plays in terms of the degree of confidence that Canadians have in parole. As part of this discussion, the results from previous studies on public opinion and parole are presented. This section also focuses on ways to improve public confidence in parole, and the effect that the media may have. Finally, recent trends in parole are presented. In particular, the increase in the use of parole over the past five years is highlighted.

This theoretical framework culminates in the presentation of the two principal research objectives addressed in this thesis. First, this study proposes to provide an updated picture of the Canadian public’s perceptions and knowledge surrounding parole. The second research question assesses the possibility that the recent increase in the use of parole is due (at least in part) to more positive perceptions and knowledge of it. To this end, this thesis examines whether people have become more or less knowledgeable about parole and whether or not their perceptions of parole have changed from their past perceptions by comparing findings from past studies to those from the current study.

Chapter 2 explains the methodology of this study. In brief, data were collected through an in-person and online survey questionnaire. It contained a total of 18 questions, including demographic identifiers and questions examining both perceptions and knowledge of the participants. The in-person component was conducted in two locations in Ottawa. The online survey was posted on the researcher’s social media websites. A total of 149 respondents were gathered (although only 147 were used for analytic purposes). The key measures (and corresponding theoretical constructs) of respondents’ perceptions and knowledge about parole are also identified and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 presents the data from the survey. Not only is a description of the sample under study given, but quantitative data analyses on respondents’ perceptions of parole as well as their knowledge about parole are conducted. Descriptive statistics (including cross tabulations and correlation coefficients) are presented. Inferential tests (chi-square tests as well as analyses of

variance) were used to assess the relationships between variables. Significant findings are presented.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the survey. It begins by highlighting the most important findings relative to respondents' current perceptions and knowledge about parole. Drawing from the literature where relevant, this chapter also discusses how peoples' perceptions and knowledge have changed over time by comparing the findings from previous studies to those in the current study. This comparison is intended to shed light on whether the recent increase in the use of parole may be due to more positive perceptions and knowledge about parole. This section ends with a discussion of the limitations of this study, as well as several recommendations for future research in this area.

1.1. History of Parole

1.1.1 Introduction

Introduced in 1899, parole has a long history in Canada. Despite several attempts to abolish it over the years, it has constituted a long-standing element of Canadian corrections for over 100 years. Despite its longevity, parole has not always been conceived in the same way, as its purpose and principles have changed over time. In fact, one might loosely classify parole into three distinct eras, defined by its primary purpose within each historical period. In the first era, one might suggest that parole's primary purpose was understood to be largely a mechanism of clemency. However, this purpose subsequently changed to that of rehabilitation during the following era. More recently, one might argue that even this purpose has suffered modifications whereby public safety seemingly now constitutes the new primary purpose of parole.

1.1.2 Parole as Clemency

Parole in Canada was initially legislated by the *Ticket of Leave Act* which was enacted by the Canadian Government in 1899 as “An Act to Provide for the Conditional Liberation of Prisoners” (Ticket of Leave Act, 1989). This legislation marked the beginning of the first era of parole which extended to the 1950s. During this historical period, parole was predominantly seen as a form of pardon or clemency. Although not explicitly stated as clemency, this interpretation of its principal purpose can be deduced from the *Act* itself, as well as from various other sources.

Most notably, despite the absence of any explicit reference to clemency in the text of the *Act*, the Canadian Government stated that the purpose of conditional release (referred to at the time as a ticket of leave) “was generally understood to be a form of pardon” (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). Similarly, when the Remission Branch was established by the Department of Justice in 1913, it was officially designated to handle “all matters of clemency including parole”, recognizing parole as one of these measures (History of Parole in Canada, 2016).

Perhaps more importantly, the *Ticket of Leave Act* was based on British legislation, with its target population being first time offenders and those of good character (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). This target group likely reflects the view held at the time that prisons were “schools of crime”. For those offenders who were yet to be deemed ‘real criminals’, parole was

seen as a mechanism by which this population could be released early and, as such, avoid the criminogenic effects of prison. Indeed, the *Act* was explicitly designed for:

“...a young man of good character, who may have committed a crime in a moment of passion, or perhaps, have fallen victim to bad example, or the influence of unworthy friends. There is a good report on him while in confinement and it is supposed that if he were given another chance, he would be a good citizen” (Ticket of Leave, 1989).

Said differently, parole was seen principally as a form of mercy in which inmates who were believed to not yet be criminals were given a second chance.

Consistent with this conceptualization of parole, the *Act* contained no guidelines for assistance or supervision once released. In fact, the only obligation was that the parolee report to police at regular intervals as well as agree to obey the law and avoid the company of any bad characters (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). Clearly, rehabilitative ideals were not yet part of the official conceptualization of parole. Yet, one might argue that notions of reformation were not entirely absent. Rather, they were introduced informally, outside of the state realm. Most notably, the Salvation Army became the first private group to help with the after care of prisoners. This first post-release form of assistance was provided by prison chaplains, probation officers, parole supervisors, and halfway houses (Fauteux, 1956; History of Parole in Canada, 2016). The John Howard Society of Canada subsequently followed several decades later, providing similar assistance to inmates once released from prison.

However, it is equally true that parole also served other purposes during this historical era. Parole was also used as a cost reduction method at this time. Imprisonment was a costly measure. For example, during the Great War, when urbanization and industrialization had increased, the crime rate went up. Prison rates were increasing with the onset of the Depression, but no new funds were given for new or improved institutions. The financial burden of keeping offenders in prisons was an issue so more tickets of leave were given (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). As such, releasing offenders on parole seemed to reduce the prison costs. More broadly, it was believed that the sooner a man was paroled, the sooner he could also get back to supporting himself and his family (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). In this way, wider ‘social costs’ were also reduced through recourse to parole.

At the same time, parole also served the purpose of mitigating sentence disparities. After sentences were handed down by judges, inmates would be granted parole based on their

character, the offense committed, and sentence served. Put differently, parole served to lessen the unequal treatment and disadvantages that were sometimes caused by inconsistencies in the length of prison sentences handed down. As this lack of parity created a great deal of discontent among prisoners, parole was used to ensure that those with similar crimes would receive similar punishments (History of Parole in Canada, 2016).

Parole began to come under attack after the Great War as people believed it was lacking in its purpose and principles. In response, the Remission Branch produced empirically supported evidence stating that only 2.2% of prisoners granted a Ticket of Leave between 1899 and 1922 had actually committed an offense while on parole, showing how successful parole was in reducing recidivism at this time (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). However, as criticism continued, the Branch reorganized and implemented new criteria for parole eligibility such as looking at one's mental history, extreme youth or old age, assistance given to the Crown, or questions about guilt (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). As rehabilitation remained (at least formally) irrelevant and the number of offenders granted parole declined, remission became of crucial importance to those in prison. In fact, it was not until 1947 that the first classification officer was introduced and parole re-emerged on the horizon.

Indeed, classification was the study of convicts for the purpose of grouping them into categories and planning appropriate rehabilitation programs (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). At this time, the principle purpose of prison itself began to change, with a focus toward greater assistance being given to individuals in contact with the law. While humanity and indulgence remained important considerations, attempts at rehabilitation started to become more prominent.

1.1.3 Parole as Rehabilitation

One might argue that the 1950s ushered in a new era in the history of parole. The way in which parole was viewed had begun to change from a measure of clemency to one with a greater emphasis on rehabilitation. This historical period is often characterized by criminologists as being influenced by the "medical model" for understanding crime and criminals. In contrast with the previous period in which offenders were seen as inherently bad, the view of the criminal had now changed. Specifically, society believed that crime was a sort of sickness and that offenders could be treated and ultimately 'cured'. The rehabilitative movement recognized that through treatment, offenders could be fixed (Lehman, 1972).

As such, offenders began to receive individualized treatments within prison and eventually were awarded gradual release with supervision in the community. Although the Archambault Report⁵ was released in 1938, many of its recommendations were not taken into consideration until the 1950s. In particular, this report emphasized prison as a site for rehabilitation, informed by the medical model of this historical period. The Archambault Report had maintained that the prison rate remained high because inmates were not given a chance to reform or become rehabilitated while in prison (Archambault, 1938). Archambault believed that the responsibility of the state vis-à-vis prisons was to show clemency as well as rehabilitate inmates so that they could become contributing members of society once again (Archambault, 1938).

These ideas were ultimately put into action only several decades later. The Penitentiaries Branch was reorganized and prisons began to hire teachers, develop training courses, and encourage hobbies within prisons for the purpose of inmate reformation. The Archambault Report recognized the deleterious effects of prison on inmates, and believed that the state had the obligation to ensure that offenders are not released even more anti-social than before entering prison. Specifically, this formal statement noted that:

“[t]he undeniable responsibility of the state to those held in its custody is to see that they are not returned to freedom worse than when they were taken in charge. This responsibility has been officially recognized in Canada for nearly a century but, although recognized, it has not been discharged. The evidence before the Commission convinced us that there are very few, if any, prisoners who enter our penitentiaries who do not leave them worse members of society than when they entered them” (Archambault, 1938).

Rehabilitative strategies were introduced precisely to counter the criminogenic effects of prison. Within the spirit of Archambault, offenders were provided with more rehabilitative measures within prisons rather than simply after care programs.

However, this philosophy of rehabilitation was subsequently formally extended beyond the prison. Parole had begun to emerge as an important component of the rehabilitative philosophy. Although the notion of rehabilitating offenders found its roots in the Archambault

⁵ The Royal Commission on Penal Reform was struck to examine Canadian penal history and provide recommendations to the prison and correctional system (Archambault, 1938). Their final report- tabled in 1938 – is best known by the Commission’s chairman, Joseph Archambault. The need for this report arose from the Depression years during which the crime rate was high but prison space was limited. Further, there were minimal government funds to build new prisons.

Report, its extension to parole was largely proposed and developed in the Fauteux report⁶. In 1956, the Fauteux report looked at the *Ticket of Leave Act* and made recommendations to its policies and procedures (Fauteux, 1956). It proposed that all inmates be considered for parole on the merits of their individual case. Indeed, they saw parole as an important transition from the institution to the community, having an integrative and supervisory role, and being a positive step to decreasing the number of those in prison (Daubney, 1988). In particular, Fauteux stressed that “[p]arole offers an opportunity for the practical applications of rehabilitation programs” (Fauteux, 1956, p. 51).

At this time, the assumption was that when a court imposes a sentence of imprisonment, judges do so with the knowledge that parole may be granted to the prisoner at some stage of his/her sentence as a rehabilitative measure. This new vision for parole found its legislative/administrative roots in the creation of the National Parole Board (NPB)⁷ and the introduction of the *Parole Act* in 1959. After abolishing the Remission Service, the NPB and *Parole Act* were created from recommendations proposed in the Fauteux report and formally recognized the contribution of parole to the supervision and rehabilitation of offenders (Daubney, 1988). Following these recommendations, the NPB would have jurisdiction over parole for all inmates – including those serving indeterminate sentences – and would impose conditions (Fauteux, 1956). While individuals believed that parole was only granted to those serving determinate sentences, the Fauteux report confirmed that those serving indeterminate sentences would also be eligible for parole as well (Fauteux, 1956). Reinforcing the idea of the rehabilitative philosophy, the committee members stated that “[a]s aftercare agencies become stronger, parole results will be more successful” (Fauteux, 1956). Indeed, it was believed that as offenders were rehabilitated and reintegrated into society, recidivism rates would be lowered (Fauteux, 1956).

Drawing on the notion proposed in the Fauteux Report that parole was not designed to mitigate punishment but to rehabilitate offenders, the NPB conceptualized parole as a logical step in the reformation of offenders (Parole Act and National Parole Board, 1959). Similarly, the

⁶ A task force to inquire into the principles and procedures followed by the Remission Service of the Department of Justice of Canada was struck to investigate and provide recommendations to the correctional system (Fauteux, 1956). The final report – tabled in 1956 – is best known by the Commission’s chairman, Justice Gerald Fauteux. The need for this report arose from the divided jurisdiction within Canada, as probation fell under the provincial government and parole under parliament.

⁷ Henceforth, the abbreviation – NPB – will be used.

Parole Act of 1959 introduced new criteria for parole. Illustratively, it was to be used when an inmate had derived the maximum benefit from prison, where reformation and rehabilitation would be aided by parole, and when release would not be an undue risk to society (Parole Act and National Parole Board, 1959). In brief, a clear affirmation of the use of parole for reformation and rehabilitation is evident. Indeed, the new parole legislation and its administrative counterpart (the NPB) enshrined this principle of rehabilitation, creating new criteria for reform and conceptualizing parole as the final phase of a correctional treatment program.

Under this Act, the NPB granted the gradual re-entry of the prisoner through multiple forms of gradual release (preparation) which were used for rehabilitative purposes (Brunet, n.d). Temporary parole⁸ was a predecessor of day parole, whereby inmates not granted full parole could leave the institution for short periods of time before their final release as a means of helping them adjust to society (Brunet, n.d). This form of parole was substituted in 1969 with the creation of mandatory supervision and day parole. In particular, the first legal definition of day parole from the *Parole Act* stated that “[d]ay parole means the terms and conditions of which require the inmate to whom it is granted to return to prison from time to time during the duration of such parole or to return to prison after a specified period” (Brunet, n.d.). The admission of day parole before full parole for offenders shows this notion of not only rehabilitation but also a fledgling recognition that inmates are citizens with rights who shall be reintegrated and rehabilitated within the community. By releasing inmates into the community on day parole, it allows them to start their post-custodial rehabilitation earlier, gaining experience in the community and preparing for their release. Equally notable, it suggests that inmates deserve the chance to be reintegrated slowly into the community in order to promote a greater likelihood of success when they are fully released. Further, parole had also expanded from use with only first-time offenders to habitual and violent offenders as well, showing the confidence in rehabilitation and reintegration. Indeed, the guiding principle was now one which emphasized that offenders could be rehabilitated through long-term gradual release and supervision; no matter what offence they had committed or how long their sentence may be (History of Parole in Canada, 2016; John Howard Society of Canada, 2007).

⁸ This is similar to what is now known as temporary absence (escorted or unescorted) (Public Safety Canada, 2015).

The philosophy of parole for rehabilitation purposes was further reinforced by the Ouimet Report⁹. Introduced in 1969, it gave parole and the aftercare of prisoner's even greater importance. This report explicitly stated that prisons actually made inmates worse and that rehabilitation needed to be at the forefront of the administration of prison sentences. Perhaps not surprisingly, this notion reaffirmed the conclusions drawn in the Archambault Report. Within this logic, the report's recommendations proposed the abolition of indeterminate sentences and stated that parole officers had a dual role of providing both supervision and treatment (Ouimet, 1969). While stating that parole is a treatment-oriented correctional measure, the report also recognized that supervision should be thought of as a form of surveillance and, as such, a step in assisting the offender's reintegration. Through surveillance, the offender could be assisted with his/her reintegration- by being provided guidance and help to stay on track with his/her rehabilitation. Through this dual role, parole was perceived as serving the long-term protection of society (Ouimet, 1969). In fact, the report explicitly states that "[t]he committee believes that the rehabilitation of the individual offender offers the best long term protection for society, since that ends the risk of a continuing criminal career" (Ouimet, 1969, p 15). Within this context, society also began to conceptualize parole as a calculated risk but a less costly treatment than incarceration.

Within this new rehabilitative philosophy, the use of parole expanded. In 1959, the parole grant rate was 42% - the highest to that date. In the early 1970s, 65% of parole applications received by the parole board were approved, further demonstrating the growing belief in the potential rehabilitative and re-integrative qualities of parole (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). Consistent with the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement of this historical era, a series of procedural safeguards were also introduced. Symptomatically, inmates gained the right to a hearing at their parole eligibility date. Further, an internal review committee was created such that an inmate who was denied parole could request that the decision be formally reviewed (History of Parole in Canada, 2016). In addition, amendments to the criminal law in 1977 provided that a parolee whose parole was revoked would get credit for his/her time on parole. Finally, inmates were granted the right to appeal before a national parole board, as well as the

⁹ The Canadian Committee on Corrections was struck, to study corrections and make recommendations (Ouimet, 1969). Their final report – tabled in 1969 – was most commonly known by the committee's chairman, Justice Roger Ouimet. The need for this report arose from the Minister's concern about the broad field of corrections, from the initial offense to the final discharge of a prisoner from prison or parole.

right to be represented by counsel (Parole Act and National Parole Board, 1959). In brief, parole had become not only a rehabilitative mechanism, but also a legal right, recognized as part of this historical period.

But change was again in the wind. By the early-to-mid 1970s, the purpose of parole began to shift. This change was announced with both the Hugessen¹⁰ and Goldenberg reports¹¹. While parole was still conceived as a means of reducing the human and social costs of prisons, there was a movement away from the medical model in which criminals would be ‘cured’ through correctional treatment and parole. Rather, these reports suggested a more realistic recognition that individuals might still reoffend in the future. As such, although parole was still being used as a rehabilitative tool, concerns with public safety were becoming more pronounced. Symptomatically, the Hugessen report recommended “the creation of a decentralized but coordinated system closely linked to the public, police, and other parts of the criminal justice process, as well as a monitoring system and a number of procedural safeguards for the rights of inmates” (Hugessen, 1973, p55). This creation of a monitoring system suggested a new concern with the safety of the public by closely linking public interest to offender reintegration. In particular, parole began to be seen as an effective surveillance system for the purpose of public safety, as well as rehabilitation.

1.1.4 Parole as Reintegration

Late into the 1970s, one might argue that the central purpose of parole - as conceptualized since the mid-20th century - was being challenged and critiqued in many ways. Opposition to parole (as a strategy to reform prisoners) was arguably spearheaded by the Martinson report¹² which explicitly concluded that nothing works in terms of the correctional

¹⁰ In 1972, the Task Force on the Release of Inmates was struck to study procedures and make recommendations with relation to prison and parole (Hugessen, 1973). Their final report - tabled in 1973 - was most commonly known by its chairman, James K. Hugessen. The need for this report arose from the fact that there was no unified system of corrections in Canada and other various shortcomings of the present system.

¹¹ The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was asked to assess and make recommendations to corrections (Goldenberg, 1974). Their final report - tabled in 1974 - was most commonly known by its chairperson, The Honourable H. Carl Goldenberg. The need for this report arose from the Senate Committee’s recognition of the changing government and public attitudes, and limitations of the jurisdiction of the NPB.

¹² In 1966, the Governor of New York tasked a group of researchers to review prisons and rehabilitation due to the public belief that ‘nothing works’ in terms of crime. An official book was submitted to the governor, but Martinson produced his own systematic review of a collection of correctional programs that spanned the various categories

treatment of criminals (Martinson, 1974). The Martinson report conducted a systematic review of a collection of correctional programs that spanned the various categories of existing programs, such as education, counselling, and vocational training. Martinson's review addressed the effectiveness of prison reforms in terms of the rehabilitation of inmates and found that both programs within prison and outside of prison, including prison alternatives, were ineffective in reducing recidivism and that the length of a sentence had no impact on recidivism (Martinson, 1974). By extension, it stated that parole should be abolished (as it existed in the United States) and that offenders should serve out their sentences within prisons. More broadly, he heralded the 'nothing works' movement and many of the strong proponents of the rehabilitative movement within the correctional arena began to adopt the mantra that 'rehabilitation is dead'. He stated that attention has been directed "away from a 'rehabilitative' strategy" and "away from the notion that we may best insure public safety through a series of 'treatments' to be imposed forcibly on convicted offenders" (Martinson, 1974, p49).

The socio-political context at this time reflects how influential this report was. Crime rates were increasing during this period, elevating the demand for public safety by the wider community and, by extension, putting pressure of politicians to find 'new' strategies of reducing criminal behaviours. This increase in crime caused doubt in whether rehabilitation should be the central goal of correctional systems (Martinson, 1974). This report suggested that the reasons for this lack of effectiveness, and by extension, societal benefit was that education and psychotherapy may not be able to overcome or reduce powerful tendencies to continue criminal behaviour (Martinson, 1974). In particular, "[w]hen intensive supervision does produce an improvement in offenders' behaviour, it does so not through the mechanism of 'treatment' or 'rehabilitation' but instead through a mechanism that our studies have almost totally ignored- the mechanism of deterrence" (Martinson, 1974, p47). In the United States, this report had a significant impact on the purpose of parole. In fact, it suggested that criminals needed to be treated more harshly, through the elimination of conditional release. Although Canada did not embrace the report to the same degree as the United States, it certainly was influential in shifting the focus away from rehabilitation and the belief that individuals can be 'cured' in prison. Rather, rehabilitative ideals were henceforth understood in more realistic terms within a wider

of existing programs, summarizing the broader manuscript. A final report was published by Robert Martinson in 1974.

reintegrative model, focusing on assisting convicts as much as possible, to become law-abiding citizens. The goal was now to facilitate their gradual return to society under supervision and support, to help them successfully reintegrate the criminal back into society so that he/she could lead a productive life.

Another challenge to parole emerged in 1987 with the establishment of the Canadian Sentencing Commission¹³. It stated that full parole should be abolished and that there should be “truth in sentencing” (Sentencing Reform, 1987). Unlike the Martinson report, parole was not being challenged from a practical or pragmatic perspective (that is, as an ineffective mechanism for rehabilitating the offender), but from a more principled perspective. Specifically, this Commission questioned parole because it introduced uncertainty and disparity in sentences, reducing the perception of fairness and justice and negatively affecting principles of proportionality. By extension, it was argued that sentences with parole eligibility would reduce public confidence precisely because of the lack of concordance between the sentence handed down and the sentence actually served. However, this position should not necessarily be read as reflecting the belief that rehabilitation did not work. Rather, it might be better understood as advocating that sentences needed to be carried out in order for justice to be fully restored. At this time, there was a lack of public confidence in sentencing, parole, and any form of early release. In particular, parole was seen to add an element of indeterminacy to sentences (Sentencing Reform, 1987). Within this context, the Canadian Sentencing Commission could recommend the elimination of full parole (and, as such, the unwarranted disparity in sentences that it caused) without having to be concerned that this proposal would detrimentally affect rehabilitative outcomes.

The Commission argued that “release decisions are made on the basis of two criteria: the perceived need for incapacitating the offender for protection reasons and an assessment of the offender’s progress towards rehabilitation” (Sentencing Reform, 1987, p. xxxiii). They also proposed that the primary purpose of a release on day parole (which it recommended to occur after the prisoner had served $\frac{3}{4}$ of sentence in order to eliminate the disparity that full parole introduced into the system) be for public protection as well as rehabilitation (Sentencing Reform,

¹³ In 1984, the Canadian Sentencing Commission was struck to examine sentencing laws and practices in Canada (Sentencing Reform, 1987). The final report – tabled in 1987 – was most commonly known as the Sentencing Commission’s report. The need for this Commission arose out of the Government of Canada’s recognition of the existence of serious problems with the structure of sentencing, including unwarranted disparities in sentencing, lack of public confidence, and over-reliance on custodial sanctions.

1987). The Commission still endorsed the reintegrative properties of gradual release into the community under supervision. They simply wanted to ensure the standardization of ‘parole’ across all offenders. In particular, they state that a term of imprisonment “should not be used for rehabilitation and should be imposed only in those cases where: a) it is necessary to protect the public from violent crime, b) another sanction would not sufficiently reflect the gravity of the offence or the repetitive nature of the criminal conduct of the offender, or c) any other sanction would not adequately protect the public or the integrity of the administration of justice” (Sentencing Reform, 1987, p. xxxi). In particular, this report suggested that parole was not as necessary as society had originally thought for the purpose of imprisonment, rehabilitation, and public protection.

The Sentencing Commission’s report also argued that parole undermines the purpose of proportionality as those sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment tended to serve a smaller portion of their sentence in custody than did those handed down shorter sentences. By extension, the commissioners concluded that the “most powerful argument against parole is that it serves none of its stated purposes in the current system...” and that previous reports showed that rehabilitation was not working, and full parole should be abolished (Sentencing Reform, 1987, xxxiv). This recommendation was rooted largely in the belief that parole:

“is essentially a structure based on a rehabilitation model... [and] if sentencing were based primarily on rehabilitation and if offenders were rehabilitated in prison, and if we could determine with a high degree of certainty that a person had been rehabilitated, parole would make sense” (Sentencing Reform, 1987, xxxiv).

However, the post-Martinson era underlined the flaw in this reasoning. The Commission also argued that the elimination of parole would not necessarily imply longer prison stays as judges might hand down shorter sentences if they knew there was no option for full parole. Indeed, the Commission argued that the knowledge of parole appeared to have an uneven impact on the original sanction. Specifically, although judges are not supposed to take parole into consideration when determining the sentence, they may do so implicitly (Sentencing Reform, 1987).

The final challenge to parole during this era was rooted in the increased public concern with safety. At this time, the public did not understand the difference between parole and release on mandatory supervision and there was a growing fear of crime. Notably, this concern with criminal activity was not without empirical basis. Overall crime rates as well as those for violent

crime began increasing in the 1960s and continued to climb until the early 1990s (Webster & Doob, 2007). It might also be argued that an increasing media focus on crime exacerbated the public's concern with safety. Given that it was no longer believed that prison – as well as parole – were particularly effective rehabilitative strategies (at least within the notion of reform or cure), the issue of public safety needed to be addressed and ensured through other mechanisms.

The recommendations of the Sentencing Commission to abolish parole were never adopted. However, they arguably nudged – if not forced – the government to re-define the principal purpose of parole and the role that it should play in corrections. That is, parole was not, in fact, abolished but reconceptualized. Indeed, its primary purpose became that of a reintegrative strategy. With the rejection of parole as a curative mechanism, public safety was now most effectively accomplished through gradual, supervision/monitoring and support. This shift reflects a more realistic understanding of the limitations of rehabilitation/treatment (although rehabilitation continues to be seen as playing a role for some offenders). In brief, this new conceptualization of parole emerges as a partial adoption of Martinson's conclusions and a complete rejection of the Sentencing Commission's recommendation to abolish it. One might be tempted to say that rehabilitation was not forgotten, just refurbished. That is, the goal of parole was to increase public safety by enhancing the prisoner's successful return to society through gradual reintegration and support rather than through his/her reformation.

This 'new and improved' role of parole received Royal Assent in 1992 when the *CCRA* replaced the *Penitentiary Act* of 1961 and the *Parole Act* of 1959 – both of which had previously governed corrections and the NPB (History of Parole, 2016). Broadly, this new law made significant milestones in protecting human rights and in the development of corrections while also reflecting many of the principles and values rooted in the mission of Correctional Service Canada¹⁴. The primary purpose and principle of corrections and conditional release were explicitly stated. Specifically, "the protection of society is the paramount consideration for the Service in the corrections process" and governs all decisions relating to the release and treatment of offenders (Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1992). To maintain a peaceful and just society, "assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community" is seen as a paramount consideration (Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1992). Other important principles of this *Act* include the use of the least restrictive measures consistent with

¹⁴ Henceforth, the abbreviation – CSC – will be used.

the protection of the public, and the offender's retention of the rights and privileges of all members of society (Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1992).

More specifically, this *Act* also set out the principal guidelines governing parole, parole reviews, the supervision of parole, as well as an interpretation of conditional release (Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1992). Within the wider socio-cultural concerns with safety, the concept of risk became central to parole. In particular, the CCRA contained many new measures to emphasize public safety. Perhaps most notably, risk assessment tools to assess an individual's right to parole were put into place by the CCRA. In addition, the CCRA provided a legal definition of day parole, which gave sentencing judges the authority to set parole eligibility to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the sentence, rather than $\frac{1}{3}$, for violent and serious drug offences (Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1992; Public Safety Canada, 2015). In a similar light, the eligibility for day parole was moved to six months before full parole eligibility, as opposed to the one-sixth point of the sentence. In contrast, an accelerated parole review was simultaneously created by the CCRA (Public Safety Canada, 2015). This latter change targeted those offenders who posed little to no risk to public safety.

In brief, parole was henceforth conceptualized as a balance between the protection of society and the rights of the offender. Public safety continued to be seen as the main principle of parole. However, it was believed to be most effectively achieved through gradual, supportive, and supervised reintegration. Part of this new role reflects the recognition of the deleterious effects of incarceration (that is, its de-socialization effects or properties) and, by extension, the need (in the interest of public safety) to release the offender as soon as possible. Another part of this reintegrative approach reflects the understanding/recognition of the limited (pro-social) effects of rehabilitative programming. That is, rehabilitation cannot "cure" criminals, as such, they can still represent a risk to public safety. What parole provides is supervision, which limits their ability to re-offend while also simultaneously providing assistance and support to enhance their successful re-entry into the community as law-abiding citizens. In other words, parole is no longer seen as a curative fix but as a strategy, which can assist offenders in their return to society.

While parole was no longer seen as part of the 'curative' process to eliminate crime (as a transitional phase of reformation/rehabilitation), parole was still largely viewed as an essential phase in the reintegration of the offender, essentially to limit crime (Webster, 2015). The role of

the government (to educate the public rather than encourage the public's misplaced fears of crime) changed in the 1990s/2000s when the government chose to pander to the public's misplaced concerns with risk (penal populism) rather than to educate or lead them. Concerns with risk are seen as early as 1970 in which remission (for federal offenders) was eliminated and replaced by community supervision for the last 1/3 of the sentence. In 1978, parole eligibility for violent recidivists moves from 1/3 to 1/2 of the sentence. In 1986, the ability to detain prisoners until warrant expiry is introduced. Clearly, parole is becoming progressively restricted to only the 'safe' cases (as assessed by risk tools). Indeed, 'public safety' is becoming increasingly defined through the lens of 'risk'.

1.2 Parole and the Rise of the Risk Society

1.2.1 Rise of the Risk Society

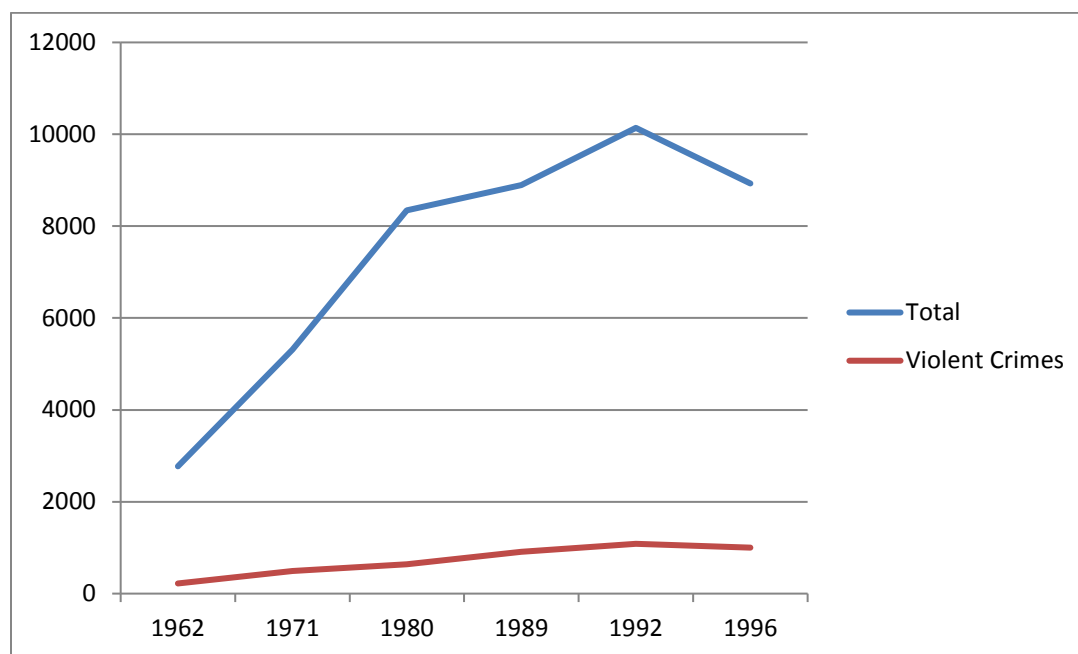
The introduction of the CCRA in the early 1990s and the reconceptualization of parole as a mechanism to facilitate the offender's successful re-entry into society, already hinted at wider changes that had been set in motion. Specifically, recognition of the risks involved in releasing convicted criminals into the community before the completion of their sentence had progressively been taking a more central stage from the mid-1970s onward. These concerns reflected – as well as re-produced – a wider socio-political focus on risk. Indeed, the gradual substitution of the welfare state ideology with a neo-liberal mentality introduced heightened concern with risk, causing fear in citizens (Webster, 2015).

Equally notable, the role of the state became predominately one of limiting the dangers to public safety which offenders represent. This risk-averse mentality also began to permeate criminal justice processes, translating into attempts to avoid releasing accused offenders as well as convicted individuals (Webster, 2015). Within the more recent context of bail, release decisions have increasingly been justified on the secondary grounds for detention – that is, to ensure the protection and safety of the public from additional criminal acts that the accused might commit while on bail (Webster, 2015). In fact, it has been argued that the primary grounds for detention – to ensure the accused person's appearance in court – has been largely abandoned (Webster, 2015). Parole decisions have followed the same pattern whereby any release decision is being increasingly conceptualized in terms of the amount of risk that the inmate represents

(Webster, 2015). Indeed, *any* form of release had become progressively viewed as a risk to society. This new era (post-CCRA) – often labelled as the ‘risk society’ – might be characterized as one in which risk, risk assessment, increased fear of crime by the public, and political pandering to this fear constituted the most central factors when considering release decisions.

Importantly though, while the 1990s have been described as the era in which we witnessed the rise of the ‘Risk Society’ (Beck, 1992), the broader social, cultural and political processes that culminated in this characterization were arguably underway – at least in terms of their impact on criminal justice policy and practice - during the latter half of the 20th century. Most notably, overall and violent crime rates in Canada had been increasing steadily from the 1960s, into the early 1990s (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Police-Reported Crime Rates in Canada, 1962-1996



Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (2018)

Within this context, it would be unsurprising that this unrelenting rise in crime over this historical period also increased the public’s fear of crime. However, in contrast to other eras in Canadian criminal justice history, it would seem that the government opted largely to acquiesce to this growing fear, rather than educate the public about the actual risks of releasing prisoners (Doob & Webster, 2016). At least within the context of parole, this increasing fear would appear to lack empirical support. Publicly available data demonstrate that those released on parole – and

those receiving statutory release – contribute very little to either crime, in general or violent crime, in particular, in Canada (Doob et al., 2014). In fact, empirical evidence (Doob et al., 2014) demonstrates that the risk that a parolee will commit a violent offence while on parole is very, very small. In fact, in 2011-12, of the 150, 044 adults that had been charged for a violent offence, only 7 offenders on full parole had their parole revoked for this type offence (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Notwithstanding this reality, the Canadian government chose not to deny the public's perception of increased risk to public safety rooted in the belief that releasing prisoners would lead to more crime. As such, 'good criminal justice policy' was redefined as a means of keeping the public safe through short-term security measures. This new approach contrasts with decades of state resistance to the excessive and unnecessary use of custody (Webster & Doob, 2007). In particular, it had been vigorously defended that 'good policy' should be informed by the broad range of cases that come before our justice system, not one particular case (such as a violent crime committed by one parolee). Further, it had been consistently held that the role of the government was to focus primarily on the facts and not what the public wants or is demanding (Bartels, Gleb, Spiranovic, Saree, & Dodd, 2018).

Seemingly, this vision of government had largely been lost by the early 1990s. By extension, parole has become increasingly conceptualized as a short-term protective strategy (that is, only to be used with those prisoners who represent little-to-no risk) rather than a long-term measure to ensure the successful re-entry and reintegration of any offender into society as a law-abiding member. However, this new conceptualization of parole has not come without consequences. Specifically, it would seem that this heightened concern with public safety justifies sacrificing inmates' right to parole. Indeed, Hudson (2003) argues that 'justice' may come under threat in the current risk society. When fears of crime and safety become high, they can overwhelm our care for liberty and justice (Hudson, 2003). In Canada, increased risk aversion has arguably rendered an inmate's individual rights and freedoms less important. That is, an inmate's need for (gradual and supervised) release is sacrificed so that the rest of society can feel safe. Risk is managed by keeping offenders in custody, rather than releasing them where they may be tempted to commit another crime.

1.2.2 Risk Assessment

The rise of the risk society also arguably gave greater importance to the risk assessment of any prisoner who is being considered for release. Indeed, criminal justice policies have increasingly been driven by a focus on the *effects* of crime rather than on the *causes* of crime (Webster, 2015). Similarly, the individual (rather than social) causes of crime have been highlighted; just as future behaviour has become the focus (rather than past behaviour) in terms of determining appropriate responses/intervention. In brief, parole has been redefined as an earned privilege for those who do not represent a danger to society (rather than a logical step in the reintegration process of the offender). By extension, the decision to grant parole has become almost exclusively based on a prisoner's likelihood of reoffending, whereby the need for risk assessment becomes paramount (Webster, 2015). Indeed, parole is henceforth determined – some might say exclusively – by the degree of future risk that he/she represents.

The prediction of risk has also shifted away from focusing on specific individuals to targeting entire categories of individuals who share 'risk factors' (Myers, 2009). Risk factors can include any factor that makes the likelihood of reoffending high, such as past criminal behaviour, slow progress within the institution, socioeconomic status, employment, and age (Parole Board of Canada, 2016). Risk assessment tools are used by the parole board precisely to assess potential risk by measuring these broad/general factors which may not capture individual differences. One might even argue that the state creates these assessment tools in order to avoid the responsibility of an offender committing a crime while on parole. Indeed, it shifts the blame from the state (broadly defined) to other criminal justice officials as well as the offender him/herself (Myers, 2009).

Risk theory not only involves risk assessment tools *per se* but also a broader cost-benefit analysis. The decision-making process can be illustrated as a matrix (see Table 1.1, taken from Doob et al., 2014). When thinking about releasing an offender on parole, the costs and benefits of the decision are weighed. On the one hand, the parole board can decide to deny parole. The primary advantage of this option is that the benefits are visible to the public while the costs are largely hidden. By keeping prisoners in custody, society does not have to worry about the possibility of reoffending, nor the necessary effort put into their reintegration back into the community. Further, the costs of having offenders remain in the prison are less visible to the

general public (e.g., financial costs as well as the costs to the individual's reintegration). What is prominent – at least in the eyes of society – is that the public is kept safe (Webster, 2015; Webster, Doob, & Myers, 2009).

Table 1.1: Parole Risk Matrix

		Prisoner's behaviour after release but prior to the warrant expiry date	
		Offence Committed (or assume 'would have offended')	No offending
Decision	Grant Parole	Decision likely to result in public criticism of the parole board.	Desired outcome. No bad consequences but will disappear into statistical summary with no acknowledgement of success.
	Refuse Parole	Outcome consistent with the decision but will disappear into statistical summary. Only an assumed outcome.	An invisible error. There are <i>no</i> negative consequences to the decision-maker for this 'wrong' decision.

Doob et al., (2014)

On the other hand, the parole board can decide to grant parole. When releasing an offender into the community, the benefits remain hidden or may go unnoticed while the costs are more evident. Specifically, the decision to release an inmate increases the degree of institutional risk. Indeed, the costs relative to any re-offense by the accused person are of a public nature. Specifically, the public may decry the release of particular offenders (whom they believe should not be released) or the released prisoners may commit a new offence while on parole (Webster et al., 2009). In contrast, the benefits of release are hidden (such as the financial savings and the reintegration of the offender) and do not accrue to the decision maker.

Within the current risk-averse mentality, the benefits associated with a decision to deny release would appear to (greatly) outweigh the costs. This would appear to be particularly true

given the recognition that inmates are no longer ‘cured’. Rather, they are perceived as still capable of reoffending. Further, it is generally held that past behaviour predicts future actions. Not surprisingly, parole board members likely have a heightened concern with public safety.

1.2.3 Rise of Risk Aversion

Ideally, decisions about release (whether on bail or parole) that ‘go bad’ (that is, the released person commits a (serious) crime) are nonetheless understood as having been the best decision/approach at the time, given the available information. More recently, the rise of risk governance has led to the increased conceptualization of decisions as being either ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. In other words, criminal justice professionals are now held directly responsible for the outcome of the decision and blame is laid when the released offender commits a subsequent crime (or breaches a condition of their release) while on parole. More importantly, this ‘individual’ blame (e.g., the criminal justice decision-maker is seen to have made the wrong decision and is blamed for the outcome) is compounded by institutional blame. In this latter case, the reputation of the institution is tarnished by the ‘wrong decision’ having been made, leading to the loss of public confidence in the wider criminal justice system.

In fact, scholars (Myers, 2009; Power, 2004) have identified two types of organizational risk avoidance: primary and secondary risk (Myers, 2009; Power, 2004). Although this literature discusses these ideas in terms of bail, they can also be applied to parole. The primary risk is posed by the release of persons in the community who may subsequently commit a criminal act. The secondary risk is the risk to the reputation of the criminal justice system which can occur when a released person offends while still under the responsibility of the state (Myers, 2009). Both primary and secondary risk are predicated on the risk that a released offender commits a crime while on parole/bail.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this ‘double’ risk makes officials increasingly reluctant to make a decision with respect to release (Myers, 2009; Power, 2004). Concerns about the consequences of a decision may generate feelings of unease among criminal justice actors. Indeed, every misfortune may be turned into risk in a society in which there is an expectation of security and a belief that the government is capable of providing it (Myers, 2009). As a response to an

increased focus on risk and public safety, criminal justice professionals have become increasingly more risk-averse in their responses to crime/criminals (Myers, 2009).

More broadly, as levels of fear of crime rise, criminal justice actors become more and more reluctant to make release decisions and, by extension, increase this fear (Myers, 2013). In a culture with a government who prioritizes risk consciousness, there seems to be an obsession with safety and security. In fact, the protection of the community seemingly trumps all other consideration. Indeed, risk management becomes the cornerstone of risk reduction strategies. Responding with policy change and denouncements of behaviour are the rational response to the perceived crisis, as it is politically risky to deny the fears of the citizens (Myers, 2013). Politicians are not willing to risk themselves or their reputation in the case that someone reoffends. Rather, it is easier to appease the public through assurances of closer regulation and stricter control of risky people. In a culture governed by fear of crime, the government cannot say it is expected that some prisoners will offend once back in the community.

Indeed, in a culture of accountability and transparency, it has become progressively more risky to venture any judgement or take responsibility for a decision involving risk (Myers, 2009). In holding officials accountable for decisions that go wrong, they become more preoccupied with managing their own risk. One might even say that they adopt a risk minimization mentality whereby rational decision-makers favour detention because the incentives to oppose release are greater than those to grant release (Doob & Webster, 2012). That is, the benefits of keeping the offenders in prison outweigh the costs (such as financial costs associated with imprisonment as well as the long-term benefits of gradually releasing them into the community).

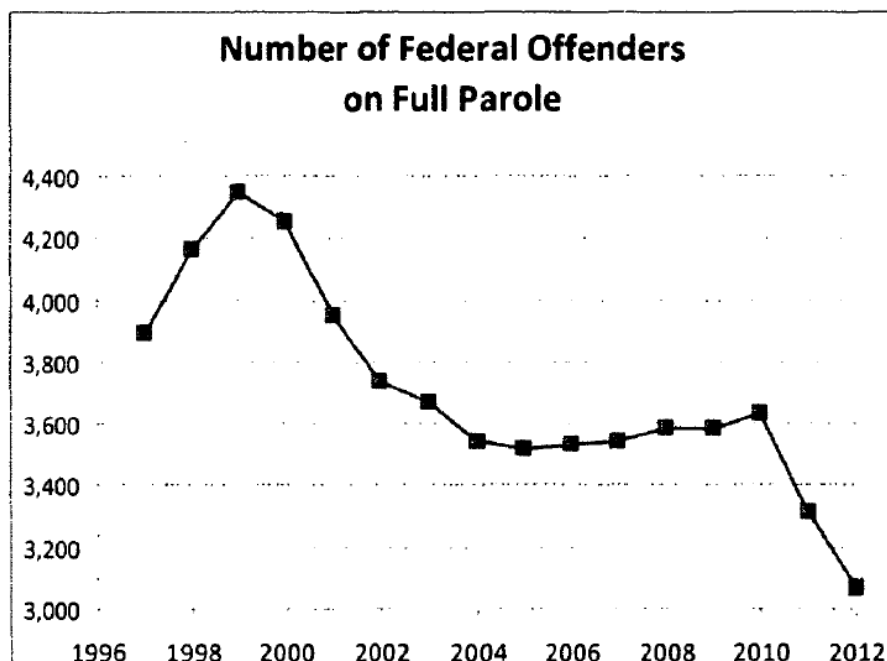
Doob & Webster (2012) suggest that thinking has changed regarding state practices of release. Specifically, the question has moved from why offenders should not be released in almost any circumstance to demonstrating why they should be released at all. Although these scholars made this statement within the bail context, it would appear equally relevant to parole. Indeed, a risk-averse culture has arisen in an attempt to avoid releasing persons who might subsequently commit crimes while still under state control/supervision (Doob & Webster, 2012). This has created a generalized incentive to avoid releasing anyone with more than a non-trivial likelihood of committing a crime. In brief, the very notion of 'public safety' has been reconceptualized. That is, it is now understood through the lens of risk. Driven by a risk-averse

mentality, short-term public safety through the continued detention of offenders is prioritized, reducing the immediate risk that he/she might represent. However, the rise of risk aversion within the criminal justice system has meant that long-term public safety through gradual, supervised reintegration of offenders is forfeited.

1.2.4 Legislative and Administrative Repercussions for Parole

With the emergence of the ‘risk society’ in the early 1990s and its increased sensitivity/concerns with risk, it would be unsurprising that this wider reality has impacted both the administrative decisions made by the PBC as well as decisions on the part of the prisoner to even apply for parole (Webster, 2015). And, in fact, the use of parole has decreased over time. The (predictable) impact of this concern with public safety on parole decisions is reflected in a continual, long-term decline throughout this era. Further, it has occurred at both the federal as well as provincial levels. Figure 1.2 presents data on the number of federal offenders on full parole between 1997 to 2012.

Figure 1.2: Number of Federal Offenders on Full Parole, 1996-2012



Doob et al., (2014)

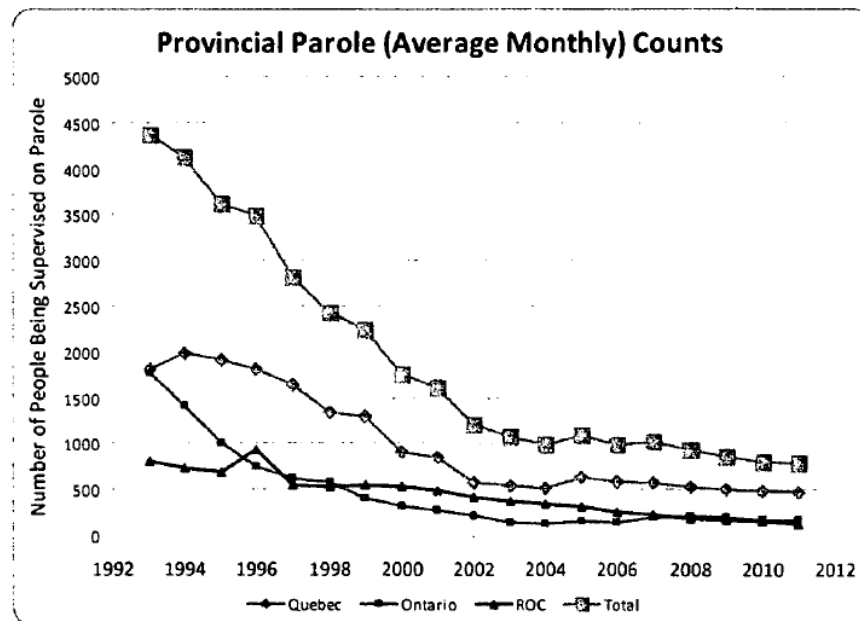
Despite a temporary increase in the number of federal offenders who were granted full parole between 1997 and 1999, the trend quickly changes. In fact, one notes a steady decline until the mid-2000s at which point the numbers more or less stabilize for several years. Notably though, this relative – albeit brief – stability is followed by a subsequent (and pronounced) decline during the early years of the 2010s. To further emphasize the long-term decline, one need only to note that there were 4,347 people on parole from federal institutions in 1999-2000. In 2012-13, this number had dropped to 3,068 (Doob et al., 2014).

Notably, this decline at the federal level is paralleled at the provincial level. While the PBC makes decisions for all federal offenders as well as for most provincial offenders, Ontario and Quebec have their own provincial parole boards.¹⁵ Figure 1.3 presents the parole counts¹⁶ for these two provincial jurisdictions separately. Otherwise, all other provincial parole numbers (reflecting decisions made by the PBC) are aggregated (and labelled as ROC or ‘Rest of Canada’).

¹⁵ Until 2007-08, British Columbia also had their own parole board. However, the Parole Board of Canada took over responsibility for parole decisions from this jurisdiction in 2007-08. For ease of presentation, BC parolees have been combined with those in the rest of Canada or ROC (other than Quebec and Ontario). Data are drawn from the Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2013, at p. 76 and the Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2003, at p. 68 (Doob et al., 2014)

¹⁶ The ‘number’ of those on full parole in Figure 3 are also ‘counts’ (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016).

Figure 1.3: Number of Provincial Offenders on Full Parole, 1992-2012



Doob et al., (2014)

As it is clear from this figure, the trends for all 4 categories of provincial parolees are virtually identical. That is, there is a long-term decline in the number of provincial prisoners who were granted full parole between 1993 and 2011. A quick glance at the aggregate measure (labelled as ‘total’) illustrates the dramatic drop over this 15-year period. Indeed, there were less than one fifth as many offenders serving their sentence on parole from provincial/territorial institutions in 2011-12 as there were in the peak year of 1993-94 (790 vs. 4,375).

Taken together, Figures 1.2 and 1.3 appear to suggest that the various Parole Boards have become increasingly more risk-averse over this period, releasing fewer and fewer offenders on parole. Obviously though, these data are not perfect. Most notably, the use of numbers rather than rates does not take into account the changing size of the correctional population (Doob et al., 2014). Similarly, the number of prisoners granted parole is also dependent on the number of applications submitted. Within this context, declining numbers of prisoners granted parole could theoretically be a reflection of declining populations of sentenced prisoners and/or fewer parole applications, having little to do with the actual decisions of the paroling authorities (Doob et al.,

2014). In addition, the dichotomous arrangement of a prisoner as having been granted parole does not lend itself well to a detailed portrayal of the degree to which parole is still being utilized in Canadian corrections (Doob et al., 2014). For instance, while one inmate may be granted parole after having only served 28% of his/her custodial sentence, another inmate may be granted parole after having served 56% of his/her sentence. Finally, the decline in the use of parole over time could also be a reflection of the increase in the remand population such that increasing numbers of people are serving their sentences before being found guilty. When sentenced, many are – in effect – sentenced to ‘time served’ (Doob et al., 2014).

Clearly, there is some plausibility to these alternative explanations. Nonetheless, the data are certainly suggestive of a dramatic decline in the use of parole in Canada beginning in the early 1990s (Doob et al., 2014). Speaking specifically to the latter caveat (rooted in the growing remand population), these scholars suggest that there has likely been a reduction in parole beyond what would have been expected from the increase in pretrial detention rates.

However, the current risk-averse era has not only had repercussions on the administrative decisions of the PBC. Rather, it has arguably also had an impact on legislative proposals which, in turn, likely constitute yet another factor affecting the use of parole. Most notably, the decline in the use of parole almost certainly reflects stricter legislation that restricts or limits parole. While most of these new laws were brought in under the Harper government, one cannot ignore the fact that one of the first pieces of legislation to affect parole was proposed and passed by a Liberal government during the 1990s.

Indeed, greater restrictions were placed on the Faint Hope Clause in 1996, foreshadowing further restrictions on parole over the next decades. The Faint Hope Clause was a statutory provision that allowed prisoners who had been sentenced to life imprisonment with a parole ineligibility period of greater than 15 years to apply for an earlier eligibility date once they had served 15 years (LEGISinfo). Bill C-45 was introduced in parliament in 1996 (and came into effect in January 1997) and proposed to amend section 745.6 of the Criminal Code by adding several stringent conditions that an applicant must satisfy in order to be permitted to apply for a reduced ineligibility period. They include: 1) multiple murderers would no longer be eligible to apply; 2) the Chief Justice must determine whether the applicant has a reasonable prospect for success before empanelling a jury to decide in favour (or not) of a reduced ineligibility period;

and 3) if an application makes it to the jury stage, the jury has to arrive at a unanimous decision (rather than the prior requirement of a two-thirds majority agreement), approving that the parole ineligibility period should be reduced (Stein, 2001). For those applying for parole under this new legislation, successfully securing an earlier parole eligibility date and potentially being granted parole clearly became even more difficult subsequent to the enactment of this new legislative bill.

While this initial legislation might have got the proverbial ball rolling, the Harper government quickly expanded the number of legislative bills that further restricted the use of parole. During the Harper government's tenure as a minority government, over 60 crime Bills were introduced in the House of Commons and the Senate, although only 20 of them were made into law (Doob, 2012). Bill C-25, known as the *Truth in Sentencing Act*, received Royal Assent on October 22, 2009 (40th parliament, 2nd session). The *Act* limited the amount of credit for time spent in pre-trial (or remand) custody that a judge could administer on sentencing. Previously, judges were typically giving a 2-for-1 credit to prisoners with the rationale that time spent in pre-trial custody would count toward parole eligibility. The *Act* reduced that amount to 1-to-1, with a provision that a 1.5-to-1 credit could be imposed "if circumstances justify it" (Comack, Fabre, & Burgher, 2015). Overall, the impact of this bill on the use of parole is rooted in the longer prison sentences that resulted for those who had spent time in pre-trial detention. As such, eligibility for parole would also be extended.

Further examples can be found during the Harper government's 40th Parliament, 3rd Session. Bill C-48 (which received Royal Assent on March 23, 2011) proposed possible sequential parole ineligibility periods for certain multiple murders (LEGISinfo). Specifically, this legislative proposal allowed the parole ineligibility periods for multiple murders to be consecutive rather than concurrent. Until this time, in cases where there was more than one murder, the sentence was required to be served concurrently. The parole ineligibility period derived from any concurrent sentences was also treated as consecutive to the remaining parole ineligibility on the individual's life sentence. Ultimately, the judicial decision was not made mandatory. Rather, it was left at the discretion of the sentencing judge. However, the Crown may appeal the decision and the jury can make recommendations to this order.

Bill S-6 (which also received Royal Assent on March 23, 2011) proposed the repeal to the Faint Hope Clause (LEGISinfo). When the Faint Hope Clause was in force, it allowed prisoners who have been sentenced to life with a parole eligibility greater than 15 years to apply for early parole once they have served 15 years. After Bill S-6 was passed, the full parole ineligibility period became fixed, or unchanged, and prisoners were no longer able to apply for early release (Doob & Webster, 2016). However, it is true that there have been very few faint hope cases in Canada. For instance, only 155 people had been granted an earlier eligibility period to apply for parole under the Faint Hope Clause between 1987 and 2013. Further, as of April 14, 2013, only 139 of these prisoners had been released from the penitentiary (Doob & Webster, 2016, p391). Nonetheless, for the very small number of offenders who have committed murder after this legislative change came into force, the absence of even a faint hope of being eligible for parole before 25 years would almost certainly make a considerable difference.

Bill C-59 (which also received Royal Assent on March 23, 2011) eliminated accelerated parole review (LEGISinfo). Accelerated parole review (APR) was a system that accelerated the process of parole applications by first-time federal offenders who had not been convicted of a serious offence (LEGISinfo). They were presumptively granted parole after 6 months or 1/6th of their sentence, with the intention of granting parole as soon as possible, without a parole hearing on their eligibility date. In 2007-08, 831 offenders were granted full parole under APR, compared to 527 offenders released under the regular procedure. Clearly, this large number of offenders granted parole under APR further supports the notion that this legislative bill would have a significant impact on the use of parole¹⁷.

1.3 Getting Parole Back on Track

1.3.1 Why We Might want to Change the Way in Which Parole is Currently (rarely) Used

The use of parole has declined dramatically over the past several decades. Using data from 2011-12, Doob et al., (2014) demonstrate that in the case that all full parole was abolished

¹⁷ To this list, one might also add Bill C-39, introduced in 40th Parliament, 3rd Session. Although it was ultimately not passed, it proposed many amendments to parole including increasing the waiting time for new applications from 6 months to a year following the Parole Board's decision to refuse a parole application. It also proposed an automatic suspension when an individual receives an additional sentence while on parole. This Bill died on the order paper on March 26, 2011 when an election was called. Although not coming into force, this Bill attempted to add greater restrictions to the granting of parole. Its 'message' (of reduced use of parole) may still have influenced parole decision-makers.

for fixed sentence prisoners in Canada, there would be only roughly 1,059 more prisoners on an average day than the 39,567 offenders imprisoned in Canadian prisons/penitentiaries at that time. In terms of rates, they estimate (using data from 2011-12) that Canada's imprisonment rate was 113.1. In the case that full parole had already been officially abolished, it would have risen – only slightly – to 116.1 or only about 2.7% higher. They point out that, relatively speaking, the effect of the abolition of full parole would not be large (Doob et al., 2014). They conclude that in the case that the purpose of parole is to facilitate the safe and peaceful reintegration of prisoners into society, it is failing. That is, it is clear that parole has, in effect, withered away. In sum, it would appear that the impact of full parole (as an institution) on imprisonment rates was minimal by 2013 and that much of the 'savings' (of imprisonment) was coming from day parole (Doob et al., 2014).

While some might agree with this restricted use, others might argue that it is important to change our current way of dealing with parole in order to fulfil its principal purpose of assisting in the gradual reintegration of offenders safely into the community. Indeed, the substantially small recourse to parole which has characterized the past several decades, almost certainly has caused lost opportunities for successful reintegration. Notably, very few parolees have their parole revoked. The percentage of federal full parolees that had their parole revoked (for breach of conditions, a non-violent offence, or a violent offence) in 2017-18 was only about 10% (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). In other words, 91% of offenders on full parole successfully completed their parole. Further, this success rate has increased since 2013-14 at which time 'only' 85% had successfully completed their parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). As there is no obvious reason to assume that potential parolees have become less likely to 'succeed' on parole today, the restricted use of parole may well be denying offenders the opportunity to begin their reintegration process early – precisely at a time in which there is arguably a higher likelihood of success and, by extension, minimal risk to public safety.

Arguably even more important, the minimal use of parole also means that prisoners (who could be released with little negative impact on the safety of the public) remain in custody for longer periods of time. Extensive criminological literature highlights the deleterious effects of prison on the offender, his/her family, and his/her successful re-entry into the community. Notably, there has been evidence – using some measures – that being in prison increases the rate

of recidivism (see the summary provided by Doob, Webster, & Gartner, 2014). Beyond finding that imprisonment increases the likelihood of reoffending, empirical studies have also documented its negative effects on the offender's family. For instance, incarceration of fathers increases the physical aggressiveness of their young sons and increases the likelihood that their children will commit offences as adults (discussed in Doob, Webster, & Gartner, 2014). The detrimental impact of incarceration can also impact the community more generally. It may negatively impact people's views of the justice system, further the economic viability of neighbourhoods is reduced as those with income are taken out of it, and incarceration appears to be related to the lasting deterioration of poor families, contributing to the high rate of single (female) parent families (Doob, Webster, & Gartner, 2014). To the extent that those returning from prison are more likely to commit offences than they would be had they not been incarcerated, communities to which they return become less safe and are perceived to be less safe (Doob, Webster, & Gartner, 2014).

There are many other negative impacts on the restricted use of parole. Most obviously, one might point to the high costs to house a prisoner. The annual average cost per prisoner in provincial jails in 2011-12 was about \$67,000. (John Howard of Canada, 2018). The annual average cost of keeping an inmate incarcerated in federal penitentiaries was \$112,197 per year in 2012-13, and \$116, 473 in 2015-17 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). According to the 2018 Parliamentary Budget Officer, the average institution-specific expenditure associated with each inmate was \$114,587/year or \$314/day per offender in 2016-17. This compares to an average of 8,572 offenders being supervised in the community at an average cost of \$18,058/year, during the same time period (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2018).

Another problem in Canadian prisons is overcrowding – a situation which would also be reduced by the increased use of parole. According to several previous reports (as seen in the CSC 2013 review), the Canadian federal correctional system has – at least until recently – been facing a long-term overcrowding crisis whereby offenders have had to be housed in shared cells (“double-bunking”). Overcrowding in prison has been linked to such serious problems as increased violence among prisoners as well as reduced safety for correctional staff. Although this practice seems to be improving (Correctional Service Canada, 2018)¹⁸, it continues to be a cause

¹⁸ The double-bunking rates of offenders fell from 20% in 2012-13 to 5.5% in 2017-18 (CSC, 2018).

for concern for prisoners and staff. As a case in point, B.C. correctional officers reported a serious increase (129%) in the incidence of violence within the province's correctional facilities connected to the level of overcrowding between 2009 and 2013 (Public Services Foundation of Canada, 2015). In 2013, there were 54 such indirect assaults and threats — more than double the 20 events in 2009 (Public Services Foundation of Canada, 2015). Similarly, overcrowding has also been linked to a rising number of criminal gangs in these facilities. According to a report obtained by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, federal prisons have seen a 44% jump in gang members over the last five years (Public Services Foundation of Canada, 2015), further reducing the level of safety for prisoners and staff.

In addition to the increase in violence, there is also a known increase in mental health issues within prisons. A literature review conducted by CSC in 2012 found that double-bunking is also correlated with higher illness complaints and higher rates of non-aggressive infractions (Correctional Service Canada, 2013). The toll that incarceration takes on individual inmates with mental health problems is significant. Further, the incarceration of those with mental health disorders/conditions occurs more routinely than most Canadians are aware (Public Services Foundation of Canada, 2015). There have also been studies suggesting that crowding affects the level of stress experienced by not only offenders, but prison staff as well (Correctional Service Canada, 2013).

1.3.2 The Search for Solutions: The Role of Public Confidence

Given the multiple and deleterious effects of prison – not only for the offender but also for the wider society – the search for ways of increasing the use of parole takes on additional urgency. To this end, it would be useful to target factors that may be affecting our current – very low – recourse to parole. Certainly within this context, it might be argued that the limited recourse to parole over the past several decades in Canada may be rooted – at least in part – in public confidence in parole. Specifically, this relationship may work through a variety of mechanisms, particularly within the context of the current risk society in which we live. On the one hand, public confidence in parole may have an important impact on parole boards. In the case that public confidence is low, PBC members may be more likely to adopt risk-averse behaviour. This approach would likely translate, in practice, in a reluctance to release prisoners. That is, they may fear public backlash – especially when the general public already has little

confidence in parole – in the case that a decision to grant parole ‘goes bad’. As such, it may be perceived to be safer to only grant parole to those few who are especially good candidates. Otherwise, they may be tempted to ‘play it safe’ and avoid paroling anyone else with even a low to moderate risk.

Indeed, an analysis of institutional risk would suggest that any parole board member faced with an offender who ‘might’ re-offend in such a way as to create publicity about the offence ‘while on parole’ would vote to refuse parole even though release might reduce overall offending after warrant expiry (Doob et al., 2014). Although the legislation states that the offender has to present an ‘undue risk’ in order to be refused parole, the parole board (and, by implication, an individual parole board member) is going to be criticized not for some statistical calculation of whether there was an ‘undue risk’. Instead, the parole board will be seen as responsible for any serious offence by someone granted parole regardless of any calculation of risk. Indeed, one person on parole committing a serious offence is the focus of attention while hundreds who complete their parole without offending are ignored (Doob et al., 2014).

On the other hand, public confidence in parole may have an important impact on government. In the case that public confidence is low, the government may be tempted to pander to their fear of releasing offenders on parole. In fact, the recent decline in political deference in Western society has led to the public being less willing to let the politicians decide what is good for them (Roberts et al., 2003). Within this context, the media’s influence may have become even greater in determining the public’s beliefs about parole. This approach would likely translate, in practice, into the introduction of legislation that restricts the use of parole. Indeed, low public confidence in parole may arguably put pressure on the government to ‘do something about it’. Certainly in the last 2-3 decades, the government’s response to public fear about crime generally has been to pass increasingly harsher legislation. Indeed, it has been argued that the public has led criminal justice policy generally (Doob & Webster, 2015). It would not be surprising that this same political pandering extended to correctional policy on parole.

1.3.3 Public Confidence in Parole

Given the plausible relationship between the use of parole and public confidence, it would be important to explore the degree of confidence that Canadians have in parole. Empirical

evidence (Roberts, 2001; Roberts, 2004) on public views about parole has suggested that most Canadians have little confidence in the parole system. In fact, empirical evidence suggests that, in general, the public has never had much confidence in parole. In 1998, the level of confidence in the parole board was assessed. Only 4% had a lot of confidence in the parole board, 31% had some, while 31% had little, and 26% had none at all (Department of Justice, 2015). Importantly, this relatively low level of public confidence did not seem to correspond to the actual ‘risks’ involved in releasing prisoners on parole. Notably, 78% of provincial inmates on full parole in 1997 were successful while 67% of federal full parolees were also successful. Of those who returned to prison, 22% were returned for breach of conditions, 10% for a new non-violent crime, and only 1% for a new violent crime (Department of Justice, 2015).

In the 1999 GSS, only 15% of Canadians believed that the parole system was doing a good job at releasing offenders who are not likely to re-offend, and 13% believed that the system was doing a good job at supervising offenders on parole (Tufts, 2000). In contrast, approximately 30% of respondents believed the parole system was doing a poor job. Doob & Webster (2001) also examined the 1999 GSS where those same two questions about parole were asked (i.e. belief that the parole system was doing a good job at releasing/supervising). They found that respondents were more likely to answer the questions relative to police and parole, rather than prison. It was found that attitudes towards the courts, prison, and parole all tended to be similar, whereby people who favoured one seemed to be positive about the others (Doob & Webster, 2001). Before this point, parole questions had not been asked and only a few questions were included about police. We begin to see how these views have changed when questions about parole were added in the late 1990s.

For comparative purposes, public confidence in different branches of the criminal justice system has been measured. In 1997, the highest public confidence was in the RCMP while the lowest was in parole (Angus Reid Group, 1997). Specifically, 86% of respondents of this national survey said they were very or somewhat confident in police, while 42% claimed the same level of confidence in prisons and only 25% were very or somewhat confident in parole (Angus Reid Group, 1997). More dramatically, 37% were *very* confident in police while only 3% reported the same degree of confidence in parole (see Table 1.2). Parole has reported the worst rating in comparison with other criminal justice agencies. Roberts (2004) summarized these

findings by noting that public confidence in the police, courts, and prisons was higher than parole (Angus Reid Group, 1997, as cited by Roberts, 2004).

Table 1.2: Confidence Ratings of Criminal Justice Agencies, 1997

	% of sample “very” or “somewhat” confident	% of sample “not very” or “not at all” confident
Local police	86%	13%
Courts	52%	47%
Prison System	42%	54%
Parole System	25%	72%

Roberts, 2004

A similar pattern of results emerged from a poll conducted by Environics one year later. Stein (2001) pointed out that the police and the Supreme Court attracted the most positive response from members of the public while the parole boards attracted the least. Thirty-four percent of respondents had a lot of confidence in the RCMP, 30% in the police, and only 4% in the parole boards (Environics, 1998). In addition, 31% of respondents had some confidence in the parole board, and 31% had just a little confidence. In contrast, the proportion of Canadians desiring a stricter parole system declined from 75% in 1993, to 65% in 1998 (Environics, 1998). Notably though, while the public may have declined in their desire for stricter parole, their confidence in parole was still very low.

The most recent measure of public confidence in branches of the justice system was conducted in 2002. Once again, the police attracted the highest confidence rating from the public, and the parole system the least (Ipsos-Reid, 2002; Roberts, 2004). Specifically, 88% were very or somewhat confident in the RCMP, while only 36% were very or somewhat confident in the parole system (Roberts, 2004). More notably, 61% of respondents were not very or not at all confident in the parole system (see Table 1.3). Nonetheless, there was a slight increase in the degree of confidence in the parole system from the 1997 poll, to the poll conducted a few years later in 2002. In a separate article, Roberts speaks again to these 2002 data, stating that the

lowest confidence in corrections continues to be with the parole system (Roberts, 2005). In addition, although ratings were more positive with respect to maintaining security than promoting rehabilitation as the primary goals of corrections, people continue to support rehabilitation (Roberts, 2005). Further, the general public still favoured having parole (versus no parole), and believed in supervision rather than none (Roberts, 2004).

Table 1.3: Confidence in Branches of the Justice System, 2002

	% of sample “very” or “somewhat” confident	% of sample “not very” or “not at all” confident
Local police	83%	12%
Courts	62%	36%
Prison System	49%	48%
Parole System	36%	61%

Roberts, 2004

After this date, very little research – if any – was conducted on the public’s opinion of parole until the early 2010s. Even then, there was very little inquiry specifically into the degree of confidence that the public has relative to parole. Not surprisingly, the GSS on social identity in 2013 continued to report findings similar to past research. In particular, 76% of Canadians reported having either a great deal or some confidence in the police, making it the institution with the highest level of public confidence. Although this GSS asked no questions specifically about parole, it reported on many other criminal justice agencies as well as wider institutions. The justice system and courts had a confidence level of 57%. 40% of Canadians expressed confidence in the media, with 38% in Federal Parliament, and 30% in major corporations (General Social Survey, 2013). Again, these results are similar to earlier findings on public opinion and parole/corrections. However, any specific questions relative to parole were notably absent in this survey. Further, they were again excluded from the 2014 GSS on victimization.

1.3.4 Improving Public Confidence in Parole

If we are serious about trying to resuscitate parole, one possible strategy would appear to be rooted in improving the public's confidence in parole. However, one would still need to identify ways in which to increase the confidence that the general public has in parole. One possible avenue might be gleaned from prior research on the relationship between the public's knowledge and perceptions of parole and their degree of confidence in it as an acceptable criminal justice practice.

In fact, this relationship would appear to be mediated by the media. That is, media coverage of parole-related issues defines – in large part – the public's perceptions and knowledge about parole. Indeed, the media is the primary source of information about parole for the public (Roberts, 2005). Further, the public's knowledge and perceptions about parole almost certainly form the basis of their confidence in parole. And, in fact, Roberts (2001) noted that while parole has received a lot of public criticism, the rise in public support for parole during the early 2000s seemed to be related to more positive media coverage. Specifically, the combination of an absence of major parole-related tragedies reported in the media, the publication of low recidivism rates by those on parole, and positive media publicity on parole generally may have contributed to less public fear of re-offending by those on parole by altering the public's perceptions and knowledge of parole.

Low public confidence in parole can be explained in the same way. More often, the media – when reporting on parole – focuses on the most horrific cases of crimes committed by those released on parole. However, by focusing on the most sensationalist cases, the public only hears about the 'bad things' that happen when prisoners are on parole. Not surprisingly, their perceptions and knowledge about parole are often inaccurate or distorted. As a useful illustration, correctional data clearly show that the vast majority of prisoners released on parole complete their time in the community without violations. However, in a case in which a parolee commits a serious crime, the media coverage is often intense and negative. Hence, public confidence in parole is low precisely because their perceptions and knowledge about parole are determined by a single case in the media. This is not to say that the media accounts of parole-related incidents are necessarily wrong. However, the media often sensationalizes offences involving violence,

making the public think that serious parole violations are frequent and that their safety is in (constant) jeopardy by those on parole (Roberts, 2005).

Indeed, some might argue that media is one of – if not the main – cause of low public knowledge and confidence in parole. In his overview of research summaries of public confidence in the criminal justice system, Doob (2014) found that people's views may be formed on the basis of individual high profile cases (as seen in the media) and a small number of interactions with the formal system. In fact, the expectations that people have (and receive through the media) may be more important than the material they receive through education (schooling). People are influenced by what those whom they trust say about the system and this 'information' may affect their views on parole (Doob, 2014).

And in fact, although crime rates have been declining in Canada since the mid-1990s, the media often act as if the opposite is true (Roberts et al., 2003). This response causes increased public demand for even more punitive measures. Indeed, the real and ever-present danger to evidence-based penal policies is the uncomfortable truth that such policies are often framed to serve wider referential contexts that have little to do with the penal system. Within this context, Roberts (2004) examined possible causes of Canadians' low confidence in the criminal justice system generally as well as in parole specifically. In general, it was found that the public perceives crime rates to be increasing, they overestimate recidivism rates, they believe that the criminal justice system works in favour of suspects, they underestimate the severity of sentences, and believe that sentences are more lenient in Canada than elsewhere (Roberts, 2004). Specifically related to parole, Roberts (2004) also states that citizens overestimate the proportion of those granted parole and further overestimate the rate of re-offending by those on parole.

And, in fact, many other descriptions of public misinformation or misperceptions related to parole can be found. The Angus Reid Group (1996) found that people knew nothing about statutory release and very little about parole. Similarly, studies have shown that Canadians overestimate the parole grant rates as well as the rate of parolees that result in revocation. More importantly – at least in terms of potential mechanisms to change the public's opinions – the perceptions of parole held by the general public are highly distorted (Roberts, 2001; Roberts, 2004). Dating back to the 1980s, it was found that 4 in 5 Canadians believe that many inmates commit violent crimes while on parole and that the manner in which the parole process affects

sentencing (such as a judge taking parole eligibility into consideration when sentencing) is not well understood by the public and is subject to criticism from the media and criminal justice professionals (Chretien, 1982). In a more recent survey, the majority of respondents were unable to correctly identify the definition of a conditional sentence¹⁹ from a three-option multiple-choice question. While 43% correctly identified the term, 38% chose the definition of parole and 13% chose the definition for bail (Department of Justice, 2015).

In addition, the public believes that rehabilitation is possible for most offenders but not for those who commit violent or sexual offences. This perception likely has repercussions on the public's support (or lack thereof) for parole when it involves those convicted of violent or sexual offences. Not surprisingly, the public was found to be opposed to granting parole to offenders convicted of the most serious crimes and believe that murderers should not be eligible for parole (Doob, 2014; Doob & Webster, 2014). Beyond subscribing to many misconceptions about those who are granted parole and what occurs once they are released into the community, the general public also assumes that all prisoners apply for parole and get it on their first application. Notably though, while Canadians have been found to want stricter parole, very few are supportive of completely abolishing it (Correctional Service Canada, 2015; Roberts, 2005). Specifically, while 70% believe that parole should be made stricter, less than 1% believe it should be abolished. More symptomatically though, the public believes that parole is a part of the punishment for a crime and that in general, sentences are too lenient (Correctional Service Canada, 2015; Webster & Doob, 2007; Webster & Doob, 2015).

1.3.5 Recent Trends in Parole

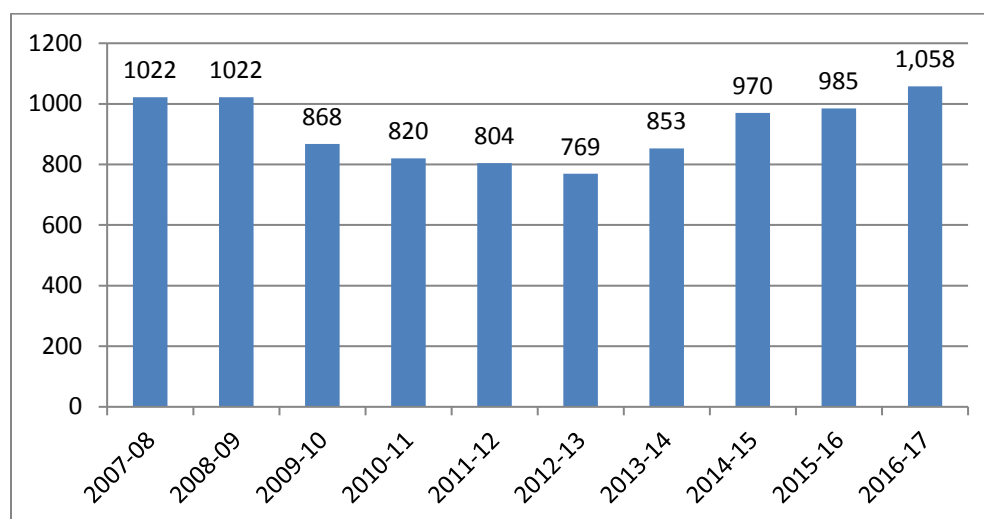
Within this broader context of the relationship between public support for parole and their knowledge and perceptions of it, it is intriguing to note a very recent upturn in the use of parole itself. According to the 2018 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview (CCRSO)²⁰, the total federal/provincial offender population supervised in the community while on parole has increased by 16.3% over the past five years. Since 2012-13, there had been about a 25% increase in the number of offenders on provincial parole, up from 769 in 2012-13 to 1,058

¹⁹ A conditional sentence is a sentence of imprisonment that the offender serves in the community under strict conditions (i.e. house arrest). It is a type of criminal sanction in Canada and only available for those sanctions eligible for a sentence of imprisonment that is two years less a day (Correctional Service Canada, 2018).

²⁰ Henceforth, the abbreviation – CCRSO – will be used.

in 2016-17 (see Figure 1.4). The trend from 2007-08 to 2008-09 seemed to be relatively stable, at which point it declined to a low of 769 in 2012-13. The trend then switched direction, continuously increasing into 2016-17 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018).

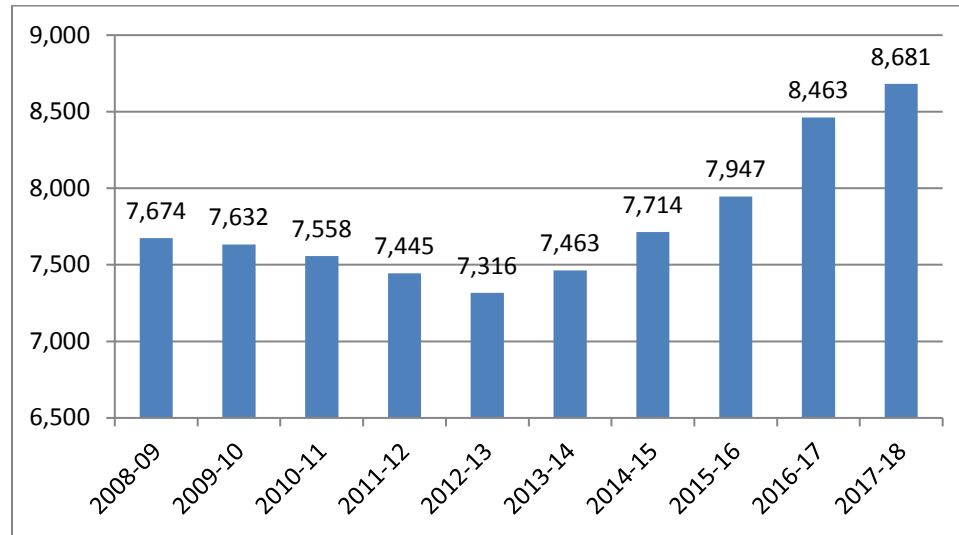
Figure 1.4: The Number of Offenders on Provincial Parole in Canada, 2006/07-2016/17



Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview (2018)

A similar trend can be seen at the federal level. Specifically, the total number of federal offenders on parole (including day parole, full parole, and statutory release) increased from 7,316 in 2012-13 to 8,681 in 2017-18 (see Figure 1.5). In fact, the general trend was decreasing between 2008-09 and 2012-13, with a recent upswing from 2012-13 to 2016-17. More dramatically, over the past five years, the total number of offenders on full parole increased by over 24%, while the proportion of offenders on statutory release increased by only 2.5% (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018).

Figure 1.5: The Number of Federal Offenders Released on Parole, 2007/08-2017/18



Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview (2018)

In addition, the number of federal offenders on day parole increased from 1,162 in 2010-11 to 1,659 in 2017-18 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). Those on federal full parole have remained fairly stable over the last ten years with an increase more recently, from 3,157 in 2012-13, to 4,215 in 2017-18 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). In relation to grant rates, the federal day parole grant rate increased from 62.6% in 2010-11 to 79% in 2017-18 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). The federal full parole grant rate also showed an increase from 16.6% in 2010-11 to 37.5% in 2017-18 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018).

This recent increase in the use of parole at both the provincial/territorial and federal levels is intriguing, particularly within the context of exploring the potential relationship between the use of parole and public confidence in parole. Specifically, this upswing in the recourse to parole may be (at least partially) related to increased public knowledge and/or more positive perceptions of parole and, by extension, increased public confidence in parole. Indeed, one might suggest that more positive views of parole by the public could arguably reduce not only the pressure on the parole boards to be risk-averse when deciding whether to grant parole but also the temptation of the government to pander to the public's fear of crime (even while on parole).

The problem in exploring this hypothesis is that the data on Canadian perceptions and knowledge of parole are very outdated (almost 20 years old). This study purports to (at least partially) fill this gap. That is, it proposes to provide an initial, preliminary picture of current public perceptions and knowledge surrounding parole in Canada. This objective will not only be able to speak to the hypothesis that the recent upswing in our recourse to parole is a partial reflection of more positive public perceptions and/or more accurate knowledge of parole. It will also – by extension – contribute a first step to identifying more effective strategies to intervene (and increase public support for the use of parole).

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Objectives

This study explores one possible ‘explanation’ for the very recent increase in the use of parole in Canada. Specifically, it aims to examine whether the increased recourse to parole has something to do with an increase in public knowledge about parole as well as more positive perceptions of it. The principal research objective of this study is descriptive in nature. Indeed, it is primarily focused on the ‘what’ (that is, constructing a picture of public perceptions and knowledge), rather than the ‘why’ (that is, exploring potential explanations for why the public’s perceptions and knowledge are a certain way). The central purpose of this study is to provide an initial, preliminary picture of current public perceptions and knowledge surrounding parole in Canada. This description will subsequently be used – for comparative purposes – to assess whether the public’s perceptions and knowledge of parole have changed over time.

2.2 Research Design

This research project adopts a non-experimental – rather than experimental or quasi-experimental – research design. Data are collected from part of a population to assess the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of naturally occurring phenomena. Although one cannot control, manipulate or alter the predictor variable or subjects, one can instead use interpretation of responses to draw conclusions (West, 2019). Although one cannot demonstrate a true cause-and-effect relationship, strong and weak correlations or relationships can be determined.

This research study is also non-experimental because it focuses on statistical relationships between variables but does not include the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to conditions or orders of conditions, or both. Specifically, this study adopts a correlational research design, as the researcher measures the variables of interest with little or no attempt to control extraneous variables and then assesses the relationship between them (West, 2019). In correlation designs, the researcher is not stating that the relationship is a causal one; rather, that there is simply a correlation.

Further, this study also adopts a cross-sectional design (capturing the public’s perceptions and knowledge at one point in time), versus a longitudinal design (which collects data over time). The researcher gathers data that can be described variable by variable as well as compared

across different sub-groups (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, and education) at a single point in time. The benefit of a cross-sectional study design is that it can provide a useful picture of a particular phenomenon of interest as it exists at a particular point in time (West, 2019). This description can also be compared to prior or future characterizations of the same phenomenon, permitting tentative inferences about changes over time.

2.2.1 Data Collection Techniques

This study uses a questionnaire as the primary data collection technique. It is particularly well suited because there is no intention to draw causal inferences in this study – data are used for purely descriptive purposes. That is, this research simply wants to answer questions about the distribution and relationships among characteristics of people as they exist in their natural setting. The questionnaire asks respondents to choose the most appropriate response from a fixed set of choices, or to indicate their own answer in the space provided.

The questionnaire contains a total of 18 questions: 4 demographic questions (age, gender, ethnicity, education); 6 fixed (closed-ended) questions with a varying number of response categories (depending on the question); and 8 open-ended questions in which respondents are asked to write their own response. With respect to the fixed questions, the response categories predominantly employ a variation of a Likert scale (i.e., 4 categories in ascending or descending rank order – e.g., parole is working very well, somewhat well, poorly, very poorly, or do not know). Notably, some of the questions with fixed responses also include a final open-ended response category for those respondents whose answer was not included (e.g., the respondent's primary source of knowledge regarding parole included an 'other' category in which participants could write their own answer if it was not included as one of the fixed choices). Regarding the open-ended questions, respondents were typically asked to provide a percentage or specific number (e.g., their estimate of the percentage of offenders released on parole or the number of murderers released on parole). One final open-ended question asked participants whether they had any other additional comments about parole, in which 56% of participants responded.

This data collection method was chosen because questionnaires are relatively easy to implement. Questionnaires allow for the quick gathering of data. Further, they permit the collection of standardized data in that each respondent is asked the same questions and in the same order. Systematic data ensures comparability and, by extension, greater generalizability

(West, 2019). Moreover, questionnaires permit a certain degree of anonymity, so that participants do not feel judged or ashamed if they do not answer the questions accurately (as most people likely do not have much knowledge about parole).

Finally, they are less costly than other forms of data collection. Some disadvantages include that we cannot explore respondent's reasons, feelings, and/or interpretations – therefore, more superficial (versus detailed, rich) data are concerned with what is obvious; and no flexibility (to follow up on responses) as it may not contain enough information. It might have been useful to have been able to study respondents' feelings or interpretations of parole in order to capture a more complete picture of their knowledge and perceptions about parole. There may also be a risk that people misunderstood the questions, as some individuals do not fully understand the difference between full and day parole, as well as federal versus provincial parole (Roberts, 2005). The inclusion of more qualitative data on their feelings and perceptions of parole may have shed additional light on the findings. In particular, it might have given additional context to their answers, to better understand their knowledge and perceptions about parole. As well, the possibility of a 'follow up' could have been helpful to capture missing data such as those that missed a question or left a question unanswered (a few were left unanswered) or clarify questions in cases that the respondents misunderstood a question.

Two different survey techniques were adopted. On the one hand, an in-person questionnaire was implemented in which potential respondents were approached by the researcher and asked to complete it immediately. On the other hand, an online questionnaire was also used in which potential respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire at their convenience and submit it electronically. Data collection took place from March 23, 2017 to May 22, 2017 – the period of time corresponding to the dates in which the survey was active on "SurveyMonkey" (two months were purchased by the researcher).

2.2.1.1 In-person Questionnaire

The data collection of the in-person questionnaire occurred on weekdays and weekends, between the hours of 9am and 5pm. This portion of the study was conducted in Ottawa, specifically on the University of Ottawa campus, and also at the Rideau Center mall. The researcher approached random people and asked them if they had 5-10 minutes to fill out a

survey on public opinion about parole for her Master's thesis. She informed them that there was a mixture of multiple choice questions as well as questions in which they would have to provide a single number or percentage. She gave them the consent form (see Appendix A) to read, which was required before being able to participate. They were then given the questionnaire, which included an explanatory paragraph about parole before the start of the survey (see Appendix B). They would then immediately fill out the survey on the researcher's iPad.

In-person questionnaires have many advantages. They tend to have high response rates, are better suited to collecting data from a large number of respondents, and the respondent has the ability to ask for clarifications if needed. Notably, a few people asked for clarification regarding the murder question (they did not understand that murderers could also be released on parole), and the difference between provincial and federal offenders. As such, there is also always a potential unintentional bias for approaching certain types of people. The researcher may have been drawn to people who looked like they were not in a rush (typically older people) or those who looked less intimidating (typically women).

2.2.1.2 Online Questionnaire

The surveys were posted online, and participants could have been from Ottawa or other cities (such as Bowmanville, the researcher's hometown, in which many of her Facebook/Twitter friends are located). The survey questionnaire was posted on Facebook and Twitter and people were encouraged to fill it out. The researcher simply posted that she was doing research on public opinions about parole, and asked people to fill out the questionnaire voluntarily. The post had a link to the online questionnaire, which was the same as the one on the researcher's iPad. Posted on the social media sites (Facebook and Twitter) of the researcher was the following paragraph:

“Attention Friends: I am doing a research study for my Master's thesis at the University of Ottawa on public views about parole. Those invited to participate in the study must be 18 years or older. Participation requires a quick 5-minute survey that is completely confidential and anonymous. It will include questions about your opinion on parole within the Canadian Criminal Justice System. Please take 5 minutes to fill out this survey as it will help me out a lot. Thank you”.

Once the participants clicked on the link to the survey, it brought them to the “survey monkey” website, which included exactly the same information (consent form, paragraph on parole, and survey), as that given to those who filled out the questionnaire in-person. Once they read the consent form, they would have to click on “Agree” before starting the survey. This brought them to another page which included the explanatory paragraph on parole, followed by the survey.

By posting the survey online, this option also had its own advantages. Responses can be gathered more quickly than in-person, as the survey can be provided to multiple people at the same time. Indeed, many people can fill out the survey simultaneously, while with the in-person questionnaire, only one respondent can complete the survey at a time as there was only one iPad available. Further, respondents may be more willing to share honest information when they are completely anonymous. Indeed, the mere presence of the researcher may have had an impact on their responses, as they are more tempted to include what they think the researcher wants to hear. Indeed, by posting the survey online (Facebook and Twitter), the participants felt no pressure to even accept the request as the respondent did not have to refuse the researcher (who was standing in front of him/her). Further, participants can also respond on their own schedule, making it more convenient (West, 2019). Finally, this form of data collection also allowed the researcher to gather information in a short period of time and at minimal cost.

Nonetheless, this method does have its own drawbacks. Similar to the in-person questionnaire, online questionnaires also have difficulty in ensuring greater depth of the data gathered (West, 2019). Further, this type of sampling may still have introduced some unintentional bias as the researcher may have been more likely to sample certain types of people, as the researcher may only have friends and family on Facebook and Twitter. Another disadvantage to this method may include the fact that it may not be possible to address the respondent’s questions or concerns about participation (West, 2019). However, judging from the number of respondents who asked for clarifications during the in-person questionnaire, this possibility would not seem to be a serious concern generally.

2.2.2 Sampling Procedure

The target population for this study was the Canadian general public. Specifically, the researcher was interested in describing the knowledge and perceptions of parole of Canadians who are over the age of 18. The survey was conducted on the University of Ottawa Campus, at the Rideau Centre mall, and on Facebook and Twitter. A total of 149 questionnaires were completed. This study used self-selection sampling. This type of sampling is appropriate when the researcher wants to allow units or cases, whether individuals or organizations, to choose to take part in research on their own accord (Lund Research Ltd. Self-selection Sampling, 2012).

Non-probabilistic sampling was used as the selection of participants from the population of interest was not determined by chance. That is, each member of the population did not have a known or given chance of being selected (Lund Research Ltd. Non-Probability Sampling, 2012). As such, findings from this study cannot be generalized to the population of interest with any confidence. Simply as an illustration, it is likely that there are significant differences between Canadians generally and those who live in Ottawa. For instance, Ottawa is the capital of Canada and likely has a higher proportion of its population who are government workers and, more importantly, people who may be familiar with corrections and parole. It is also a University town, (with both the University of Ottawa and Carleton University) so many of the subjects may have a higher education than in other areas in Canada.

Nonetheless, non-probabilistic sampling can be particularly useful when the aim is to find out if a problem or issue even exists in a quick and inexpensive way. There may be a theory that such a problem or issue exists, but there is limited research that currently supports such a theory (Lund Research Ltd. Non-Probability Sampling, 2012). In the current case, this research study is exploratory in nature in the sense of attempting to provide an initial or 'first look' at current perceptions and knowledge regarding parole. In the case that these preliminary data support the notion that public attitudes have improved over time, a more rigorous sample could be used to more accurately assess whether the rise in confidence in parole is correlated with the recent upwards trend in public knowledge and perceptions of parole.

This study uses convenience sampling (as one type of non-probabilistic sampling). Indeed, the people who were selected for inclusion in the sample were the easiest to access (Lund Research Ltd. Convenience Sampling, 2012). Those who were approached via in-person

were simply found in the mall or on campus. Since the aim of convenience sampling is easy access, the researcher simply chose to stand at one of the main entrances to campus, as well as the Rideau Centre, where it would be easy to invite the many students and the general public that pass by to take part in the research. By posting the online survey questionnaire, the request was only sent to those whom the researcher had as friends on her Facebook and Twitter accounts. This was also easy as she only had to post the survey, leaving potential Facebook and Twitter friends to fill it out.

The researcher defined 150 individuals as the ideal sample size (in terms of the time restraints of the MA program). Invitations to take part in the research continued until the expiry of the “SurveyMonkey” survey (as it was purchased for a total of two months). Although, the researcher obtained data from 149 participants by the expiry of the survey, two respondents were not included in the final sample as they only filled out the demographic questions. As no perception or knowledge questions were captured, these questionnaires provided no valid information on the central topic of interest. As such, they were omitted from the study.

2.3 Key Measures

The principal theoretical constructs of interest in this study are twofold. On the one hand, this research is interested in describing the public’s current *perceptions* of parole. Obviously, this construct is broad and multi-dimensional. As such, it was measured using a variety of different variables – each reflecting the respondent’s perceptions of one element or aspect of parole. Table 3.1 provides a list of the various items on the questionnaire that were used to capture this theoretical construct.

Table 3.1: Measures of the Respondent's Perceptions of Parole

Dimension	Corresponding Questionnaire Item(s)
Change Over Time in the Use of Parole	Thinking about the proportion of people who are currently released on parole, do you think that parole has become easier, harder or the same to obtain compared to 10 years ago? (harder, easier, same, don't know)
Degree to Which the Parole System is Working	How well do you feel the parole system is working in Canada? (very poorly, poorly, somewhat well, very well, don't know)
Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners	In your opinion, do you think that the parole system should release more, fewer or the same number of people? (fewer, more, same, don't know)
Sentence Severity	Do you think that sentences in Canadian criminal courts are too lenient, too harsh, or about right? (too lenient, too harsh, neither, don't know)

On the other hand, this study is interested in describing the public's current *knowledge* of parole. This construct was measured using a variety of different variables – each reflecting the respondent's knowledge of one element or aspect of parole. Indeed, many of the knowledge questions were asked separately in relation to federal and provincial parole, captured the same dimension of knowledge about parole. Table 3.2 provides a list of the various items on the questionnaire that were used to capture this theoretical construct.

Table 3.2: Measures of the Respondent's Knowledge of Parole

Dimension	Corresponding Questionnaire Item(s)
Frequency of Use	What percentage of provincial prisoners (sentenced to less than 2 years) do you think are released on parole? What percentage of federal prisoners (sentenced to 2 years or more) do you think are released on parole?
Total Custodial Sentence Actually Served	For those federal prisoners who are released on parole, what percentage of their total custodial sentence do you think is actually served in prison? For those provincial prisoners who are released on parole, what percentage of their total custodial sentence do you think is actually served in prison?
Use of Revocation	Excluding murders, think about 100 hypothetical people who are serving sentences of 2 years or more and have been released on parole. How many of them do you think will have their parole revoked because they have committed a violent offence?
Degree of Current Knowledge	How knowledgeable do you feel you are about the parole system in Canada? (very, reasonably, not very, not at all)
Source(s) of Information About Parole	Where do you get your knowledge/information about parole? (Media, Politicians, Friends/family, School, Government, Personal Experience with someone on parole, Other)
Granting Rate of Applications	What percentage of parole applications do you think are granted by the parole board?
Extent to Which Murderers Are Released	At the moment, there are 4,539 people serving sentences for murder. How many of them do you think have been released in the community?

Beyond these central theoretical constructs, a number of demographic questions were also included. They are presented in Table 3.3. Beyond simply providing a picture of the ‘general public’ who was actually surveyed in this study, these measures also serve as independent variables in any bivariate analyses which examine potential relationships with respondents’ perceptions and knowledge of parole.

Table 3.3: Demographic Information about the Respondent

Descriptor	Corresponding Questionnaire Item
Age	What is your age? 18-19 20-24 25-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+
Gender	What is your gender? (Male or Female)
Ethnicity	Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Indigenous, South Asian (eg., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan), Chinese, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian), West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan), Korean, Japanese, Black or African American, White / Caucasian, Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify))
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed? (some high school, high school diploma, some post-secondary education, college/undergraduate degree, graduate studies)

2.4 Analytic Strategy

This study attempts to explain whether the increased recourse to parole has something to do with an increase in public knowledge about parole as well as more positive perceptions of it. To describe the data, simple frequencies are reported (e.g., 82 people believed parole was easier to obtain now, rather than 10 years ago). Further, a number of measures of central tendency were also employed (e.g., the average number of respondents who believed that the parole system was working “somewhat well” was 42, or 28.6%). Beyond these univariate analyses (which describe one variable at a time), a number of bivariate analyses were also conducted, permitting an examination of potential relationships between variables (e.g., whether people’s estimate of how often offenders are released on parole is correlated with their age). With this type of analysis, the various demographic identifiers (age, gender, ethnicity, and education) of the respondent might be considered independent variables. The dependent variable, in these cases, often related to specific components of respondents’ perceptions or knowledge about parole. However, several analyses also examined potential correlations between respondents’ perceptions and knowledge (e.g., sentence severity and degree of current knowledge was correlated, as those who felt that they were not at all knowledgeable about parole also felt that sentences are too lenient).

The methodological approach adopted in this study is predominately quantitative. Not only are the data themselves quantified, but the analyses also follow quantitative (statistical) methods. Indeed, quantitative methodologies provide a useful preliminary picture of current public perceptions and knowledge surrounding parole, particularly in terms of their ability to synthesize a large number of cases as well as examine potential relationships between variables. Obviously, the primary limitation is their reduced ability to provide a deeper understanding of the central issue. Indeed, qualitative approaches have the advantage of being able to reveal greater nuances and provide a richer, more detailed description of the public’s perceptions and knowledge of parole (West, 2019).

To facilitate a quantitative analysis of the data, the answers to each of the questions on the questionnaire was numerically coded. Indeed, quantitative data analysis identifies, analyzes, organizes, describes, and reports themes that occur in a dataset using numerical data (West, 2019). For those questions on the questionnaire with an open-ended response category,

subsequent to reading and categorizing each response, each distinct theme was given a numerical value to represent it.

For those situations in which the participant chose or wrote two answers to a particular question, a hierarchy of what would be considered the primary response was created and represented as his/her response to that question. For instance, respondents were asked to identify the source of their knowledge about parole. 'Media' as a response was prioritized over 'friends'. Similarly, 'personal experience' was chosen over 'school'. These methodological decisions were rooted in the theoretical literature which has suggested that media is a particularly strong source of information for the public (Doob, 2014). Similarly, when choosing 'personal experience' over 'school instruction', the assumption is that the former is a stronger predictor than the latter. Indeed, people tend to value their own personal experience over what they may learn in school (although these two sources also tend to overlap) (Doob, 2014). The limitations of this methodological approach are twofold. On the one hand, potential errors might occur with this hierarchy. Indeed, the researcher is imposing a certain general hierarchy that may not always correspond to an individual respondent's own hierarchy. On the other hand, some respondents may have chosen the most appropriate response from the list provided while others opted to select the 'other' category and included a new source. For instance, two respondents may both have felt that 'work' was their primary source of information. However, in the first case, the participant chose 'friends' because 'work' was not a stated option. In contrast, the second participant may have chosen 'other' and then added 'work'. In both cases, the primary source of information is 'work'. However, the two responses (as reported on the questionnaire and coded for data analysis) are different.

For those questions on the questionnaire which required a specific number or percentage but for which respondents gave a range (e.g., "60-75%"), the average of that range was used. When participants wrote an answer using a 'qualified' number (i.e. "30 or less"), one number under the maximum number was used (in this example, 29 would have been used). For participants that put months or days instead of a percentage, the percentage out of the number of potential months was calculated. For example, a participant answered '60 days' or '2 months' when asked the percentage of their sentence that provincial prisoners serve in prison before being released on parole. Their answers would be calculated as a percentage out of two years less a day. That is, 60 (days) divided by 729 (two years less a day) would be 8.2%. For questions

pertaining to provincial/territorial prisoners (whose maximum sentence cannot exceed 2 years less a day), the percentage out of 24 months was calculated. For questions pertaining to federal prisoners (whose maximum (fixed) sentence ranges from 2 years to 25 years (life/before parole) in most cases), the percentage of months (converted to years) divided by 25 years was calculated. The limitation of this methodological decision is that it may not capture the exact response that the participant had in mind.

For those questions on the questionnaire which required a specific number but for which the majority of respondents gave a percentage, the decision was made to report *all* answers as a percentage. For example, participants were told that there were currently 4,539 people serving sentences for murder and asked how many of them have been released in the community. While the question is clearly asking for the *number* of murderers released on parole. However, for those who did, in fact, respond with an exact number, this answer was reported as a percentage of the total number of murderers who could have been released (i.e., 4,539). Illustratively, for a respondent who answered this question with '500 prisoners', the percentage would be calculated by dividing 500 by 4,539, producing a response of 11%. Responses were rounded to the nearest whole number, except if it was under 1, in which case a decimal was used in order to be able to distinguish it from 0. Decimals were not used for any other question.

Once coded, the data were subsequently described using both descriptive and inferential statistics. In the former case, measures of central tendency were reported (e.g., mean, median, and mode). Further, frequency distributions and cross tabulations were presented. Particularly when presenting the data in the form of cross tabulations, it was sometimes necessary to reduce the number of response categories for one or both of the variables (that is, certain categories were grouped into smaller groups). For example, the original 5 response categories describing how well the parole system is working (i.e. very poorly, poorly, somewhat well, well, and don't know) were subsequently grouped – for analytic purposes – into only 4 response categories (i.e. very poorly, poorly, well, and don't know). Percentages were also categorized into smaller categories (e.g., 0-39%, 40-65%, and 66%+). These new response categories were largely the result of decisions to create relatively equal frequency groups (e.g., responses were broken down into thirds, quarters, etc.).

In the latter case, a number of inferential statistics were employed. Specifically, both analysis of variance and chi-square tests were used to assess whether differences or relationships

(at the sample level) could be considered statistically significant. Statistical significance determines the likelihood that the (sample) results are simply due to chance. By extension, they are valuable when thinking about generalizations. A one-way ANOVA test was used to test whether the means of 3 or more groups differ. A chi-square test was used to determine whether 2 categorical variables are correlated. A cut off value of $p < 0.5$ was used when determining statistical significance.

3. Data Analysis

3.1 Description of the Sample

Of the total 149 respondents in the survey, two of them only filled out the demographic questions. As no perception or knowledge questions were captured, these questionnaires provided no valid information on the central topic of interest. As such, they were omitted from the study. All subsequent presentations of data describe only those respondents who provided demographic information and perception/knowledge information. Therefore, a total of 147 questionnaires were analyzed.

Table 3.1 presents a description of the sample's age. As part of this breakdown, a total of 33% (N=48) respondents are between the ages of 20 and 24 years old²¹. The age category with the lowest representation was ages 18-19 (representing 1.4% of the sample). While 48% of respondents were under the age of 30, the remaining 52% were aged 30 and over. In addition, roughly 1/3 of the sample might be categorized as 'young adults' (18-24), roughly 1/3 as 'adults' (25-49) and roughly 1/3 as 'older adults' (50+).

Table 3.1: Age of Participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-19	2	1
20-24	48	33
25-29	20	14
30-39	16	11
40-49	15	10
50-59	24	16
60+	21	14
Total	146	100

²¹ One individual chose not to answer any of the demographic questions, so he/she was omitted from any of the descriptions of the sample.

The numbers of males and females in the sample are fairly equal, given 71 (49%) identified as male and 75 (51%) as female. Over 92% of the sample identified as White Caucasian. The remaining 8% include those very few from a diverse number of other specific ethnicities²² as well as those who simply identified as either ‘Visible Minority’ or ‘Non-Visible Minority’²³. As such, the sample might be described – for analytic purposes – as either ‘White Caucasian’ or ‘Other’²⁴.

Table 3.2 presents the breakdown of the sample’s level of education. The majority of the respondents (63%) have completed a college, undergraduate or graduate degree. Only 12% of individuals identified as having only some high school experience or a high school diploma, while 25% of the sample identified as having some post-secondary education. As such, this sample represents a relatively highly educated group. In particular, while 63% of the sample completed at least some post-secondary or higher level of education, only 37% had only secondary education experience.

Table 3.2: Education of Participants

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Some high school	3	2
High school diploma	15	10
Some post-secondary education	36	25
College or Undergraduate degree	80	55
Graduate studies	12	8
Total	146	100

²² Less than 1% of the sample identified as Indigenous, South Asian, Chinese, West Asian, or Black African American respectively.

²³ While the vast majority of the sample chose to self-identify as a specific ethnicity, 3.4% chose to describe themselves as a visible minority, and 1.4% as a non-visible minority.

²⁴ The ‘Other’ category is not grouped as one single response category because they were considered to be the same but simply to facilitate data analysis.

3.2 Description of Participants' Perceptions

3.2.1 Univariate Analyses

i. Degree to Which the Parole System is Working

When asked how well respondents feel that the parole system is working in Canada, 1/3 (33%, N = 49) of the sample reported that they did not know. Of those who did have an opinion regarding how well the parole system is working (that is, eliminating those who indicated that they did not know; N = 97²⁵), 14% (N = 14) indicated that the system is working very poorly, and 41% (N = 40) indicated that it is working poorly (see Table 3.3). This finding indicates that over 1/2 of the sample believes that parole is working poorly. However, 44% (N= 43) of the sample also indicated that the parole system is working very well or somewhat well.

Table 3.3: How Well the Parole System is Working

How Well the Parole System is Working	Frequency	Percentage
Very poorly	14	14
Poorly	40	41
Somewhat well	42	43
Very well	1	1
Total	97	100

ii. Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

When asked whether the parole system should release more, fewer, or the same number of people, 22% (N= 33) reported that they did not know. Of those who did have an opinion on the number of prisoners who should be released (N= 113)²⁶, 68% (N= 77) of the sample believe that the parole system should release fewer people (see Table 3.4). Only 20% believe that the parole system should release more, and 12% believe that the same number should be released.

²⁵ One respondent did not answer this question and, as such, was eliminated.

²⁶ One respondent did not answer this question and, as such, was eliminated.

Table 3.4: Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners	Frequency	Percentage
Fewer people	77	68
The same number of people	14	12
More people	22	20
Total	113	100

iii. Change Over Time in the Use of Parole

When asked whether respondents felt that parole had become easier, harder, or the same to obtain compared to 10 years ago, 11% (N = 16) of the sample indicated that they did not know. Of those who did have an opinion regarding the change over time in the use of parole (N= 129)²⁷, roughly 2/3 (64%, N = 82) believe that parole has become easier to obtain compared to ten years ago (see Table 3.5). Only 19% believe that parole is about the same to obtain and 17% believe that it has become harder to obtain.

Table 3.5: Change Over Time in the Use of Parole

Change Over Time in the Use of Parole	Frequency	Percentage
Easier to obtain than 10 years ago	82	64
About the same compared to 10 years ago	25	19
Harder to obtain compared to 10 years ago	22	17
Total	129	100

²⁷ Two respondents did not answer this question and, as such, were eliminated.

iv. Sentence Severity

When asked whether respondents think that sentences handed down in Canadian criminal courts are too lenient, too harsh, or about right, 16% (N= 24) indicated that they did not know. Of those who did have an opinion on sentence severity (N= 122)²⁸, over 1/2 (57%, N=69) indicated that sentences in Canada are too lenient (see Table 3.6). Only 34% believe that sentences are neither lenient nor harsh, and 9% believe that sentences are too harsh.

Table 3.6: Sentence Severity

Sentence Severity	Frequency	Percentage
Too lenient	69	57
Neither lenient nor harsh	42	34
Too Harsh	11	9
Total	122	100

3.2.2. Bivariate Analyses²⁹

This section conducts a number of bivariate analyses to explore how respondents' perceptions might be related to other factors. Specifically, it examines: 1) how well they might be correlated with particular demographic factors – that is, whether certain perceptions about parole are more characteristic of particular sub-groups of the population (eg., certain age groups, gender); and 2) how they might be correlated with each other—that is, whether certain perceptions of parole are associated with other perceptions about parole, potentially suggesting broader underlying constructs (e.g., concerns about leniency).

²⁸ One respondent did not answer this question and, as such, was eliminated.

²⁹ Several response categories for each of the variables under analysis (when using chi-square inferential tests) were collapsed to eliminate cells with low expected values. Further, those who answered 'do not know' to the various perception questions were compared to the respondents who indicated a specific response. In none of the cases was a significant difference found. In other words, any significant correlations may not be attributed to the elimination of those who 'did not know'.

3.2.2.1 Correlations with Demographic Factors

i. Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

A variety of cross tabulations³⁰ have been used to examine potential relationships between the degree to which the parole system should release prisoners into the community and particular demographic descriptors of the sample. Although no significant relationship was found between the degree to which the parole system should release prisoners and respondents' ethnicity or education, a statistically significant correlation was found between age and this variable ($X^2(2, N = 113) = 6.540, p = .038$). As shown in Table 3.7, individuals aged 30+ are more likely to think that *fewer* people should be released on parole (78%) than those respondents aged 18-29 (57%). Similarly, those in the younger age bracket are more likely to think that *more* people should be released on parole (28%) than those in the older age bracket (12%).

Table 3.7: Cross Tabulation of Age and the Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

			`Number of People Who Should Be Paroled`			Total
			Fewer	Same	More	
`Age`	18- 29	Count	30	8	15	53
		% within `Age`	56.6%	15.1%	28.3%	100.0%
	30+	Count	47	6	7	60
		% within `Age`	78.3%	10.0%	11.7%	100.0%
Total	Count		77	14	22	113
	% within `Age`		68.1%	12.4%	19.5%	100.0%

A significant relationship was also found between respondents' perceptions of the degree to which the parole system should release prisoners and their gender ($P=.045$, *two tailed Fisher's Exact Test*). As shown in Table 3.8, males are more likely than females (41% versus 23%) to believe that the *same or more* people should be released on parole, while females are more likely than males (77% versus 59% respectively) to believe that *fewer* should be released on parole.

³⁰ Although the numbers in the cross tabulation are rounded to 1 decimal place and the significance level is generally rounded to 3 decimal places, the percentages reported in text are rounded to the whole number for ease of presentation.

Table 3.8: Cross Tabulation of Gender and the Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

			`Release`		
			Fewer	Same or more	Total
Gender	Female	Count	44	13	57
		% within Gender	77.2%	22.8%	100.0%
	Male	Count	33	23	56
		% within Gender	58.9%	41.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	77	36	113
		% within Gender	68.1%	31.9%	100.0%

ii. Change Over Time in the Use of Parole

In terms of respondents' perceptions regarding change over time in the use of parole, no significant correlation was found with their gender, ethnicity, or education. In contrast, age was found to have a significant relationship ($X^2 (2, N = 128) = 7.963, p = .019$). Specifically, Table 3.9 shows that respondents aged 30+ are more likely (68%) than those 18-29 years old (60%) to think that parole has become *easier* to obtain compared to ten years ago. In contrast, respondents aged 18-29 are more likely (27%) than respondents aged 30+ (9%) to believe that parole is becoming *harder* to obtain compared to ten years ago.

Table 3.9: Cross Tabulation of Age and the Change over Time in the Use of Parole

			`Ease of Obtaining Parole`			
			Easier	Same	Harder	Total
`Age`	18- 29	Count	36	8	16	60
		% within `Age`	60.0%	13.3%	26.7%	100.0%
	30+	Count	46	16	6	68
		% within `Age`	67.6%	23.5%	8.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	82	24	22	128	
	% within `Age`	64.1%	18.8%	17.2%	100.0%	

iii. Sentence Severity

In terms of sentence severity, although no significant correlation was found with respondents' gender, ethnicity, or education, age was again found to have a significant relationship when comparing the younger and older groups ($X^2 (2, N = 121) = 18.275, p < .001$). As shown in Table 3.11, respondents aged 30+ are more likely (73%) than younger respondents (38%) to think sentences are *too lenient*. In contrast, younger respondents were more likely to think sentences are *too harsh* (18%) than those in the older age category (2%).

Table 3.11: Cross Tabulation of Age and Sentence Severity

			`Harshness of Sentences`			Total
			Too lenient	Neither lenient nor harsh	Too harsh	
`Age`	18- 29	Count	21	24	10	55
		% within `Age`	38.2%	43.6%	18.2%	100.0%
	30+	Count	48	17	1	66
		% within `Age`	72.7%	25.8%	1.5%	100.0%
Total	Count		69	41	11	121
	% within `Age`		57.0%	33.9%	9.1%	100.0%

iv. Degree to Which the Parole System is Working

Age, gender, ethnicity, and education all seem to have no impact on the degree to which participants believe the parole system is working very well, somewhat well, poorly, or very poorly.

3.2.2.2 Correlations of Each Perception Variable with Each Other

In this study, each perception variable was also compared with each other in an attempt to establish the existence of any relationships between respondents' various perceptions.

i. Degree to Which the Parole System is Working

A significant relationship was found between respondents' views of how well the parole system is working and their perceptions of the number of people who should be paroled ($X^2 (2, N$

= 87) = 11.176, $p = .004^{31}$). Table 3.12 demonstrates that those who believe that parole is working poorly are more likely (80%) than those who believe that parole is working well (46%) to believe that *fewer* people should be released on parole. In contrast, those who believe that parole is working well are more likely (32%) than those who believe that parole is working poorly (14%) to think that the parole system should release *more* people.

Table 3.12: Cross Tabulation of Age and Degree to Which the Parole System is Working

			`Number of People Who Should Be Paroled`			Total
			Fewer	Same	More	
How well is parole working	poorly	Count	40	3	7	50
		% within How well is parole working	80.0%	6.0%	14.0%	100.0%
	well	Count	17	8	12	37
		% within How well is parole working	45.9%	21.6%	32.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	57	11	19	87
		% within How well is parole working	65.5%	12.6%	21.8%	100.0%

ii. Sentence Severity

A significant relationship was also found between the respondents' perceptions of the harshness of criminal sentences and their perceptions of the degree to which the parole system is working ($X^2 (2, N = 91) = 9.712, p = .008^{32}$). Notably though, it appears to be non-linear in nature (see Table 3.13). Specifically, while those who believe sentences are too lenient are more likely (71%) than those who believe sentences are too harsh (56%) to believe that parole is working poorly, those who believe that sentences are neither too lenient nor too harsh are the *least* likely (36%) to think that parole is working poorly. Similarly, although those who believe that sentences are too harsh are more likely (44%) than those who believe that sentences are too lenient (29%) to believe that parole is working *well*, those who believe that sentences are neither too lenient nor too harsh are the *most* (65%) likely to think that parole is working well.

³¹ There was 1 low expected frequency. However, it represented less than 20% of the overall sample and it was greater than 1 (4.68). As such, it is deemed not to constitute an obstacle to interpreting the data (Preacher, 2001).

³² There was 1 low expected frequency. However, it represented less than 20% of the overall sample and it was greater than 1 (3.86). As such, it is deemed not to constitute an obstacle to interpreting the data (Preacher, 2001).

Table 3.13: Cross Tabulation of Sentence Severity and How Well Parole is Working

			How well is parole working		
			poorly	well	Total
`Harshness of Sentences`	Too lenient	Count	36	15	51
		% within `Harshness of Sentences`	70.6%	29.4%	100.0%
	Neither lenient nor harsh	Count	11	20	31
		% within `Harshness of Sentences`	35.5%	64.5%	100.0%
	Too harsh	Count	5	4	9
		% within `Harshness of Sentences`	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	52	39	91	
	% within `Harshness of Sentences`	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%	

Table 3.14 shows the crosstab which demonstrates the relationship between respondents' perceptions of the harshness of sentences and the degree to which the parole system should release prisoners ($X^2(2, N = 104) = 43.583, p < .001^{33}$). Those respondents who believe sentences are too lenient are more likely (90%) than those who believe sentences are too harsh (0%) to believe that *fewer* prisoners should be released on parole. In contrast, those who believe sentences are too harsh are more likely (100%) than those who believe that sentences are too lenient (10%) to believe that the *same* or *more* prisoners should be released on parole.

³³ There was 1 low expected frequency. However, it represented less than 20% of the overall sample and it was greater than 1 (3.27). As such, it is deemed not to constitute an obstacle to interpreting the data (Preacher, 2001).

Table 3.14: Cross Tabulation of Sentence Severity and Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

			`Release`		Total
			Fewer	Same or more	
`Harshness of Sentences`	Too lenient	Count	56	6	62
		% within `Harshness of Sentences`	90.3%	9.7%	100.0%
	Neither lenient nor harsh	Count	14	18	32
		% within `Harshness of Sentences`	43.8%	56.3%	100.0%
	Too harsh	Count	0	10	10
		% within `Harshness of Sentences`	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		70	34	104
	% within `Harshness of Sentences`		67.3%	32.7%	100.0%

iii. Change over Time in the Use of Parole

Table 3.15 demonstrates the relationship between the respondents' perceptions of the ease of obtaining parole and the degree to which the parole system should release prisoners ($X^2(2, N = 105) = 20.880, p < .001$). Those who believe that parole is easier to obtain compared to ten years ago (80%) are more likely than those who believe that it is harder to obtain compared to ten years ago (24%) to believe that *fewer* prisoners should be released on parole. In contrast, those who believe that parole is harder to obtain compared to ten years ago are more likely (77%) than those who believe that parole is easier to obtain compared to ten years ago (20%) to believe the *same* or *more* prisoners should be released on parole.

Table 3.15: Cross Tabulation of Change over Time in the Use of Parole and Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

			`Release`		
			Fewer	Same or more	Total
`Ease of Obtaining Parole`	Easier	Count	53	13	66
		% within `Ease of Obtaining Parole`	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
	Same	Count	12	10	22
		% within `Ease of Obtaining Parole`	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	Harder	Count	4	13	17
		% within `Ease of Obtaining Parole`	23.5%	76.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	69	36	105
		% within `Ease of Obtaining Parole`	65.7%	34.3%	100.0%

Table 3.16 demonstrates the relationship that was also found between respondents' perceptions about the ease of obtaining parole and sentence severity ($X^2(2, N = 112) = 18.556, p < .001^{34}$). Although not a perfectly linear relationship, those who believe that parole has become easier to obtain compared to ten years ago (72%) are more likely than those who believe that parole has become the same or harder to obtain compared to ten years ago (33%) to believe that sentences are *too lenient*. In contrast, those who believe that parole is the same or harder to obtain compared to ten years ago are more likely (20%) than those who believe that parole has become easier (3%), to think that sentences are *too harsh*.

³⁴ There was 1 low expected frequency. However, it represented less than 20% of the overall sample and it was greater than 1 (4.42). As such, it is deemed not to constitute an obstacle to interpreting the data (Preacher, 2001).

Table 3.16: Cross Tabulation of Change over Time in the Use of Parole and Sentence Severity

			`Harshness of Sentences`			Total
			Too lenient	Neither lenient nor harsh	Too harsh	
`Over Past 10 Years, Parole has Become Easier	Easier	Count	48	17	2	67
		% within `Over Past 10 Years, Parole has Become Easier	71.6%	25.4%	3.0%	100.0%
	Same or Harder	Count	15	21	9	45
		% within `Over Past 10 Years, Parole has Become Easier	33.3%	46.7%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		63	38	11	112
	% within `Over Past 10 Years, Parole has Become Easier		56.3%	33.9%	9.8%	100.0%

3.3 Description of Participants' Knowledge

3.3.1 Univariate Analyses

i. Degree of Current Knowledge

When asked how knowledgeable the respondents feel that they are about the parole system in Canada³⁵, over half (59%, N= 86) of them felt that they are not very knowledgeable about parole, and about 1/4 (24%, N= 34) believe that they are not at all knowledgeable about parole (see Table 3.17). Only 2% (N= 3) believe that they are very knowledgeable and 15% (N= 22) of respondents indicated that they are reasonably knowledgeable about parole.

³⁵ Two respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

Table 3.17: Degree of Current Knowledge about Parole

Degree of Current Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all knowledgeable	34	24
Not very knowledgeable	86	59
Reasonably knowledgeable	22	15
Very Knowledgeable	3	2
Total	145	100

ii. Granting Rate of Applications

When asked about the granting rate of parole applications³⁶, respondents believe that 52% of parole applications – on average – are granted by the parole board (sd= 24.7). Table 3.18 further breaks down the distribution of responses. Notably, the majority of respondents (71%, N= 101) believe that more than 35% of applications are granted. The remaining 29% (N=42) believe that less than 35% of parole applications are granted.

Table 3.18: Parole Application Grant Rate

Granting Rate of Applications	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 35%	42	29
35%-69%	50	35
70%+	51	36
Total	143	100

³⁶ Four respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

iii. Frequency of Use

a) Provincial

Table 3.19 demonstrates that over half of the respondents (58%, N= 82) believe that 66% or more provincial prisoners are released on parole³⁷. In addition, 16% (N= 23) of respondents believe that 39% or fewer provincial prisoners are released on parole, and 26% (N= 37) believe that between 40%-65% of provincial prisoners are released on parole.

Table 3.19: Proportion of Provincial Prisoners Released

Proportional of Provincial Prisoners Released on Parole	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 39%	23	16
40%-65%	37	26
66%+	82	58
Total	142	100

b) Federal

The responses for federal parole are fairly similar to those for provincial parole when describing respondents' knowledge of the use of parole³⁸(see Table 3.20). About 1/3 (35%, N=50) believe that 40-65% of federal prisoners are released on parole. In addition, about 1/3 (32%, N= 46) of respondents believe that 39% or fewer federal prisoners are released on parole, and 1/3 (33%, N= 47) believe that 66% or more federal prisoners are released. Different from provincial parole (in which over 50% of respondents believe that 66% or more prisoners are released while only 16% believe that less than 40% are released), the respondents are more evenly distributed across the (same) three categories of parole release.

³⁷ Five respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

³⁸ Four respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

Not surprisingly, respondents also appear to differentiate the average percentage of prisoners whom they believe are released on provincial versus federal parole. Specifically, they report an average of 51% of federal prisoners (sd= 25.2), and 65% of provincial prisoners (sd= 24.5) who are released. When combining the respondents' estimates of both federal and provincial prisoners, the average percentage of inmates whom respondents believe are released on parole is 58%. In other words, respondents believe that over half (58%) of all inmates – on average – are released on parole.

Table 3.20: Proportion of Federal Prisoners Released

Proportional of Federal Prisoners Released on Parole	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 39%	46	32
40%-65%	50	35
66%+	47	33
Total	143	100

iv. Total Custodial Sentence Actually Served

a) Provincial

Over 1/3 (39%, N= 55) of respondents believe that 31%-50% of provincial prisoners' sentences are actually served in prison³⁹ (see Table 3.21). A similar proportion (37%, N= 52) believe that less than 31% of their sentence is served in prison. In some contrast, only 1/4 (25%, N= 35) believe that 51% or more of their sentence is served in prison.

³⁹ Five respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

Table 3.21: Proportion of Provincial Prisoner's Total Sentence Served in Prison

Proportion of Provincial Prisoner's Total Sentence Served in Prison	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 31%	52	37
31%-50%	55	39
51%+	35	25
Total	142	100

b) Federal

Table 3.22 demonstrates that 43% (N= 61) of respondents believe that 51%+ of a federal offender's total sentence is served in prison⁴⁰. In addition, 1/4 of the sample (25%, N= 35) believe that less than 31% is served in prison, while 1/3 (32%, N= 46) believe that 31%-50% of a federal offender's sentence is served in prison. On average, respondents believe that 49% of federal prisoners' sentences are served in prison (sd= 23.5). In contrast, respondents believe that on average, 41% of provincial prisoners' sentences are served in prison (sd= 20.5).

Table 3.22: Proportion of Federal Prisoner's Total Sentence Served in Prison

Proportional of Federal Prisoner's Total Sentence Served in Prison	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 31%	35	25
31%-50%	46	32
51%+	61	43
Total	142	100

⁴⁰ Five respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

Table 3.23 shows the percentages of both federal and provincial sentences served in prison⁴¹. About 1/3 (34%, N = 48) of respondents believe that 67% or more of the offender's sentence is actually served in prison. In addition, 1/3 (32%, N= 46) believe that 33%-66% of the offender's sentence is served in prison, and 1/3 (33%, N= 47) believe that less than 33% of their sentence is served in prison. On average, respondents believe that a prisoner serves 45% (sd= 40.29) of his/her total sentence in prison.

Table 3.23: Proportion of Prisoner's Total Sentences Served in Prison

Proportional of Prisoner's Total Sentences Served in Prison	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 33%	47	33
33%-66%	46	32
67%+	48	34
Total	141	100

v. Use of Revocation

When respondents were asked about federal parole revocations, 36% (N= 52) of respondents believe that 25%-59% of federal offenders have their parole revoked due to a violent offence (excluding murder) ⁴²(see Table 3.24). In addition, 1/3 (33%, N= 47) indicated that less than 25% of federal offenders have their parole revoked because they committed a violent offence, and roughly 1/3 (31%, N= 45) indicated that 60%+ have their parole revoked. On average, respondents believe that 41% (sd= 26.7) of federal offenders have their parole revoked due to a violent offence.

⁴¹ The respondents for these two questions were combined, representing a total of 141 respondents.

⁴² Three respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

Table 3.24: Use of Revocation

Use of Revocation	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25%	47	33
25%-59%	52	36
60%+	45	31
Total	144	100

vi. Extent to Which Murderers are Released

Table 3.25 demonstrates that 39% (N= 55) of respondents believe that 31% or more of murderers are released on parole⁴³. In addition, 1/3 (34%, N= 47) believe that less than 10% are released on parole, and just over 1/4 (27%, N= 38) of respondents believe that only 10%-30% of murderers are released. On average, respondents believe that just under 28% (sd= 26.4) of murderers are released on parole.

Table 3.25: Extent to Which Murderers are Released

Extent to Which Murderers are Released	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10%	47	34
10%-30%	38	27
31%+	55	39
Total	140	100

vii. Sources of Information about Parole

When respondents were asked to indicate the source of their knowledge/information about parole, 2/3 (67%, N= 97) indicated that they obtain their knowledge about parole from the

⁴³ Seven respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

media ⁴⁴(see Table 3.26). Only 13% indicated that they obtain their knowledge from school, and 20% indicated another source (i.e. friends and family, politicians, government, personal experience with someone on parole, and an open response in which participants wrote in their own answer).

Table 3.26: Source(s) of Information about Parole

Sources of Information about Parole	Frequency	Percentage
Media	97	67
School	19	13
Other	29	20
Total	145	100

3.3.2 Bivariate Analyses

The same bivariate analyses that were conducted for the perception variables were also carried out for the knowledge measures. In addition, any potential relationships between certain knowledge about parole and particular perceptions about parole were explored.

3.3.2.1 Correlations with Demographic Factors

i. Degree of Current Knowledge

Degree of current knowledge about parole was not found to be significantly related to any of the demographic variables.

ii. Granting Rate of Applications

Although the relationship between age and the granting rate of applications was found to be only marginally significant ($X^2(2, N = 142) = 5.337, p = 0.069$), a significant difference in the average percentage of parole applications granted was found across age categories ($F(1, 140) = 4.716, p = 0.032$). Specifically, the average percentage of parole applications granted that is

⁴⁴ Two respondents did not indicate an answer for this question and, as such, they were eliminated.

reported by those 30+ years old ($\bar{x}$ = 55.65) is higher than that reported by those 18-29 years old ($\bar{x}$ = 46.85). That is, the older respondents think that there is a higher proportion of parole applications granted to prisoners – on average – than do the younger respondents.

iii. Frequency of Use

Table 3.27 demonstrates the significant relationship between the age of the respondents and their estimate of the proportion of federal prisoners released on parole (χ^2 (4, N = 142) = 10.301, p = 0.036). Specifically, those in the youngest age category (18-29) are more likely (42%) than those in the oldest category (19%) to believe that a *lower* proportion of federal prisoners are released on parole. In contrast, those 50 years or older are more likely (42%) than those aged 30-49 (20%) and those aged 18-29 (29%) to believe that a *higher* proportion of federal prisoners are released on parole. An analysis of variance test demonstrated a significant difference in the average percentage of respondents' beliefs in the proportion of federal prisoners released on parole across these age categories (F (2, 139) = 6.492, p = 0.002). Respondents aged 50 and over believe that an average of 59% of federal prisoners are released on parole ($\bar{x}$ = 59.27), while those aged 30-49 believe that 46% - on average - are released on parole ($\bar{x}$ = 45.49), and those aged 18-29 believe that, on average, 44% are released on parole ($\bar{x}$ = 43.92).

Table 3.27: Cross Tabulation of Age and Proportion of Federal Prisoners Released on Parole

			`Proportion of federal prisoners released on parole`			Total
			Up to 39%	40 thru 65	66 and over	
`Age`	18- 29	Count	20	14	14	48
		% within `Age`	41.7%	29.2%	29.2%	100.0%
	30-49	Count	15	13	7	35
		% within `Age`	42.9%	37.1%	20.0%	100.0%
	50+	Count	11	23	25	59
		% within `Age`	18.6%	39.0%	42.4%	100.0%
Total	Count		46	50	46	142
	% within `Age`		32.4%	35.2%	32.4%	100.0%

Table 3.28 also demonstrates a significant relationship between the age of respondents and the respondents' estimates of the proportion of provincial prisoners released on parole (X^2 (2, $N = 141$) = 7.565, $p = 0.023$). Those in the younger age category (18-29) are more likely (21%) than those aged 30 and over (12%) to believe that a *lower* proportion of provincial prisoners are released on parole. In contrast, those aged 30 and over are more likely (69%) than those aged 18-29 (46%) to believe that a *higher* proportion of provincial prisoners are released on parole. In addition, an analysis of variance test demonstrates a significant difference in the average proportion of provincial prisoners believed to be released on parole across these age categories (F (1, 139) = 4.790, $p = 0.030$). The older respondents think that there is a higher proportion ($\bar{x}$ = 69.05) of provincial prisoners released on parole – on average – than do the younger respondents ($\bar{x}$ =60.19).

Table 3.28: Cross Tabulation of Age and Proportion of Provincial Prisoners Released on Parole

			`Proportion of provincial prisoners released on parole`			Total
			Up to 39%	40 thru 65	66 and over	
`Age`	18- 29	Count	14	23	31	68
		% within `Age`	20.6%	33.8%	45.6%	100.0%
	30+	Count	9	14	50	73
		% within `Age`	12.3%	19.2%	68.5%	100.0%
Total	Count		23	37	81	141
	% within `Age`		16.3%	26.2%	57.4%	100.0%

Interestingly, the same relationship with age was not found for respondents' estimates of the proportion of *federal* prisoners released on parole. However, Table 3.29 demonstrates a significant relationship between the age of participants and respondents' estimates of the proportion of *all* prisoners released on parole (X^2 (2, $N = 140$) = 8.453, $p = 0.015$). Those in the younger age category are more likely (40%) than those in the older age category (19%) to believe that a *smaller* proportion of prisoners (less than 50%) are released on parole. In contrast, those in the older category are more likely (38%) than those in the younger age category (22%) to believe that a *larger* proportion of prisoners (75% or higher) are released on parole. In

addition, an analysis of variance test demonstrates a significant difference in the average proportion of all prisoners released on parole across age ($F(1, 138) = 12.254, p = 0.001$). The older respondents think that there is a higher proportion ($\bar{x} = 63.94$) of all prisoners released on parole – on average – than do the younger respondents ($\bar{x} = 51.20$).

Table 3.29: Cross Tabulation of Age and Proportion of All Prisoners Released

			`Proportion of fed and prov released`			Total
			Less than 50%	More than 50% and Less than 75%	75% or Higher	
`Age`	18- 29	Count	27	25	15	67
		% within `Age`	40.3%	37.3%	22.4%	100.0%
	30+	Count	14	31	28	73
		% within `Age`	19.2%	42.5%	38.4%	100.0%
Total	Count		41	56	43	140
	% within `Age`		29.3%	40.0%	30.7%	100.0%

iv. Total Custodial Sentence Actually Served

Although there was no significant correlation between the percentage of provincial or federal sentences that respondents believe are served in prison and any of the demographic variables, there was a marginally significant correlation found between respondents' gender and their estimates of the proportion of federal and provincial (combined) sentences served ($X^2(2, N = 140) = 5.699, p = 0.058$). However, an analysis of variance test did not demonstrate a significant difference in the average proportion of total sentences served in prison across gender ($F(1, 138) = 0.994, p = 0.320$).

v. Use of Revocation

None of the demographic variables were significantly correlated with the use of revocation for a violent offence.

vi. Extent to Which Murderers Are Released

Although no relationship was found between age, ethnicity or gender and the extent to which murderers are believe to be released, there was a significant correlation with education ($X^2(2, N = 139) = 6.320, p = 0.042$). Those with only a secondary education are more likely (47%) than those with a post-secondary education (26%) to believe that *few* murderers (less than 10%) are released on parole (see Table 3.30). In contrast, those with higher education are more likely (43%) than those with less education (31%) to believe that more murderers (31%+) are released on parole. Notably though, no significant difference in the average percentages was found across levels of education ($F(1, 137) = 0.847, p = 0.359$).

Table 3.30: Cross Tabulation of Education and Proportion of Murderers Released on Parole

			`Percentage of Murderers on Parole`			Total
			Less than 10%	10%-30%	31%+	
`Education`	Secondary Education	Count	24	11	16	51
		% within `Education`	47.1%	21.6%	31.4%	100.0%
	Post-Secondary Education	Count	23	27	38	88
		% within `Education`	26.1%	30.7%	43.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	47	38	54	139
		% within `Education`	33.8%	27.3%	38.8%	100.0%

vii. Sources of Information about Parole

Table 3.31 demonstrates a significant relationship between the age of respondents and their source of information about parole ($X^2(2, N = 144) = 27.289, p < 0.001$). Those aged 30+ are more likely (85%) than those aged 18-29 (47%) to list the *media* as their principal source of information about parole. In contrast, those aged 18-29 are more likely to list *school* (26%) and *other* (27%) as their principal source of information about parole, compared to older individuals (1% and 14% respectively).

Table 3.31: Cross Tabulation of Age and Sources of Information about Parole

			`Source of Information about Parole`			Total
			Media	School	Other	
`Age`	18- 29	Count	33	18	19	70
		% within `Age`	47.1%	25.7%	27.1%	100.0%
	30+	Count	63	1	10	74
		% within `Age`	85.1%	1.4%	13.5%	100.0%
Total	Count		96	19	29	144
	% within `Age`		66.7%	13.2%	20.1%	100.0%

3.3.2.2 Correlations of Each Knowledge Variable with Each Other

i. Degree of Current Knowledge

Table 3.32 shows a significant correlation between respondents' knowledge about parole and their estimate of the proportion of murderers on parole ($\chi^2 (2, N = 139) = 10.589, p = 0.005$). Those respondents who indicated that they are not at all knowledgeable about parole are more likely (53%) than those who indicated that they have some knowledge (28%) about parole to believe that *less than 10%* of murderers are out on parole. In contrast, those who indicated that they have some knowledge about parole were more likely (46%) than those who indicated they are not at all knowledgeable about parole (16%) to believe that *31% or more* murderers are out on parole.

Table 3.32: Cross Tabulation of Degree of Knowledge and Proportion of Murderers on Parole

			`Percentage of Murderers on Parole`			Total
			Less than 10%	10%-30%	31%+	
Knowledge	Not at all knowledgeable	Count	17	10	5	32
		% within Knowledge	53.1%	31.3%	15.6%	100.0%
	Some knowledge	Count	30	28	49	107
		% within Knowledge	28.0%	26.2%	45.8%	100.0%
Total	Count		47	38	54	139
	% within Knowledge		33.8%	27.3%	38.8%	100.0%

An analysis of variance test demonstrated a significant difference in respondents' beliefs about the average percentage of murderers released on parole across categories of degrees of knowledge about the parole system ($F(1, 137) = 0.586, p = 0.017$). Respondents who think that they have some knowledge about parole report that more murderers – on average - are released on parole ($\bar{x} = 30.38$) than those who indicate that they are not at all knowledgeable about parole ($\bar{x} = 17.68$).

When comparing respondents' knowledge with their estimates of the percentage of parole applicants granted, a significant correlation was not found. However, an analysis of variance test demonstrated a significant difference in the average percentage of parole applications granted across respondents' degree of knowledge ($F(1, 140) = 5.184, p = 0.024$). Those who indicated that they are not at all knowledgeable about parole are more likely to believe that *fewer* applications are granted – on average - ($\bar{x} = 43.22$) than those who indicated having some knowledge about parole ($\bar{x} = 54.36$).

ii. Granting Rate of Applications

Table 3.33 demonstrates a significant correlation between respondents' estimates of the percentage of parole applications granted and their knowledge of the percentage of federal and provincial prisoners released on parole ($X^2(4, N = 140) = 44.857, p < 0.001$). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was also used to assess this relationship. A strong positive correlation was found ($r = 0.555, p < 0.001$) as respondents' estimates of the percentage of parole applications granted increase, their estimates of the proportion of federal and provincial prisoners released also increase.

Table 3.33: Cross Tabulation of Proportion of Parole Applications Granted and Proportion of Inmates Released

			`Proportion of fed and prov released`			
			Less than 50%	More than 50% and Less than 75%	75% or Higher	Total
`Percentage of Parole Applications Granted`	Less than 35%	Count	25	12	5	42
		% within `Parole Applications Granted`	59.5%	28.6%	11.9%	100.0%
	35%-69%	Count	12	27	10	49
		% within `Parole Applications Granted`	24.5%	55.1%	20.4%	100.0%
	70%+	Count	4	16	29	49
		% within `Parole Applications Granted`	8.2%	32.7%	59.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	41	55	44	140
		% within `Parole Applications Granted`	29.3%	39.3%	31.4%	100.0%

iii. Frequency of Use

Table 3.34 demonstrates a significant relationship between respondents' estimate of the proportion of federal prisoners released on parole and their estimate of the proportion of provincial prisoners released on parole ($X^2(4, N = 141) = 49.496, p < .001$). It would appear that participants report similar estimates of the frequency with which they believe provincial and federal parole is used. This significant relationship is also suggested by a strong positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.641, p < .001$).

Table 3.34: Cross Tabulation of the Proportion of Federal and Provincial Prisoners Released on Parole

			`Proportion of provincial prisoners released on parole`			Total
			Up to 39%	40 thru 65	66 and over	
`Proportion of federal prisoners released on parole`	Up to 39%	Count	20	13	12	45
		% within `Proportion of federal prisoners released on parole`	44.4%	28.9%	26.7%	100.0%
	40 thru 65	Count	3	16	30	49
		% within `Proportion of federal prisoners released on parole`	6.1%	32.7%	61.2%	100.0%
	66 and over	Count	0	7	40	47
		% within `Proportion of federal prisoners released on parole`	0.0%	14.9%	85.1%	100.0%
Total	Count		23	36	82	141
	% within `Proportion of federal prisoners released on parole`		16.3%	25.5%	58.2%	100.0%

A weak to moderate negative correlation was found between respondents' estimates of the percentage of all prisoners released on parole and the percentage of their sentence served in prison ($r = -0.184$, $p = 0.030$). While respondents generally believe that as a greater proportion of inmates are released on parole less of their sentences are actually served in prison, the relationship is not as strong as one might have assumed.

Table 3.35 demonstrates a significant correlation between the respondents' estimate of the percentage of federal and provincial inmates released on parole and their estimate of the percentage of murderers released on parole ($X^2(4, N = 137) = 10.18$, $p = 0.037$). This relationship is supported by a moderate positive correlation between these two variables ($r = .260$, $p = 0.002$). As respondents' estimates of the proportion of inmates released on parole increases, respondents' estimates of the proportion of murderers released also goes up.

Table 3.35: Cross Tabulation of the Proportion of Inmates Released and Proportion of Murderers Released

			`Percentage of Murderers on Parole`			Total
			Less than 10%	10%-30%	31%+	
`Proportion of fed and prov released`	Less than 50%	Count	19	9	12	40
		% within `Proportion of fed and prov released`	47.5%	22.5%	30.0%	100.0%
	More than 50% and Less than 75%	Count	17	20	18	55
		% within `Proportion of fed and prov released`	30.9%	36.4%	32.7%	100.0%
	75% or Higher	Count	11	8	23	42
		% within `Proportion of fed and prov released`	26.2%	19.0%	54.8%	100.0%
Total	Count		47	37	53	137
	% within `Proportion of fed and prov released`		34.3%	27.0%	38.7%	100.0%

iv. Total Custodial Sentence Actually Served

Table 3.36 demonstrates a significant relationship between the respondents' estimates of the percentage of federal prisoners' sentences served and their estimate of the percentage of provincial prisoners' sentences served in prison ($X^2 (4, N = 141) = 69.603, p < .001$). This finding is supported by a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.685, p < .001$). Those who believe that federal offenders serve most of their sentence in prison also believe that provincial offenders serve most of their time in prison.

Table 3.36: Cross Tabulation of Proportion of Federal and Provincial Sentences Served in Prison

			`Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison Provincial`			Total
			Less than 31%	31% - 50%	51%+	
`Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison Federal`	Less than 31%	Count	27	6	1	34
		% within `Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison`	79.4%	17.6%	2.9%	100.0%
	31% - 50%	Count	16	28	2	46
		% within `Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison`	34.8%	60.9%	4.3%	100.0%
	51%+	Count	8	21	32	61
		% within `Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison`	13.1%	34.4%	52.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	51	55	35	141
		% within `Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison`	36.2%	39.0%	24.8%	100.0%

v. Use of Revocation

Table 3.37 demonstrates a significant relationship between respondents' estimates of the number of federal revocations for violent offences and their estimates of the percentage of murderers on parole ($X^2(4, N = 140) = 10.58, p = 0.032$). Those respondents who believe that there are more (60%+) violent revocations are more likely (58%) than those who believe that there are less (< 25%) violent revocations (31%) to believe that *more* murderers are released on parole. In contrast, those who believe that there are less (< 25%) violent revocations are more likely (33%) than those who believe that there are more (60%+) violent revocations (28%) to believe that *fewer* murderers are released on parole. Not surprisingly, a positive correlation exists ($r = 0.247, p = 0.003$) such that as respondents' estimates of the percentage of violent revocations increases, their estimate of the percentage of murderers released on parole also increases.

However, it is equally notable that this correlation might be described as only weak to moderate in strength.

Table 3.37: Cross Tabulation of Number of Violent Revocations and Percentage of Murderers Released

			`Percentage of Murderers on Parole`			Total
			Less than 10%	10%-30%	31%+	
`Number of Violent Revocations`	Less than 25%	Count	15	16	14	45
		% within `Number of Violent Revocations`	33.3%	35.6%	31.1%	100.0%
	25-59%	Count	20	16	16	52
		% within `Number of Violent Revocations`	38.5%	30.8%	30.8%	100.0%
	60%+	Count	12	6	25	43
		% within `Number of Violent Revocations`	27.9%	14.0%	58.1%	100.0%
Total	Count		47	38	55	140
	% within `Number of Violent Revocations`		33.6%	27.1%	39.3%	100.0%

vi. Extent to Which Murderers Are Released

Table 3.38 demonstrates a significant relationship between the respondents' estimates of the percentage of murderers released on parole and their estimates of the percentage of prisoners' sentences actually served in prison ($X^2(4, N = 137) = 9.855, p = 0.043$). Although the correlation coefficient was not significant, those who believe that less than 10% of murderers are out on parole are more likely (48%) than those who believe that either 10%-30% (29%) or 31%+ of murderers (28%) are out on parole to believe that offenders serve *at least 67%+* of their sentence in prison. In contrast, those who believe that 31%+ of murderers are out on parole are more likely (42%) than those who believe that either less than 10% of murderers (30%) or 10%-30% (24%) are out on parole to believe that *less than 33%* of their time is actually served in prison.

Table 3.38: Cross Tabulation of Percentage of Murderers Released on Parole and Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison

			`Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison`			Total
			Less than 33%	33% - 66%	67%+	
`Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	Less than 10%	Count	14	10	22	46
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	30.4%	21.7%	47.8%	100.0%
	10%-30%	Count	9	18	11	38
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	23.7%	47.4%	28.9%	100.0%
	31%+	Count	22	16	15	53
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	41.5%	30.2%	28.3%	100.0%
Total	Count		45	44	48	137
	% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`		32.8%	32.1%	35.0%	100.0%

Table 3.39 demonstrates a significant correlation between respondents' estimates of the percentage of murderers on parole and their estimate of the percentage of parole applications granted ($X^2(4, N = 139) = 14.455, p = 0.006$). A moderate positive correlation was also found between these two variables ($r = 0.376, p < .001$). As respondents' estimates of the percentage of murderers on parole increases, their estimates of the percentage of parole applications granted also increases.

Table 3.39: Cross Tabulation of Percentage of Murderers Released on Parole and Parole Applications Granted

			`Percentage of Parole Applications Granted`			
			Less than 35%	35%-69%	70%+	Total
`Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	Less than 10%	Count	23	15	9	47
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	48.9%	31.9%	19.1%	100.0%
	10%-30%	Count	9	13	15	37
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	24.3%	35.1%	40.5%	100.0%
	31%+	Count	10	19	26	55
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	18.2%	34.5%	47.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	42	47	50	139
		% within `Percentage of Murderers on Parole`	30.2%	33.8%	36.0%	100.0%

vii. Sources of Information about Parole

Table 3.40 demonstrates a significant correlation between respondents' source of information about parole and their estimate of the percentage of both federal and provincial prisoners released on parole ($X^2 (2, N = 140) = 6.023, p = 0.049$). Those who indicate the media as their primary source are more likely than those who indicate another source to think that a *substantial proportion* of prisoners (either 50%-75% or 75%+) are released on parole. In contrast, those who indicate anything other than the media as their principal source of knowledge are more likely (42%) than those who indicate the media (23%) to believe that less than 50% of all prisoners are released on parole.

Table 3.40: Cross Tabulation of Sources of Information about Parole and Proportion of all Inmates Released

			`Proportion of fed and prov released`			Total
			Less than 50%	More than 50% and Less than 75%	75% or Higher	
Source	Media	Count	21	42	29	92
		% within Source	22.8%	45.7%	31.5%	100.0%
	Other	Count	20	14	14	48
		% within Source	41.7%	29.2%	29.2%	100.0%
Total	Count		41	56	43	140
	% within Source		29.3%	40.0%	30.7%	100.0%

Table 3.41 demonstrates a significant correlation between respondents' source of information about parole and their estimate of the proportion of both federal and provincial prisoners sentence served in prison ($X^2 (2, N = 141) = 6.770, p = 0.034$). Those who indicate the media as their principal source are more likely than those who indicate another source to think that *less than 31%* of an inmate's sentence is served in prison. In contrast, those who indicate anything other than the media as their principal source are more likely (54%) than those who indicate the media (37%) to believe that *more than 51%* of a prisoner's sentence is served in prison. Those who indicate the media as their primary source of knowledge about parole believe that *less* ($\bar{x} = 42.20$) of offenders' total sentences – on average - are served in prison than those who indicate anything other than the media ($\bar{x} = 50.42$) as their primary source of knowledge about parole ($F (1, 138) = 5.435, p = 0.021$).

Table 3.41: Cross Tabulation of Sources of Information about Parole and Proportion of Total Sentences Served in Prison

			`Percentage of Total Sentence Actually Served in Prison`			Total
			Less than 31%	31% - 50%	51%+	
Source	Media	Count	29	30	34	93
		% within Source	31.2%	32.3%	36.6%	100.0%
	Other	Count	6	16	26	48
		% within Source	12.5%	33.3%	54.2%	100.0%
Total	Count		35	46	60	141
	% within Source		24.8%	32.6%	42.6%	100.0%

Table 3.42 demonstrates a significant relationship between respondents' sources of information about parole and respondents' estimates of the percentage of applications granted ($X^2 (2, N = 142) = 7.037, p = 0.030$). Those who indicate the media as their principal source of knowledge are more likely (39%) than those who indicate another source (27%) to believe that a *substantial proportion* (70%+) of applications are granted. In contrast, those who state 'other' as their principal source of knowledge about parole are more likely (44%) than those who indicate the media (22%) to believe that *fewer* (less than 35%) applications are granted.⁴⁵

An analysis of variance test also found a significant difference in the average proportion of parole applications granted across the 2 principal sources of information about parole ($F (1, 140) = 7.787, p = 0.006$). On average, those who indicate the media as their principal source of knowledge about parole believe that 55.64% of parole applications are granted. In contrast, those who indicate another source believe that only 43.71% - on average – of parole applications are granted.

⁴⁵The addition of 'school' as a response category does not change the findings in any substantive way. Indeed, those who indicated 'school' provide similar estimates of the DV as the 'other' category while those whose primary source of knowledge is the media continue to distinguish themselves as providing higher estimates of the proportion of parole applications granted.

Table 3.42: Cross Tabulation of Sources of Information about Parole and Proportion of Parole Applications Granted

			`Percentage of Parole Applications Granted`			
			Less than 35%	35%-69%	70%+	Total
Source	Media	Count	21	36	37	94
		% within Source	22.3%	38.3%	39.4%	100.0%
	Other	Count	21	14	13	48
		% within Source	43.8%	29.2%	27.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	42	50	50	142
		% within Source	29.6%	35.2%	35.2%	100.0%

3.3.2.3 Correlations between Perceptions and Knowledge about Parole

i. Degree to Which the Parole System is Working

Although no significant correlation was found between respondents' perceptions of how well parole is working and their knowledge of the frequency of use of parole, there was a significant difference in the means of the frequency of use ($F(1, 93) = 5.763, p = 0.018$). Respondents who believe that the parole system is working *very poorly* believe that more ($\bar{x} = 72.31$) inmates – on average – are released on parole, compared to those who believe that the parole system is working *poorly* and *well* ($\bar{x} = 55.80$).

Although no significant correlation was found between respondents' perception of how well parole is working and their estimates of the percentage of parole applications granted, a significant difference was found in this mean estimate ($F(1, 95) = 5.181, p = 0.025$). Those who believe that the parole system is working *very poorly* are more likely to believe that more ($\bar{x} = 66.71$) parole applications are granted on average than those who believe that the parole system is working *poorly* and *well* ($\bar{x} = 50.33$).

Although no significant correlation was found between respondents' perceptions of how well parole is working and their estimate of the number of violent revocations, an analysis of variance test indicated significant mean differences in this estimate ($F(1, 95) = 4.132, p = 0.045$). That is, those who believe that parole is working *poorly* also believe that a greater number of federal offenders, on average, ($\bar{x} = 44.94$) have their parole revoked due to a subsequent violent offence than those who believe that parole is working *well* ($\bar{x} = 34.16$). This mean difference

becomes even more pronounced when comparing those who believe that parole is working very poorly ($\bar{x}$ = 55.50) to those who believe that parole is working poorly and well ($\bar{x}$ = 37.58) ($F(1, 95) = 5.810, p = 0.018$).

Although there was no significant correlation found between respondents' perceptions of how well parole is working and their estimate of the extent to which murderers are released on parole, there were significant mean differences in this estimate ($F(1, 92) = 8.502, p = 0.004$). Specifically, those who believe parole is working very poorly believe that a greater number of murderers, on average, ($\bar{x}$ = 50.31) are released on parole compared to those who believe parole is working poorly and well ($\bar{x}$ = 27.24).

ii. Change over Time in the Use of Parole

Similar mean differences were found in respondents' estimates of the percentage of applications granted across their perceptions of the change over time in the use of parole ($F(2, 124) = 3.726, p = 0.027$). That is, those who believe that parole is easier or the same to obtain compared to ten years ago believe that a higher number of parole applications, on average, are granted ($\bar{x}$ = 54.08 and $\bar{x}$ = 55.20 respectively) compared to those who believe that parole is harder to obtain ($\bar{x}$ = 38.95) compared to ten years ago.

Table 3.43 demonstrates a breakdown of respondents' principal source of information about parole and their perceptions of the ease of obtaining parole ($X^2(2, N = 128) = 12.642, p = 0.002$). Those who indicate other as their primary source of knowledge about parole are more likely to believe that parole is the same (29%) or harder (29%) to obtain compared to ten years ago, than those who indicate the media (15% and 11% respectively). In contrast, those whose principal source of information is the media are considerably more likely (74%) than those who indicated another source (43%) to believe that parole has become easier to obtain.

Table 3.43: Cross Tabulation of Sources of Information about Parole and Ease of Obtaining Parole

			`Ease of Obtaining Parole`			
			Easier	Same	Harder	Total
Source	Media	Count	64	13	9	86
		% within Source	74.4%	15.1%	10.5%	100.0%
	Other	Count	18	12	12	42
		% within Source	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	Count		82	25	21	128
	% within Source		64.1%	19.5%	16.4%	100.0%

iii. Sentence Severity

An analysis of variance test determined a significant difference in respondents' estimates of the percentage of offenders released on parole across their perceptions of sentence severity ($F(2, 116) = 9.663, p < .001$). Those who believe that sentences are too lenient believe that a higher number of offenders, on average, ($\bar{x} = 63.71$) are released on parole, compared to those who believe that sentences are neither too lenient nor harsh ($\bar{x} = 58.23$) or those who believe that sentences are too harsh ($\bar{x} = 33.64$).

An analysis of variance test demonstrated a significant mean difference in respondents' estimates of the proportion of total sentence served in (federal or provincial) prison across their perceptions of sentence severity ($F(2, 117) = 6.430, p = 0.002$). Those who believe that sentences are too harsh also believe that a greater proportion of the sentence, on average, ($\bar{x} = 56.84$) is being served in prison, compared to those who believe that sentences are neither lenient nor harsh ($\bar{x} = 49.45$), or those who believe that sentences are too lenient ($\bar{x} = 38.68$).

Although no significant correlation was found between the respondents' perceptions of sentence severity and their estimate of the percentage of federal offenders who have their parole revoked due to violence, an analysis of variance test determined a significant difference in their estimate of the average number of violent revocations across their perceptions of sentence severity ($F(2, 119) = 5.610, p = 0.005$). Those who believe that sentences are too lenient also believe that a greater number of federal offenders, on average, ($\bar{x} = 45.48$) have their parole

revoked due to a violent offence compared to those who believe that sentences are too harsh ($\bar{x}$ = 19.82), and those who believe that sentences are neither lenient nor harsh ($\bar{x}$ = 35.55).

Table 3.44 demonstrates a significant correlation between respondents' principal source of information about parole and their perception of sentence severity (X^2 (2, N = 121) = 17.423, p < .001⁴⁶). Those who indicate the media as their primary source of knowledge are more likely (68%) than those who indicate another source (36%) to believe that sentences are *too lenient*. In contrast, those who indicate anything other than media as their primary source of knowledge are more likely (43%) than those who indicate the media (29%) to believe that sentences are *neither lenient nor harsh*. They are also more likely (21%) than those who indicate the media (3%) to believe that sentences are *too harsh*.

Table 3.44: Cross Tabulation of Sources of Information about Parole and Sentence Severity

			`Harshness of Sentences`			Total
			Too lenient	Neither lenient nor harsh	Too harsh	
Source	Media	Count	54	23	2	79
		% within Source	68.4%	29.1%	2.5%	100.0%
	Other	Count	15	18	9	42
		% within Source	35.7%	42.9%	21.4%	100.0%
Total	Count		69	41	11	121
	% within Source		57.0%	33.9%	9.1%	100.0%

iv. Degree to Which the Parole System Should Release Prisoners

Table 3.45 demonstrates a significant correlation between respondents' principal source of information about parole and their estimate of the number of people who should be paroled (X^2 (2, N = 113) = 11.122, p = 0.004⁴⁷). Those who indicate the media as their primary source of knowledge are more likely (78%) than those who indicate another source (49%) to believe that *fewer* people should be released on parole. In contrast, those who indicate anything other than the media as their primary source of knowledge are more likely to believe that the *same* (23%) or

⁴⁶ There was 1 low expected frequency. However, it represented less than 20% of the overall sample and it was greater than 1 (3.82). As such, it is deemed not to constitute an obstacle to interpreting the data (Preacher, 2001).

⁴⁷ There was 1 low expected frequency. However, it represented less than 20% of the overall sample and it was greater than 1 (4.83). As such, it is deemed not to constitute an obstacle to interpreting the data (Preacher, 2001).

more (28%) people should be released on parole, than those who indicate the media (7% and 15% respectively).

Table 3.45: Cross Tabulation of Sources of Information and Number of People who should be Paroled

			`Number of People Who Should Be Paroled`			Total
			Fewer	Same	More	
Source	Media	Count	58	5	11	74
		% within Source	78.4%	6.8%	14.9%	100.0%
	Other	Count	19	9	11	39
		% within Source	48.7%	23.1%	28.2%	100.0%
Total	Count		77	14	22	113
	% within Source		68.1%	12.4%	19.5%	100.0%

4. Discussion

4.1 Current Picture of Canadians' Perceptions and Knowledge about Parole

4.1.1 Participants' Perceptions

One of the principal purposes of this study is to capture respondents' current perceptions and knowledge about parole. Importantly, many respondents chose the response 'do not know' when asked about issues related to parole. In particular, participants indicated that they do not know how well parole is working or how many prisoners should be released on parole. In contrast, it appears that they were more apt to report patterns of change over time in the use of parole as well as express their views on sentence severity. Indeed, it would seem that respondents are less likely to have thought about the issues related directly to parole (how it is working; how many prisoners should be released) than issues surrounding sentencing or broader impressions of change over time in the use of parole. This response pattern is probably not surprising as very few individuals have any (indirect or direct) experience with parole. Further, (detailed) issues of parole are not as often reported in the media as are those related to sentencing. Notwithstanding these potential explanation(s) though, it is equally notable that only between 11% and 33% of respondents chose the option of 'do not know'. One might have expected a higher percentage, particularly given individuals lack of experience with parole and infrequent media coverage.

Of those who did provide an actual response (rather than choosing 'do not know'), findings suggest – as a whole – that respondents believe that parole is not working very well. Indeed, over 50% of the sample believe that parole is working poorly. This perception seems to be (at least partially) rooted in the belief that too many prisoners are being released on parole. Indeed, 68% of respondents believe that fewer people should be released on parole. Potentially as part of the underlying justification for this belief, it may be important to recall that only 13% of the respondents in the 1999 GSS believed that the parole system was doing a good job at supervising offenders on parole (Tufts, 2000).

Compounding this 'negative' perception is the fact that respondents feel that parole has become easier to obtain than 10 years ago. That is, not only do the data suggest that the parole system is too lenient, but it has become more lenient over time. Moreover, this perception of

leniency does not appear to be restricted to the parole system. Rather, it also extends to Canadian criminal courts. Indeed, the results of this study also suggest that Canadians believe that criminal sentences are also seen to be too lenient. Not surprisingly, there is a statistically significant correlation in this study between perceptions of leniency of courts and the parole system (specifically, degree to which the parole system should release, and how well parole is working). Indeed, those who want a more conservative use of parole also desire harsher sentencing practices.

More importantly, we see the same ‘punitive’ leitmotif across the different perceptions of parole. That is, a desire for greater harshness in one area of parole is also associated with a desire for greater harshness in other areas of parole. In fact, conservative views appear to be emerging as a factor in almost all perception questions. That is, there appears to be relative consistency in respondents’ perceptions of parole. Specifically, views might be largely characterized as conservative in nature. According to these findings, the majority of Canadians not only believe that parole should be harsher but that the parole system should release fewer prisoners. Rather, they also reflect conservative views on sentencing – that sentences should be harsher.

However, this internal consistency in responses is not unique to this study. Rather, it can also be found across prior studies of Canadian perceptions of parole and sentencing (Doob, 2014; Singh & Sprott, 2017; Webster & Doob, 2015). This pattern may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that individuals believe that parole is a part of the punishment for a crime and that, in general, sentences are too lenient (Correctional Service Canada, 2015; Doob, 2014). Equally important, past research also indicates that the public overestimates crime rates and recidivism rates and believes that sentences are more lenient in Canada than elsewhere (Roberts, 2004). Perhaps not surprisingly, results from one Canadian study indicated that those who were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ confident in the courts represented 47% of the sample (Roberts, 2004). Also consistent with findings from the current study, Roberts (2004) found that those who indicated that Canadians were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ confident in the parole system represented 72% of the sample. This distinction between views on sentencing and those on parole seemingly have changed little over the past decade.

Notably though, while the majority of respondents in the current study do not think that the parole system is working well, it is not the overwhelming view. In fact, there is a sizeable number of respondents who are more liberal in their perceptions of parole/sentencing. That is,

not all respondents report negative views. Rather, over 40% think that parole is working well and that sentence severity is either too harsh or neither lenient nor harsh, and over 30% think that the same/more prisoners should be released and that parole is about the same or harder to obtain compared to ten years ago.

When trying to determine whether certain perceptions of parole are associated with particular sub-groups, age emerges as an important defining factor. Specifically, younger respondents seem to be more liberal in their views/perceptions of parole. That is, they think that not only is parole becoming *harder* to obtain over the last 10 years but they also believe that *more* people should be released on parole. Further, younger respondents are also more likely than older respondents to believe that *sentences* are too harsh. These findings are unsurprising as younger people are often less conservative in their views – perhaps a reflection of having less fear of crime/victimization than older respondents.

In terms of other defining characteristics, the only other demographic descriptor of the respondents that emerged as a significant factor in distinguishing respondents' perceptions of parole is gender. Specifically, females were more likely than males to think that *fewer* prisoners should be released on parole. Again, this finding is arguably not surprising. Indeed, it may suggest that females are more conservative in their views on parole precisely because they generally are found to have greater fear of crime/victimization than males (Fox, 2009). However, even this variable was found to be significantly correlated with only one of the perception measures. As such, gender does not seem to be a strong defining factor in respondents' perceptions of parole.

4.1.2 Participants' Knowledge

In regards to respondents' assessment of their degree of knowledge about parole, it is notable that there is a much higher percentage of participants who admit little/no knowledge about parole than those who chose the option of 'do not know' in the perception questions. While there were 11% to 33% of respondents (depending on the question) who indicated that they 'did not know' in response to the perception questions, there were 83% who reported that they had little or no knowledge about parole. Within this context, one might be tempted to conclude that a number of respondents who claim that they are either not very or not at all

knowledgeable about parole nonetheless answered the perception questions (rather than choosing 'do not know'). Despite this caveat, it is notable that there is certainly some consistency across the responses for granting rate, frequency and portion of sentence served. That is, respondents believe that an average of 52% parole applications is granted. This number is generally consistent with respondents' beliefs regarding the percentage of prisoners released and the percentage of total sentence served. That is, if people believe that 52% (on average) of applications are granted, logically, this estimate would suggest that roughly 52% (on average) should be released and roughly 48% (on average) of sentences should be served in prison before release. Indeed, one would expect – for example - that those who think that many prisoners are released on parole would also expect that they would serve less of their sentence in prison. And, in fact, the respondents' estimates for these 3 questions are completely in line with this logic, suggesting that their answers are rational and thoughtful.

Having said this, it is equally notable that these (overly high) estimates would seem to corroborate findings from past studies (Roberts, 2004) which have found that citizens overestimate the proportion of those granted parole and the rate of re-offending by those on parole. However, it is also important to recognize that those respondents who indicate that they are not very/at all knowledgeable about parole are more likely than those who indicate that they have some knowledge about parole to believe that a greater number of parole applications are granted, that many prisoners are released on parole and that less of their sentence is actually served in prison. It would seem that in the face of little knowledge, respondents err in the direction which reflects concern, if not fear of parole. Notably though, these various bivariate relationships are not strong, albeit always in the same direction.

Consistent with this tentative conclusion, it would seem that the perception that parole is working poorly is rooted – at least to some extent – in the belief that Canadians (as a society) are at greater risk of crime. Overall, respondents also appear to believe that the (frequent) use of parole can have potentially risky or dangerous consequences. Indeed, respondents generally believe that many parolees have their parole revoked due to violence. By extension, the logic seems to be that if parole were working better, there would be fewer prisoners on parole and, by extension, greater safety (precisely because there would be fewer violent revocations). These findings are consistent with past research which has claimed that the public is found to be

opposed to granting parole to offenders convicted of the most serious crimes and believe that murderers should not be eligible for parole (Doob & Webster, 2014).

Perhaps in line with this sense of risk, respondents seemingly differentiate somewhat between the use of provincial and federal parole. Specifically, they think that a greater number of provincial than federal prisoners are released on parole, and that federal prisoners serve more of their sentence in prison than do provincial prisoners. This distinction may reflect a belief that provincial prisoners commit less serious offences and would be likely more apt to obtain parole (precisely because they represent less ‘risk’ to the community).

Similar to the perception variables, age is also found to be a factor in respondents’ knowledge about parole. Those who are in the older age categories are more likely to think that a higher number of prisoners are released on parole and that more applications are granted. While one might assume that this correlation is a reflection of schooling (with younger people having benefitted from a more liberal education), one’s level of education does not appear to be a strong predictor of respondents’ knowledge (being significantly related to only one of the measures of knowledge). Rather, an explanation for the association might be rooted in respondents’ primary source of knowledge about parole. Indeed, older individuals may be more apt to rely on media (which tends to present a skewed view of parole, emphasizing its increased risk to the safety of society) than younger individuals.

It is equally interesting to note that those respondents who are more likely to believe that there are a greater number of violent revocations are also more likely to think that a greater number of murderers are released on parole. This correlation not only suggests respondents’ mental link between murderers released on parole and violent re-offences, but also continues to underline – more globally - the view of parole as risky/dangerous. This finding would seem consistent with prior research which has found that Canadians believe that parole should be restricted to certain offenders and that it could be stricter for others (Roberts, 2001). In the case that participants naturally associate murderers (on the one hand) and revocations rooted in violent offences (on the other hand) with the use of parole, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents feel that parole is used too frequently. Indeed, this (natural) tendency to link – in their minds – parole to serious offences would certainly go a long way in explaining perceptions of risk (as associated with the use of parole). This notion of ‘fear’ or risk may also be rooted in the correlation found between the view that parole has become easier to obtain compared to ten

years ago and the belief that more prisoners have the possibility of early release (as they believe that more applications are granted). Similarly, those who think that sentences are too lenient also think that more inmates are released on parole, less of their sentence is served in prison, and that more offenders have their parole revoked due to violence.

Perhaps as an extension of this argument, it may not be a coincidence that those who indicate the media as their primary source of information are more likely than those who indicate another source to believe that a greater number of parole applications are granted, more offenders are released on parole, and less of offenders' sentences are served in prison. In contrast, those who indicate anything other than the media are more likely to believe that parole is the same/harder compared to ten years ago. In this case, the danger of the media seems to be associated with the belief that parole has become easier to obtain and, by extension that we are at greater danger (suggesting that fewer people should be released on parole).

Indeed, reliance on the media as one's primary source of information seems to promote more conservative views surrounding parole. This finding is not shocking, particularly given the research demonstrating that the media over-sensationalize crimes committed by those on parole (Samra-Grewal & Roesch, 2000). Indeed, while only an infinitely small proportion of Canadian prisoners commit a violent offence while on parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018), these cases are the (often only) ones that are discussed in the media. Equally consistent with this proposed (fear-provoking) impact of the media, it is notable that those who indicate the media as their principal source also believe that sentences are too lenient. Indeed, it may be that the association between conservative views of sentencing (as too lenient) and conservative views of parole (as too lenient) is (at least partially) rooted in the media's tendency to highlight the dangers/risk to the safety of law-abiding citizens of releasing 'criminals' into the community.

4.2 Comparison of Past and Current Perceptions and Knowledge

4.2.1 Participants' Perceptions

This study is not only intended as an 'update' of past descriptions of the public's perceptions and knowledge about parole, rather, it is also intended to examine the possibility that the recent upswing in the use of parole in Canada is a reflection of more positive perceptions of parole by the public, as well as more accurate knowledge of parole. Indeed, after a brief

decrease, there has been a recent increase of the number of offenders on provincial parole. In fact, the number of offenders on provincial parole went from 1,089 in 2005-06 to 769 in 2012-13 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). However, it subsequently rose incrementally to a high of 1,058 in 2016-17 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2018). Similar to provincial parole, the population of offenders in the community under federal supervision has increased slightly after a larger decrease. In 2005-06, there was a total of 7,834 federal offenders on day or full parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2015). This number decreased to 7,240 in 2011-12 but then steadily increased to 7,615 in 2015-16 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview 2016⁴⁸). This study attempts to shed light on this change over time in the use of parole by assessing whether it might be partially rooted in (positive) changes in Canadians' perceptions and knowledge of parole.

In the current study, 64% of respondents indicate that parole is easier to obtain than 10 years ago. In actuality though, parole has remained fairly stable when looking exclusively at the most recent 10-year period under study (i.e., 2006-2016). Having said this, parole had become harder to obtain up until 2012, with it becoming easier (with an increasing number of prisoners released on parole) only over the more recent years. In this sense, respondents may be partially correct. More importantly for purposes of 'explaining' recent increases in the use of parole (rooted in more favourable perceptions of this criminal process), it would seem – in this study – that respondents' perceptions of parole as having become easier to obtain over the past 10 years are more likely to be associated with negative (rather than positive) perceptions of parole. Hence, although respondents' knowledge of the use of parole over time in Canada may be reasonably accurate, it does not appear to be associated with more positive perceptions.

In fact, data from the current study suggest that the majority of individuals think that parole should be stricter, with 68% of respondents indicating that fewer prisoners should be released on parole. This finding corroborates other recent estimates which suggest that 70% of Canadians believe that parole should be made stricter (although less than 1% want it abolished) (Correctional Service Canada, 2015). In a similar public opinion poll, research has suggested that

⁴⁸ CCRSO data published from multiple years were used to capture all time periods dating back to 2005, as each published report only dates back so far. CCRSO 2016 was used because this study collected survey responses in the spring of 2017 – the year in which the 2016 CCRSO was released. This was the most recent CCRSO edition at the time of the survey.

65% of Canadians would like parole to be stricter. Notably though, these estimates are lower than those from 1993 in which a full 75% of Canadians wanted stricter parole (Department of Justice, 2015). This same study (Department of Justice, 2015) also found that 69% of respondents believe that sentences are not severe enough. However, these findings are considerably more in line with findings from a 2000 study (Samra-Grewal & Roesch, 2000) in which almost half agreed that the current system is too lenient and that offenders are granted full parole too early. Indeed, one would be hesitant to suggest that Canadians' perceptions of parole have changed in any obvious manner over the past several decades.

Slightly more optimistic conclusions might be drawn from findings of other relevant measures. In a 2004-2005 review (Roberts, 2004), only 3% of Canadians were very confident in parole. When combined with those who were very or somewhat confident, the percentage rose to 25%. In contrast, 72% were not very or not at all confident with parole (Angus Reid Group, 1997; Roberts, 2004). Results were similar in terms of confidence in the parole boards. More importantly though, these findings were found to demonstrate less confidence than those from 2002. Indeed, while a similar proportion of respondents reported to be very or somewhat confident (26% in 2002 and 25% in 2004/5), 61% were not very or not at all confident (compared to 72% in 2004/5) (Roberts, 2004). While a slightly different measure is used, it is notable that findings from the current study indicate that 'only' 55% believe that parole is working poorly or very poorly. These results become even more positive when juxtaposed with other previous research that examined public opinions regarding specific functions/tasks of parole. Specifically, Roberts noted in 2004 that only 13% of respondents believed that we were doing a good job supervising offenders while on parole. Similarly, a mere 15% indicated that we were doing a good job at releasing offenders who are not likely to re-offend (Roberts, 2004). Again though, parallel questions were not asked in the current study such that direct comparisons cannot be drawn.

Within this context, perhaps a more cautious interpretation may be that little has changed in terms of Canadians' perceptions of parole. Public opinion surveys over the past 35 years show that the public is generally dissatisfied with parole decisions and would like them to be harsher. Similarly, parole has consistently been found to fair much worse than other criminal justice agencies in the eyes of the public. Notably, past research has found that public confidence in the police, courts, and prisons are higher than confidence about parole (Roberts, 2004). The findings

from the present study are consistent with this statement as respondents also seem to indicate higher confidence levels in the courts (albeit as measured exclusively by their perceptions of criminal sanctions handed down) than in parole. The fairly sizable proportion of respondents in the current study who answered many of the perception questions with ‘do not know’ would seem to not only support this observation that respondents generally have low confidence in parole, but also raise some doubts about the statements made by those who did, in fact, provide valid responses.

4.2.2 Participants’ Knowledge

Perhaps even more relevant to the current discussion though, Roberts noted as early as 2005 that people tend to know nothing about statutory release and very little about parole (Roberts, 2005). In Robert’s (2005) literature review on public opinion and corrections, this scholar noted that people frequently overestimate the parole revocation rate and its granting rate as well as the recidivism rate of those on parole. Further, only 25% agreed that all offenders should be considered by parole, as most believed that parole should be abolished for violent offenders (Roberts, 2005). Other prior research also suggests that public attitudes are not favourable to parole and that the public holds inaccurate knowledge of the rates, nature, and severity of crimes committed, as well as inaccurate perceptions of release and recidivism for those on conditional release (Samra-Grewal & Roesch, 2000).

In this study, respondents believe that an average of 51% of federal prisoners and 65% of provincial prisoners are released on parole, which is considerably higher than the reality. In 2016, a total of only 2.4% of federal offenders were released on full parole and 27.9% of federal offenders were released on day parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016). In addition, a mere 3.8% of the provincial offenders are, in fact, released on parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016). It seems as though respondents continue to overestimate the release rates of prisoners on parole. Given that most Canadians also appear to believe that too many offenders are granted parole, such high estimates of actual releases raise the intriguing question of whether their (negative) views of parole might be rendered more positive with more accurate knowledge of actual numbers of prisoners released.

Similar conclusions may be drawn about granting rates. In the current study, respondents believe that an average of 52% of parole applications are granted by the parole board. Although the survey did not draw a distinction between full and day parole, it is likely that most participants are unaware of the difference. By extension, it may be a safe assumption that they were thinking about full parole (being released into the community without having to live in a halfway house) when answering this question. Notably, respondents overestimated the full parole grant rate. In reality, 33.7% of federal full parole applications were granted in 2015-16 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016). The provincial full parole grant rate for 2015-16 was 32% (Performance Monitoring Report, 2014-2015), indicating a similar grant rate to federal parole.

In contrast, respondents tended to underestimate the proportion of murderers on parole. Specifically, they believe that, on average, slightly fewer than 28% of murderers are released on parole. In reality, 33.4% of murderers were released on parole in 2015-16 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016). However, this slight underestimation may be due to the fact that many respondents believed that murderers are not eligible to be released on parole.

In terms of the proportion of the total custodial sentences actually served in prison, respondents estimated that an average of 49% of federal offenders' and 41% of provincial offenders' sentences are served in prison. At least regarding the federal estimates (as provincial data on this variable are not publicly available), these findings are slightly higher than the reality. In 2015-16, federal offenders on day parole served an average of 38.5% of their sentence in prison, and those on full parole served 46.5% of their sentence in prison (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview 2016). Again, as most respondents are unlikely to make a distinction between day and full parole, their estimates are remarkably accurate (at least with federal offenders).

In dramatic contrast though, respondents in the current study dramatically overestimated the proportion of federal offenders who had their parole revoked due to a violent re-offence. Specifically, they estimated that 41% – on average – committed a violent offence while on parole (leading to a revocation of parole). In fact, only 0.2% of offenders on day parole and 0.2% of those on full parole had their parole revoked for a violent offence in 2015-2016 (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016). In fact, 87.6% of offenders on full parole

successfully completed their parole (without any revocations for either violent or non-violent offences). Further, this success rate has increased since 2011-12 at which time ‘only’ 78.6% had successfully completed full parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2016).

To further contextualize the findings from the current study, it is notable that the majority of respondents (67%) indicated that they obtain their information about parole primarily from the media. This description provides an important context to this study’s findings. As part of their wider discussion about penal populism and public opinion, Roberts, et al. (2003) state that while crime rates have been relatively stable or declining, politicians and media act as if the opposite is true. According to them, this ‘contradiction’ has caused the public to demand even more punitive measures. By extension, the public is no longer prepared to listen to government leaders, focusing primarily on interactive media technologies as their principal source of information (Roberts et al., 2003). Given the media’s tendency to overestimate the dangers that parolees represent to the safety of community members, it is likely unsurprising that respondents in this study continue to believe that parole is used too often and with risky outcomes (e.g., high rates of violent revocations). It would also explain prior findings in which respondents believe that violent offenders should not be eligible for parole (Samra-Grewal & Roesch, 2000).

More broadly, the accuracy of Canadians’ perceptions and knowledge about parole has not improved to any significant extent over the last 10-15 years, despite small pockets of issues in which responses are closer to reality. Nor have they become noticeably more positive. By extension, it would not appear that the more recent increase in the use of parole finds its roots in this phenomenon. Rather, one will need to search elsewhere.

Within this context, it is possible that parole boards have been encouraged to make greater use of parole. This ‘encouragement’ may be rooted in immediate concerns with the costs of incarceration or the wider (moral, social) concerns with mass imprisonment generally (particularly given the poignant example of our closest neighbour). Perhaps as part of this new ‘awareness’, one might argue that there has been – very recently – less emphasis on the risks/dangers of parole, particularly with the end of the Harper government and his constant fear-mongering rooted in crime. Certainly given the public’s longstanding lack of confidence in parole, the prior Conservative government may have attempted to pander to these views by passing increasingly harsher legislation related to parole (e.g., consecutive parole ineligibility

periods) and pressure parole boards to limit their use of parole. Indeed, it has been argued that the public has increasingly led criminal justice policy generally (Doob & Webster, 2015). In fact, the recent decline in political deference in Western society has led to the public being less willing to let politicians decide what is good for them (Roberts et al., 2003). With the end of the Harper era, it is possible that the ‘message’ of parole’ has become more positive (i.e., less focused on its risks and more focused on its benefits).

4.3 Study Limitations

A number of limitations were identified throughout the process of completing this research project. Perhaps most importantly, the generalizability of the study findings to Canadians generally is significantly limited. Since this study was conducted within one city, it obviously cannot be considered to be representative of Canadians generally. Further, those who completed the survey are very unlikely to even constitute a representative sample of all residents of the city in which the study was carried out. Indeed, the use of non-probabilistic sampling techniques virtually guarantee that not all members of the population are given the chance of participating in the study.

This limitation is further compounded by the sample size of this study as only 149 individuals were surveyed. In sum, the findings from this study have very low external validity. Obviously future research would want to not only expand the number of study participants but also draw from wider geographic and demographic populations.

Another limitation to this study is the confusion or difficulty that some respondents had in understanding several of the survey questions. In particular, the researcher - when conducting the in-person survey - received a notable number of queries specifically in regards to the question concerning the proportion of murderers released on parole. Many people did not know that murderers are given the opportunity to apply for parole. By extension, they found the question confusing.

4.4 Conclusion and Future Research

To conclude, the findings of this study might be characterized as an initial or first step in creating a more recent or current picture of respondents’ perceptions and knowledge about parole. More broadly, it attempts to shed light on the recent increase in the use of parole, related

to peoples' perceptions and knowledge about parole and their fear of crime/victimization. This research makes a relevant contribution to the field of criminology for several reasons. Given the limited (recent) academic literature on the subject, this thesis attempts to (partially) fill the gap by collecting and analyzing quantitative data on Canadians' perceptions and knowledge of parole. This study also assesses potential change over time in public perceptions/knowledge by comparing the current findings with those reported over a decade ago. Finally, this thesis attempts to identify a possible link between Canadians' current perceptions/knowledge about parole and the recent increase in its use. Future research should be conducted throughout Canada, using a larger sample size. Since this study has suggested that the public's perceptions and knowledge have not become noticeably more positive in recent years, researchers may want to search for alternative explanations for the recent increase in the use of parole in Canada. Such an endeavour might wish to consider wider social, cultural and political factors that may have affected the conceptualization, legislation and broader understanding of the role of parole within the wider criminal justice system.

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Appendix A

Public views on parole

Consent Form

University of Ottawa

Title of the study: Public Views on Parole

Researcher: Taylor Small

Department of Criminology

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Ottawa

Supervisor: Dr. Cheryl Webster

Associate Professor

Department of Criminology

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Ottawa

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned M.A research study conducted by Taylor Small under the supervision of Cheryl Webster.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to get a general sense of the public's views and knowledge on parole when it comes to federally and provincially sentenced inmates.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of completing a short survey during which I will answer questions about my views on parole. The survey will take place online through "SurveyMonkey" and will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail no risks.

Benefits: My participation in this study will benefit me by allowing me to voice my views about parole, and by extension, contribute to the existing academic literature on parole in Canada.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for academic purposes and that my anonymity will be protected. I will not be asked to give my name or any identifying characteristics. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure confidentiality, I have been advised to use standard safety measures such as signing out of my account, closing my browser and locking my screen or device when I am no longer using them / when I have completed the study.

Conservation of data: The data collected on the online survey will be copied to an electronic file, which will be kept in a secure manner on a locked computer and in a password-protected document which will only be accessible by Taylor Small and Dr. Cheryl Webster. The data on SurveyMonkey will be securely deleted as soon as the survey is closed. The remaining data will be kept for 5 years and then securely deleted.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. Data can be withdrawn until I click on the submit button on the survey. I can choose not to submit my answers by not clicking on the submit button and simply closing the window with the link to the survey.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor at the e-mails provided above.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613)

Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

By clicking on the 'Agree' button, I am giving my consent to participate in this study.

AGREE

Appendix B

Individuals sentenced to prison in Canada (other than those convicted of murder) are generally required to serve at least 1/3 of their sentences in a correctional facility and are typically released at the 2/3 point. Those serving 6 months or more can apply to be released on parole after serving 1/3 of their sentence. Parole boards review the cases of those prisoners who apply for parole and decide whether the person should be released. If granted, they can serve the remainder of their sentence in the community under supervision.

1. What is your age?

18-19

20-24

25-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60+

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

3. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

Indigenous

South Asian (eg., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)

Chinese

Filipino

Latin American

Arab

Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian).

West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)

Korean

Japanese

Black or African American

White / Caucasian

Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school

High school diploma

Some post-secondary education

College/undergraduate degree

Graduate studies

5. What percentage of provincial prisoners (sentenced to less than 2 years) do you think are released on parole?

___%

6. For those provincial prisoners who are released on parole, what percentage of their total custodial sentence do you think is actually served in prison?

____%

7. What percentage of federal prisoners (sentenced to 2 years or more) do you think are released on parole?

____%

8. For those federal prisoners who are released on parole, what percentage of their total custodial sentence do you think is actually served in prison?

____%

9. Excluding murders, think about 100 hypothetical people who are serving sentences of 2 years or more and have been released on parole. How many of them do you think will have their parole revoked because they have committed a violent offence?

10. At the moment, there are 4,539 people serving sentences for murder. How many of them do you think have been released in the community?

11. What percentage of parole applications do you think are granted by the parole board?

____%

12. Thinking about the proportion of people who are currently released on parole, do you think that parole has become easier, harder or the same to obtain compared to 10 years ago?

Easier to obtain than 10 years ago

Harder to obtain than 10 years ago

About the same to obtain compared to 10 years ago

Don't know

13. Where do you get your knowledge/information about parole?

Media

Politicians

Friends/family

School

Government

Personal Experience with someone on parole

Other

14. In your opinion, do you think that the parole system should release more, fewer or the same number of people?

More people

Fewer people

The same number of people

Don't know

15. How well do you feel the parole system is working in Canada?

Very well

Somewhat well

Poorly

Very poorly

Don't know

16. How knowledgeable do you feel you are about the parole system in Canada?

Very knowledgeable

Reasonably knowledgeable

Not very knowledgeable

Not at all knowledgeable

17. Do you think that sentences in Canadian criminal courts are too lenient, too harsh, or about right?

Too lenient

Too harsh

Neither lenient nor harsh

Don't know

18. Any other additional comments about parole:

—

Appendix C

File Number: 02-17-30

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 03/21/2017



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice **Social Sciences and Humanities REB**

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Cheryl	Webster	Social Sciences / Criminology	Supervisor
Taylor	Small	Social Sciences / Criminology	Student Researcher

File Number: 02-17-30

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Views in Parole

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
03/21/2017	03/20/2018	Approval

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above named research project. Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the project, the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the project (e.g., change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, including consent and recruitment documentation, should be submitted to the Ethics Office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <https://research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms>.

Please submit an annual report to the Ethics Office four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval. To close the file, a final report must be submitted. These documents can be found at: <https://research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

Gabriel Petitti
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB