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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the aggregate impact of incarceration on the quality of community life in areas experiencing high concentrations of incarceration. Throughout the report, incarceration generally refers to a two- prong process: the process of leaving the community to be incarcerated, and the process of returning from prison to the community. To investigate the impact of this dual process, we conducted a study of two Tallahassee, Florida, neighborhoods that had been previously identified as having high rates of incarceration relative to other locations in that city. We reviewed historical and contemporary documents and, employing a snowball approach, we interviewed over 30 local officials, community leaders and social service providers to gain an understanding of the social, political, and economic context of the neighborhoods. These individuals were also instrumental in providing initial referrals to residents. After pilot tests and screening interviews, we conducted individual interviews and a series of four focus groups (led by a professional group facilitator) with 39 people either living or working in the neighborhoods, 13 of whom were ex-offenders. Our approach was first to ask respondents for general commentary about the processes of individuals leaving for and returning from prison on themselves, their families and their communities, and then to explore the responses we received to these opening probes.

Our analyses identify four domains in which removing and reintegrating ex-offenders effects individuals, families and the community-at-large. While some of the impacts are positive (public safety) our respondents also emphasize the negative aspects of incarceration and reentry in their lives, through: (1) Stigma—incarceration carries a negative social status, often becoming an individual's master status, which is transferred to family and community, shaping the way others view residents and ex-offenders alike; (2) Financial—incarceration and reentry has adverse effects on the financial capacity of offenders, their families, and the neighborhood as a whole; (3) Identity—residents and ex-offenders who experience a loss of self-worth and self-esteem struggle to shift their identity in positive directions; and (4) Relationships—interpersonal networks are disrupted in multiple ways—spousal and parent/child relationships become strained or severed, and relations between neighbors can grow distant. The aggregate effect reduces the capacity of social supports for all concerned. To this list, ex-offenders add the problem of "pressure," which permeates their reentry experience.

These four domains illustrate how high rates of incarceration might destabilize communities by damaging the human capital of the residents, the social capital of networks of informal social control, and the credibility of the justice system in the eyes of people who see their communities afflicted by systems of inequality and injustice. To address these problems, we offer 16 recommendations that serve as a comprehensive programmatic response to the problems that arise from high rates of incarceration concentrated in certain communities. We conclude by suggesting areas for further research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INCARCERATION AS COERCIVE MOBILITY: REMOVAL, REENTRY, AND

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION

It is well established that crime is concentrated in certain urban areas while other areas remain relatively crime-free. Criminologists have long been interested in uncovering the dynamics associated with the spatial distribution of crime in an effort to understand this phenomenon and how community context impacts the lives of people living in those neighborhoods. One vein of research has drawn upon social disorganization theory focusing on ecological characteristics such as rates of poverty, residential mobility, and single parent families (see Shaw and McKay, 1942; Sampson, 1988). Another closely related vein has examined the structural and cultural impact of entrenched poverty (Wilson, 1987), whereas others have focused on opportunities for crime provided by structural changes in lifestyles and labor force participation (Felson, 1987). Recently, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) merged social disorganization and systemic theories to specify how the three levels of social control (private, parochial and public) mediate between deleterious environmental characteristics and crime.

One of the prima facie assumptions of all these approaches is that public control operates solely as a response to crime and, as such, it need not be considered as one of the determinants of crime. Yet, research has underscored the fact that at least one form of public control, incarceration, affects some groups of Americans much more than others (Mauer, 2000), and given the residential segregation realities of living in America today (South and Deane, 1993) public control is spatially concentrated too.

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Recent technical advances in geo-spatial analyses of crime and justice have enabled researchers to estimate the impact of differential selection for incarceration on narrowly defined residential areas. Because poor men of color are concentrated in neighborhoods that are racially and economically homogeneous, researchers have begun to document the aggregate impact of differential rates of incarceration on the places these men tend to live. Depending upon the size of the neighborhood and the method of counting, studies of particular neighborhoods have found that up to 30% of the adult male residents are locked up on any given day (Lynch and Sabol, 1992; Mauer, 2000), up to 30% of adult males enter prison or jail in a given year (CASES, 2000) and up to 2% of all residents enter prison in a given year (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully, 2000). While a growing body of research has established reliably the extraordinary level of concentrated incarceration experience in these places and among these groups, little is known about the socio-political implications of this circumstance for those places.

This is a report of a study of residents and offenders in two Tallahassee, Florida, neighborhoods. We examine the impact of high levels of prison admissions and releases on community life and the problems of reintegrating offenders into these areas. These neighborhoods warrant study because of their high rates of incarceration, a form of "coercive mobility" (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully, 2000). Large proportions of their residents are removed from these two communities to be admitted to prison and large portions then are returned to the community through prison release. Statistical analysis shows these neighborhoods have been affected in important ways by this concentrated flow to and from prison. We chose these neighborhoods in order to enrich two existing quantitative data sets pertaining to Tallahassee neighborhoods, (one containing demographic and criminal justice data,

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the other consisting of attitudinal data) so that we might obtain a more complete understanding of the impact of admission to and release from prison on community life.

The processes of removing and returning offenders are intricately intertwined—one cannot occur without the other—and as a policy "system" it is important to study both, not one in isolation of the other. These processes are linked, especially in high-incarceration communities (i.e., communities which experience above-average levels of crime and above- average levels of removing and returning offenders), and can lead to greater community disorganization. We undertake this study with the following objectives:

- To learn how removing and returning high volumes of offenders affects area residents in high-incarceration neighborhoods;

- To learn how the aggregate effect of removing and returning high volumes of offenders affects a community's quality of life;

- To learn more about the problems offenders and residents encounter in the transition process in high volume neighborhoods;

- To better understand the role of drug abuse in the re-integration process of ex-offenders in neighborhoods experiencing high levels of coercive mobility; and

- To understand how high levels of incarceration shape residents' attitudes about the criminal justice system.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The subject of the released prisoner commonly is viewed from the "official agency" perspective. This position typically focuses on three dominant facts about the problem of

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transition. First, ex-offenders represent a risk to the community. Second, on the whole, their risk is closely intertwined with the problem of drugs. Third, the early days following release are the most difficult time period for the ex-offender's adjustment. Strategies designed to reflect these three facts have been at the core of release practices typically designed and operated by official agencies. Most of them employ some form of risk assessment to determine the degree of surveillance to be used among the released offenders, offer their most intensive surveillance during the initial days of release, and augment supervision with a regular program of drug testing. Research priorities from this perspective include ways to improve the ability to assess risk, and ways to improve the impact of drug testing, drug treatment, and other supervision practices.

An alternative perspective on the newly released prisoner focuses on the ex-offender, his or her family, and community members in areas into which that offender has been released. In contrast to the "official agency" perspective, this point of view might be thought of as the "consumer" perspective. At first glance, it may seem that this alternative perspective either is unimportant, already well-understood, or perhaps both. Studies of public opinion about crime and justice tell us that many Americans are dissatisfied with the justice system because they see it as inefficient and/or lenient (Flanagan and Longmire, 1996). It is not wise to take these broad generalizations about the public's view of crime as representative of the opinions and interests of those faced with the reality of ex-offenders newly arrived in their midst. The relatives and neighbors of ex-offenders have useful information about the problems faced both by area residents and by newly-released offenders during the period of reintegration. Ex-offenders themselves also have important insights about the transition processes they must undergo.

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Understanding the transition process from the "consumer" perspective must take account of three important facts: released offenders tend to be concentrated in certain, multi-problem neighborhoods; released offenders both struggle in the face of their neighborhood's problems and contribute to them; and the network of interpersonal relationships many ex-offenders return to have been changed by their removal to prison and are challenged by their return. A consumer-oriented practice would reflect these less commonly discussed "facts" by targeting the relationships among offenders and their families and neighbors, and by confronting the interdependence between the local area's problems and the offender's circumstances.

We know little, however, about those who are affected on a daily basis by released offenders—the family members and residents who serve as the potential supports for the ex-offender during the transition back to community life. Also, we know little about how offenders view their circumstances during transition from prison to community life. What are the perspectives of these consumers on the transition problems offenders face and on the quality of community life, and what is their assessment of contemporary approaches official agencies take to the transition process?

There is good reason to think that learning more about this "consumer" perspective will contribute significantly to our knowledge of the transition ex-offenders face and open the door to new insights about how to increase the odds of successful re-integration into community life. This perspective will also help to identify ways to minimize the impact of incarceration on communities, thereby making them better places to live. A rich body of theory and data (Nelson, Deess and Allen, 1999; Petersilia, 2000) have recently borne fruit in a series of studies that provide support for the "consumer" perspective line of inquiry. In addition, to its heritage in

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social disorganization theory, this research is conditioned by the massive expansion of the criminal justice system in the United States.

THE GROWTH OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

For 23 consecutive years, incarceration rates in the United States have grown. The increase in prisoners has occurred at an average annual rate of over 5% per year, making this country the heaviest user of the prison of any Western democracy. In raw numbers, imprisoned Americans have increased from 200,000 in 1973 to over 1 million in 1996. Never before in history has there been such a lengthy, steady increase in the use of the prison. The growth in incarceration since the mid-1980s is mostly a product of increased penalties for drug offenders (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995), and this has meant an increase in the number of drug offenders removed from their communities and sent to prison, later to be returned. These facts are well known.

It is equally well known that the people who make up this population of prisoners are not drawn from a representative sample of American citizens. They are likely to be young males of color, coming from poor, inner-city areas. In a 10-year-old study of Washington, DC, Lynch and Sabol (1992) estimated that as many as 30% of all black males between 20 and 40 years of age were currently in prison or jail. A doubling of the total prison population since then surely must have increased the number of incarcerated black males dramatically. Thus, the very neighborhoods that suffer most from problems of crime are also those that experience the greatest loss of males to incarceration.

While it is known that prison population increases have affected minority male populations far out of proportion to their numbers in the general population, it is not known precisely how incarceration impacts the neighborhoods in which these males live. There are good theoretical and grounded empirical reasons to think these effects are substantial. The common expectation is that increased levels of criminal justice activity, particularly incarceration, will translate into better neighborhoods when active offenders are removed from those locations. Some research supports this view (DiIulio and Piehl, 1991). On the other hand some researchers have described the various ways in which removing offending residents, through incarceration, can deplete neighborhood social capital and result in a deterioration of social life that may exacerbate, rather than reduce, many of the problems contributing to crime (Rose and Clear, 1998a). At least one study has found that the risk of recidivism is increased when offenders are released to certain high crime/offender concentration areas (Gottfredson and Taylor, 1988), making these areas more undesirable and crime ridden.

The relationship between criminal justice and community life is important because, in cities, crime and the resulting criminal justice activity are concentrated in a subset of neighborhoods. This means that any negative effects of incarceration also will be concentrated in these areas. In light of recent public policies which have resulted in an unprecedented increase in the level of justice activity, the negative effects of incarceration have the potential to devastate community life.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY AND NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CONTROL

There are two levels at which crime may be studied: the individual offender and the social setting of offenses. The former strategy examines what causes particular people to behave in a criminal manner; the latter focuses on why certain places experience more crime and generate more offenders. Social disorganization theory seeks to explain why some neighborhoods consistently produce more crime. Developed originally by Shaw and McKay (1942) and extended more recently by Sampson (1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1988), Bursik (1986, 1988), Rountree and Warner (1999), Rose and Clear (1998a) and others, this theory holds that socially disorganized areas are unable to "self-regulate"—that is, they cannot agree upon and enforce a code of norms and values—due to the damaging effects of problems such as unemployment, family disorganization and poverty. One result of the inability to self-regulate is crime.

According to social disorganization theory, a key factor which destabilizes community life is residential mobility. Mobility is the name given to socio-economic processes by which people choose where to live, and is a complicated variable in the social life of a neighborhood. For instance, people who leave one neighborhood for another one nearby, may maintain ties to friends and family left behind while others may find it difficult to continue these connections. It is believed that areas with unusually high rates of residential mobility will experience more social disorganization because they have a higher proportion of residents who are not integrated into the community because they are in transition. Thus, the lack of integration (and the anonymity that accompanies it) leads to an environment where shared norms and values are neither developed nor enforced. As a result, crime can flourish.

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Voluntary mobility is partly a product of opportunity: places where opportunity abounds will attract inward migration, while places with opportunity deficits will tend to encourage the reverse. Those who remain in the opportunity-starved places, however, do so because they lack choices. In this way, places characterized by concentrations of poor residents may seem less mobile, a social condition thought to decrease disorganization. Alternatively, they may have high levels of coercive mobility.

COERCIVE MOBILITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Although mobility is generally defined as voluntary movement from one place to another, in opportunity-starved locations voluntary relocation is a rare option. Coercive relocation, however, does exist and the most significant coercive source of mobility in poor high-crime areas is imprisonment. The importance of incarceration as a form of mobility is a relatively new phenomenon. Since the 1970s, incarceration rates have risen by 500% and those most effected by this growth are inner city residents of color. It is estimated that the lifetime probability of a black male going to prison is now 28% (Bonczar and Beck, 1997) and in the African-American community of Brownsville in Brooklyn, New York, incarceration rates are 150 times that of another neighborhood, only a few blocks away. In Brownsville, it is estimated that in 1996 alone, about three percent of males went to prison (CASES, 1998). By far, most of the people locked up are eventually released and when they are, they need to be reintegrated into a community, whether they return to their home towns or go somewhere new.

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Central to the argument of "coercive mobility" is the way in which high concentrations of incarceration damage the social capital on which neighborhoods rely for the quality of their collective life. Social capital is composed of two main elements: human capital and social networks. Human capital is the resource individuals need to affect their environments in ways that improve their life chances through talents and credentials. People with healthy levels of human capital can engage effectively in the basic problems of human living: attaining essential goods and services and sustaining interpersonal relationships. Higher levels of human capital also facilitate greater personal success in achieving social status and other conventional forms of accomplishment.

Social capital is also based on social networks, the interconnections of interpersonal support and exchange (Coleman, 1990). People may count among their interpersonal contacts close friends and families, a range of acquaintances or a combination of the two. Thus, networks may be broad or narrow, they may be weak or strong. People will ordinarily have a deep dependence on certain relations, a thin dependence upon others. While strong ties are the foundation of private control, weak ties are the foundation of parochial social control. Consequently, both are needed for effective social control.

One of the most important new formulations of the ecological models is based on "collective efficacy" (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997). This refers to the capacity of local residents in neighborhood areas to affect, in a positive way, each others' public safety by mutual support, supervision of young people, and shared normative expectations for public behavior. In places where neighbors perceive these elements of "collective efficacy" are present, crime should be lower. Empirical tests of the "collective efficacy" hypothesis have confirmed its importance

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as an element of public safety (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999). Recently, Sampson, Morenoff and Earls (1999) clarified the distinction between social capital and collective efficacy. In their conceptualization social capital is comprised of the networks that are the foundation of action, collective efficacy is actualized action. Thus, factors that disrupt networks (the foundation of social capital) reduce the potential for collective efficacy because they reduce the potential for collective action.

It is entirely plausible that incarceration affects human capital and social networks both positively and negatively. Human capital is affected by imprisonment both directly and indirectly. For instance, a person who goes to prison might use the time to get an education, receive job training, and generally turn his life around. Alternatively, a person who goes to prison suffers lifelong deficits in earnings and other measures of life achievement (Freeman, 1992; Spohn and Holleran, 2000). Likewise, the child of a prisoner might benefit from living in a crime-free home or alternatively suffer a reduced likelihood of educational and personal experiences that develop human capital (see Gabel, 1992). As for social networks, while removing lawbreaking individuals from the community might strengthen the networks among those who remain, it may also weaken those networks by promoting factors such as stigma and fear—conditions that reduce, rather than promote linkages and ties among residents. There also is, at a bare minimum, a numerical disadvantage for those who count among their network people who are imprisoned, since the incarcerated are far less likely to be able to provide the social supports that are expected of networks.

The theory of "coercive mobility" submits that deficits in human capital and social networks that result from incarceration "add up" in places that have high concentrations of these

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deficits. The collective impact of reductions in human capital and subtractions from social networks is more than the sum of the individual effects. Since human capital strengthens social networks, and the size and depth of networks are related to their social effectiveness, as each is diminished, the capacity of the other is affected. Consequently, "coercive mobility" operates at the neighborhood level by reducing stability, not only because it diminishes the human and social capital of those who are incarcerated, but also because it has a negative impact on the strengths of those individuals and groups who remain. Thus, the aggregate impact of incarceration may have unintended consequences because at the neighborhood-level this form of public control constrains the effectiveness of private and parochial control, thereby reducing the community's collective efficacy. In the end, this may foster the conditions that lead to more disorganization and, thus, more crime.

"Coercive mobility" and "collective efficacy" may be seen as mutually compatible ideas, both owing their intellectual heritage to social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay, 1942), which maintains that the ecological factors of poverty, mobility, and heterogeneity serve as foundations for crime. The idea of "coercive mobility" is a direct descendent of social disorganization theory, updating one of its main constructs to account for the new significance of incarceration. "Collective efficacy" serves as a mirror image to social disorganization concepts, specifying the conditions that suppress crime rather than the ecological conditions that facilitate it. As newly emerging empirical approaches, these perspectives underscore the significance of "place." They join a growing interest in ecological and contextual analyses of crime and justice (see Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Hawkins, Laub, Lauritsen and Cothern, 2000).

The aim of place-based criminology is to learn how people interact with places in ways that tend to contribute to or constrain crime. Most ecological studies of crime and place have a "black box" character. They estimate the size of the relationship between place variables and crime, and they model the direct and indirect effects of various contextual indicators (for example, female-headed households) upon criminality. Reliable reviews of these studies may be found elsewhere (see Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Here it is sufficient to recognize that ecological characteristics consistently emerge as important explanations of variance in the distribution of crime.

While the quantitative body of literature on the social ecology of crime is growing, qualitative data on this perspective is less prominent. The current study adds to our understanding of the processes that link ecological characteristics and crime by examining the aggregate impact of incarceration on community life through the eyes of the people who live and work in those areas.

PRIOR STUDIES

Coercive mobility can play a destabilizing role in community life that is similar to that of voluntary mobility. In a recent paper (Rose and Clear, 1998a), we reviewed the literature on the impact of removing men from neighborhoods through incarceration and argued that high incarceration rates in certain communities have a negative impact on familial, political and economic systems by effecting social networks. While coercive mobility generally disrupts the local networks that serve as the basis for social capital, just as voluntary mobility does, there is an additional problem created by incarceration: it negatively affects family and friends and their

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attitudes toward the criminal justice system. Our thesis is that by increasing coercive mobility, i.e., removing and returning offenders, incarceration increases social disorganization and limits the ability of community residents to self-regulate. Furthermore, because there is a relationship between private and public controls (Black 1976; Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Rose and Clear, 1998a, 1998b), undermining the effectiveness of one may be undermining the effectiveness of the other.

We recently compiled two quantitative data sets designed to help empirically test this theoretical argument, and our analyses to date lend support to both arguments. One data set, from a Random-Digit-Dial survey of Leon County Residents, measures attitudinal data about the criminal justice system and neighborhood social control. The other data set measures, at the neighborhood level, social characteristics (drawn from 1990 U.S. Census); 1996 and 1997 crime data (from the Tallahassee Police Department); numbers of residents admitted to prison in 1996 and numbers of residents released from prison in 1996 (from Florida Department of Corrections).

By analyzing the attitudinal data, we found (Rose and Clear, 1998b) that knowing someone who has been incarcerated influences people's attitudes about formal and informal social control. For those people exposed to incarceration either by having personally been to prison or by knowing someone who has, a low opinion about formal control is associated with a low opinion of informal control. (The opposite relationship was found for those not exposed to incarceration). Thus, high levels of incarceration may undermine the efficacy of informal social control. This study is important because it illustrates the importance of experiences in shaping attitudes. In particular, exposure to incarceration is a defining experience in influencing how people feel, about both public and private social control.

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From the ecological data Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully (2000) found a nonlinear relationship between incarceration and crime. In that study, we investigated the impact of releases from and admissions to prison in 1996 on crime in 1997. We found, not surprisingly, that releases from prison are related to crime in a positive linear fashion. Admissions, however, at low levels were negligibly related to crime. At moderate levels admissions were negatively related to crime the following year until a certain "tipping point" threshold was reached. After that tipping point, increasing admissions had the effect of increasing crime. The nonlinear relationship is maintained even while controlling for the effect of releases from prison in 1996 on crime in 1997. Thus, contrary to policy expectations, the effect of removing large numbers of offenders from the community may increase, rather than decrease crime.

We then analyzed Tallahassee incarceration rates at the neighborhood level. Almost half (38 of 80 neighborhoods) experienced no admission to prison in 1996. A handful of neighborhoods had high admission rates (for example six neighborhoods had greater than .5% of the residents admitted to prison in 1996). The two primarily residential areas with the highest admission rates in 1996 were Frenchtown and South City.[1] We selected these areas for study. *Figure 1* is a map of the 80 Tallahassee neighborhoods showing admissions and releases in 1996 and crime rates for 1997. The cluster in the southeastern portion of the city marks the

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[1] In previous studies we referred to these areas as Lower Frenchtown and South Monroe, respectively. Chapter Three describes these areas and explains their names. Maps are provided in that chapter.

80 Tallahassee Neighborhoods with Prison Admissions and Releases
Shaded by Neighborhood Crime Rate
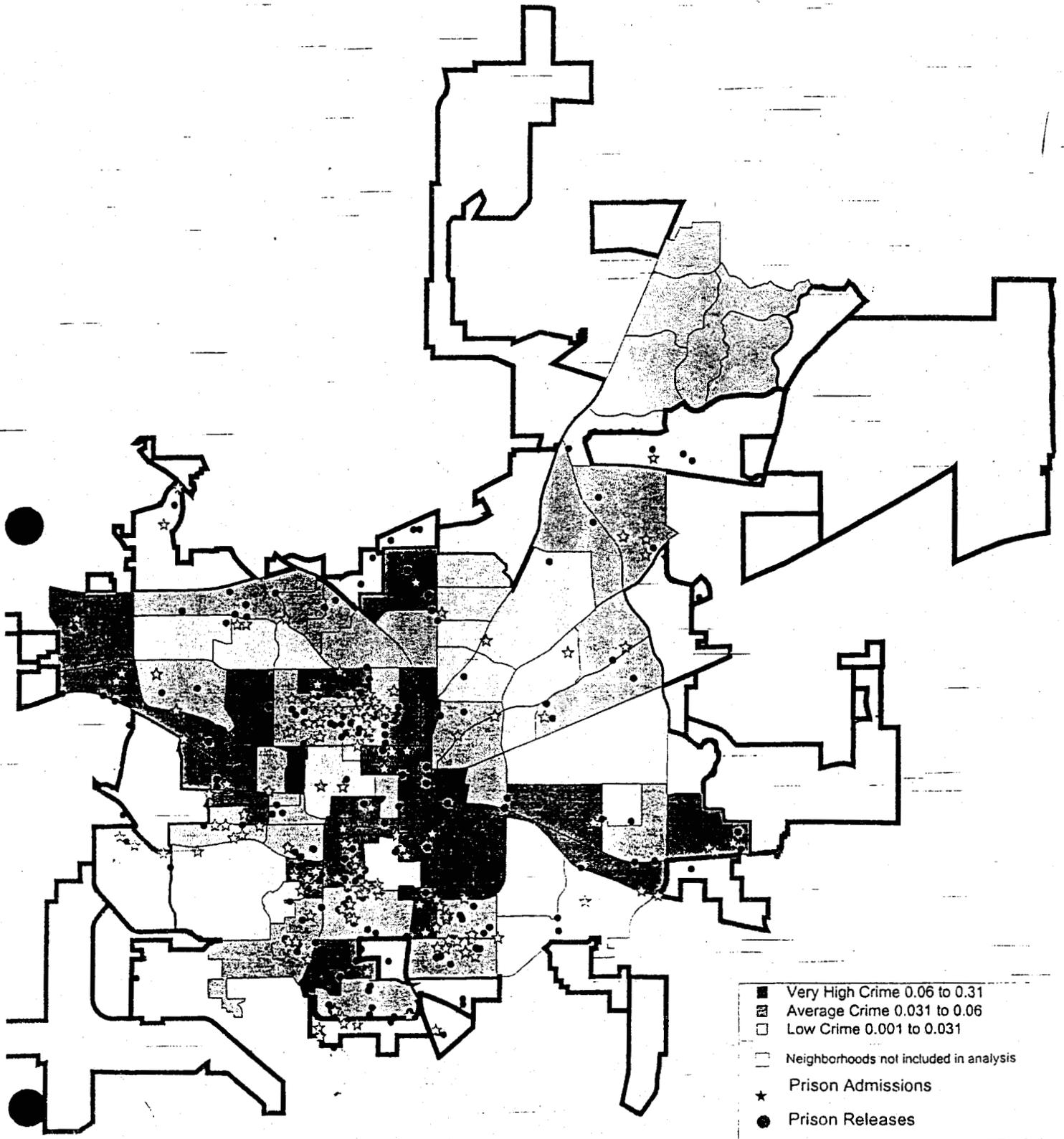
Legend:
- Very High Crime 0.06 to 0.31
- Average Crime 0.031 to 0.06
- Low Crime 0.001 to 0.031
- Neighborhoods not included in analysis
- ★ Prison Admissions
- ● Prison Releases

general location of the South City neighborhood; the cluster in the north-central part of town marks the Frenchtown area. (Precise boundaries for these areas are describe in Chapter Three.)

Our analysis of high incarceration neighborhoods in Tallahassee provides support for the idea that incarceration policy in the form of prison admissions and releases is a factor in overall crime rates at the neighborhood level. The possibility that high concentrations of prison admissions and releases may inhibit, rather than enhance, community stability has important implications for practices of incarceration and transition of release. This study demonstrates the direct effect of incarceration in one year on crime the following year.

The two prior studies of Tallahassee are suggestive rather than conclusive. The sample is small, only 80 neighborhoods and there are statistical complications in the analysis of these data. For instance, the study of citizen attitudes is limited because the data are at the individual-level making it impossible for us to determine the aggregate effect of exposure to incarceration on the community. The study of crimes rates is statistically complex due to modeling issues such as multicollinearity, but, more importantly, it shows only the quantitative patterns that establish the relationship between incarceration and crime. It tells us little about the specific linkages between incarceration, social control and crime in these high volume locations. These studies, however, do provide strong quantitative evidence that important social processes surround the imprisonment and release of offenders in concentrated levels, but we can only speculate as to what these are and how residents and offenders live in relation to them.

Thus, the next step in our analysis, the current study, was to gather the kind of qualitative data that will enable us to more fully understand how the linkages operate between high levels of incarceration and crime at the neighborhood-level. In the chapters that follow, we explore

"coercive mobility" as an ecological variable through qualitative means. Working within two neighborhoods enduring high rates of incarceration, we report on a series of individual and group interviews designed to assess the way incarceration affects neighborhood life in those locations. Due to the nature of this study (a small sample in two neighborhoods) the results must be considered preliminary rather than as conclusive, and as such, they are useful for developing hypotheses and suggestions for future study.

An Executive Summary is provided in this report's preliminary pages. The following section, Chapter Two, "Research Strategy," describes the multi-pronged methodology employed in the research, as well as our sample-selection process. We also outline the protections afforded participants. In Chapter Three, "The Frenchtown and South City Neighborhoods in Historical and Social Context," we outline significant social, political and economic developments that have helped to shape the character and demographics of both communities in Tallahassee, and review issues that are of current concern. These data are drawn from archival material as well as interviews with public officials and community leaders. In Chapter Four, "Resident's Perceptions of the Impact of Removal and Reentry," and Chapter Five, "Ex-Offender's Perceptions of the Impact of Removal and Reentry," we report on the perspectives of a sample of residents who currently live in these two high-incarceration neighborhoods and ex-offenders who either currently live in these areas or were living there at the time of their arrest and incarceration. Using data from focus groups, one-on-one and group interviews, we analyze how their experiences and perceptions may help us understand the processes by which coercive mobility makes communities less capable of suppressing crime. Finally, in Chapter Six we present our conclusions and recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH STRATEGY

This study uses a multi-pronged approach to investigate the aggregate impact of high levels of prison admissions and releases on community life. First we developed detailed case studies of two Tallahassee neighborhoods, both with high rates of incarceration, and then we conducted focus groups and supplemental group and individual interviews with neighborhood residents, some of whom had previously been incarcerated, some of whom had not. The benefit of this approach is that the case study analysis enables us to gain a deep understanding of the way individuals experience the impact of incarceration on themselves, their families and their neighborhoods.

Specifically, the research strategy consists of using public data and open-ended interviews with key informants to understand the neighborhoods, conducting neighborhood-specific focus groups and interviews to understand the impact of incarceration on community life, and concluding with a debriefing and community dialogue meeting to verify our findings and sharpen the final policy recommendations.

THE SELECTION OF TALLAHASSEE NEIGHBORHOODS

This study employs the case study design at two levels. Tallahassee was selected as a city for investigation, and two neighborhoods within Tallahassee were chosen as specific cases for analysis. Tallahassee was chosen as the site for this research because of its role in previous studies on the impact of incarceration on community life (for review see Clear, Rose and Ryder,

2000). The two neighborhoods were selected because this prior research identified them as having high rates of incarceration. Consequently, our sites meet the criteria for case studies of being worthy of detailed study because they are not atypical of a larger group of cases in which there might be interest. Information about intricate social processes gathered in these case studies should be informative of the broader class of cases from which these are drawn.

As a mid-size city of approximately 140,643 (Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department, 1997), Tallahassee may be considered representative of many American mid-sized cities. Unlike larger cities (Chicago, Baltimore, etc.) where researchers have been examining facets of neighborhood life using proxies for neighborhoods that are quite large (frequently census tracts), the neighborhoods in Tallahassee range from 200 to 5,000 residents. Thus, they approximate more closely the size of more typical American neighborhoods. The small size of the neighborhoods also is beneficial to this study because it increases the likelihood that the focus group participants are representative of the neighborhoods from which they were selected. Finally, because the processes linking incarceration and crime are quite complex, we believe that working in a smaller city increased our ability to identify and isolate many effects, and that the detailed information we gathered will serve as a foundation for future studies of other cities.

The selection of the two neighborhoods study sites is also strategic. Previously, we identified neighborhoods in Tallahassee whose boundaries were based upon the 1990 U.S. Census, 1996 and 1997 Tallahassee Police Department crime reporting data, and information gathered from local neighborhood associations. We then mapped addresses of people admitted to and released from prison 1996 provided to us by the Florida Department of Corrections. As described in Chapter One, those analyses showed that after a "tipping point" increasing the

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density of admissions to prison increases crime in the community. We selected two residential areas with the highest incarceration rates for further study. One neighborhood we labeled Frenchtown (Census Tract Six, Blocks One and Two) and the other we labeled South Monroe (Census Tract 10.01, Block One). Both are in the urban core of Tallahassee but are not adjacent to one another.

We selected these neighborhoods because, although they are similar in terms of their level of incarceration, 1990 US Census data showed them to be different on two key social disorganization indicators: voluntary residential mobility and racial heterogeneity. These data showed Frenchtown to be a more residentially stable and racially homogeneous neighborhood than South Monroe. Thus, by selecting these two neighborhoods, we felt we would examine two slightly different neighborhoods coping with a similar level of incarceration thereby isolating the effects of incarceration from other disorganizing conditions.

Once we began interviews with city officials and neighborhood leaders, however, it became apparent that it would be necessary to expand our South Monroe designation beyond Block One to include Blocks Two and Three of the 10.01 census tract. Although the original work to identify meaningful neighborhoods had revealed some consensus (among the officials helping us establish neighborhood boundaries) that Block One was different from Blocks Two and Three, we determined from our field visits that it would suit our research agenda more effectively to treat all three Census Blocks as one neighborhood unit. This larger area we labeled South City.

Our reasoning for this change was two-fold. First, the original boundary of Block One (described in more detail in Chapter Three) has a small population (N= 249) and almost one-half of the area consists of two shopping malls. Although the claim by one city official we

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interviewed at the outset of this project that there was "no neighborhood there" seemed an exaggeration, it was clear to us that we would have difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of people for the focus groups from such a small number of residents. Furthermore, we learned that the newly-formed South City Neighborhood Association included Blocks One, Two and Three within its boundaries, indicating that the people who live in the area consider Census Tract 10.01 to be a cohesive neighborhood. Thus, it made sense for both research and pragmatic reasons to broaden our boundaries. We believed this would not be problematic since analysis of the 1990 US Census data showed the larger neighborhood had similar characteristics to the smaller one and so differences between South City and Frenchtown were preserved. As was the case when only considering Block One, the larger South City neighborhood had a more transient residential population than Frenchtown and it was also slightly more racially diverse than Frenchtown (78% black, 21% white vs. 99.5% black). From speaking with officials and being in the neighborhood, however, we now expect the 2000 census to indicate both South City and Frenchtown to be nearly 100% black. As a result, although South City does appear to be more residentially mobile than Frenchtown, the two neighborhoods are more alike than we previously believed.

    In this research we draw from a sample of two and thus, generalizing to other cases is difficult. Furthermore, because each individual case is unique in some sense, it is difficult to know whether the lessons from two cases can be transferred to others. The small sample size and problems of representativeness may prohibit drawing causal conclusions, but the deep analysis of the two neighborhoods generates rich data that help to contextualize our understanding of the

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effect of the processes of incarceration and release on individuals, families and the quality of community life.

PUBLIC DATA COLLECTION

The first stage of analysis was to enhance our general knowledge of Tallahassee and the two study neighborhoods by compiling data about the development and recent history of each of these areas. These data informed us about the areas' demographic composition over time, significant social, economic and political developments, and the role and influence of institutions such as churches and businesses. This information also was essential to understanding the environment in which our subjects live so that we might place into context the statements and experiences of the interviewees and focus group participants.

In this data collection phase, we first conducted a broad survey of both historical and contemporary studies, academic writings and newspaper articles. For general historical information on Tallahassee, we reviewed the holdings of the Special Collections at Florida State University Library, the Coleman Library at Florida A & M University, as well as the Leroy Collins Leon County Public Library and the State Library of Florida. The Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc. was also helpful for its architectural survey of buildings in the Frenchtown area.

We were particularly interested in obtaining information about the African-American community in Tallahassee, given that this is the primary racial and ethnic group in the two study neighborhoods. Thus, two important sources were the Riley House Museum and Center of African-American History and Culture, in Tallahassee, and the Schomberg Center for Research

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and Black Culture in New York City. From these, we obtained local family history as well as notable publications on the civil rights movement in Tallahassee, including a contemporary report of *The Tallahassee Bus Protest* (Smith and Killian,1958); Glenda Rabby's (1999) *The Pain and the Promise: the Struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee, Florida*; and James Fendrich's *Ideal Citizens* (1993), which explores the legacy of the Black student movement that had its roots in-Tallahassee.

The on-line archives of the *Tallahassee Democrat* provided important leads to people and subjects of current interest in Tallahassee, including criminal and juvenile justice, race relations, housing, community revitalization and drugs.- Important political and developmental information also was retrieved from various City and County reports and announcements and press releases from the Executive Office of the Governor and the City of Tallahassee. The Tallahassee Counseling and Referral Service, Inc.'s comprehensive database allowed us to search for available services appropriate to the needs of ex-offenders and their families. Data from the 1990 United States Census were examined for neighborhood demographics and conditions, and census tract maps were obtained from Leon County Management Information Services in order to code key locations and also stimulate discussion within the focus groups.

In addition to collecting physical documents, we garnered information about the neighborhoods through site visits. This was especially important since the researchers were not based-in Tallahassee. At the beginning of the project, prior to any formal interviews or recruitment screenings, we toured the neighborhoods with officers from the Tallahassee Police Department, and we also drove through and around the communities on our own. As the research progressed and we were in the neighborhoods on a monthly basis, we also had the

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opportunity to travel with representatives from the Florida Department of Corrections, an AIDS services program, a neighborhood association, and a news magazine, each of which provided a different perspective, enabling us to see the communities with "fresh eyes."

The collection of public data occurred most intensely at the beginning of the research project as we sought to learn as much as possible about the history of Tallahassee as well as contemporary local issues. We continued to gather such information, however, as events occurred throughout the course of the project (i.e., the City threatened to close a transition house) and participants made reference to particular people, topics or incidents.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

We interviewed a series of key informants, or "experts," to learn more about the current condition of the two neighborhoods, as well as any specific issues or policies affecting them. Interview subjects were drawn from three general groups: government officials, service providers and individuals identified (either by themselves or by others) as leaders within the community. Each had knowledge and opinions of various aspects of neighborhood or justice-related policy.

We used a snowball technique to identify experts. This nonprobability sampling method is appropriate for identifying study subjects when it is difficult to identify and/or obtain cooperation of members of the population of interest, or where the target population is a social cluster of people defined by elective self-conceptions rather than formal attributes or published lists. The technique begins by identifying at least one member of the group of interest and asking for a referral to other group members who may be appropriate for the study. This process continues until a sufficient sample has been obtained. Snowball sampling was fitting for this

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study because of the difficulty of locating individuals, other than by word of mouth, who were both willing and able to speak knowledgeably about the effects of incarceration and release upon these two communities.

We began our sample with city officials with whom we had worked during our prior research studies: people within the Tallahassee Police Department and the City Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. Other key government officials were included in our sample by virtue of having been elected or appointed to public office, or due to their position in the civil service hierarchy. In addition, we had previously established contacts with several non-justice agencies (e.g., representatives from the Tallahassee Coalition for the Homeless, Catholic Social Services, and Neighborhood Justice Center) that have extensive and long-standing networks in the communities. After interviewing these officials we asked each of them to refer us to community leaders who could speak authoritatively about the neighborhoods' history and current conditions and the effects of incarceration.

Using a conversational interview protocol, we asked officials and community leaders about current neighborhood issues pertaining to incarceration and release, as well as initiatives to reduce crime, assessments of the role of drugs on community disorganization, and the effect of incarceration on community life. (See *Appendix 1, Expert Interview Topics.*) Although most of the interviews were in person, a few were conducted on the telephone.[1] Experts were told that

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[1] With permission of each participant, we audio taped and transcribed the interviews to facilitate accurate review of the data. We informed all participants that even if they agreed to be taped, if they wished to stop taping at any time, we would comply with that request. Given their positions of power relative to the researchers, and the fact that we were interviewing to understand official and quasi-official perspectives on broad social issues, the experts' participation truly could be considered voluntary. There was little or no risk associated with their participation as these officials and residential leaders are, by the nature of their work, public figures known by others in the community. Therefore, we did not request informed consent signatures.

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they would be invited formally to participate in the final debriefing meeting, thereby providing an additional opportunity for input. In this report, we chose to use descriptive terms (i.e., a city official, a community leader as identifiers) rather than the experts' actual names.

We conducted 16 formal interviews (one of the 16 was a group interview of six people) that were tape recorded and transcribed. Most of these were conducted in February and March, 2000. In addition, over the course of the research we had approximately 20 informal discussions with both official and unofficial leaders. We believe we conducted an exhaustive sampling of appropriate experts since no new names surfaced by the end of the project of people whom we had not already interviewed. Our interviews included representatives from the Tallahassee Police Department, the Florida Department of Corrections, and the Tallahassee Urban League; City housing and neighborhood service officials; community organizers, neighborhood association officers, and tenant association staff; local ministers and missionaries; drug treatment and HIV/AIDS service providers; youth workers, justice advocates, and caseworkers; program evaluators, academicians and a local historian. These interviews enabled us to learn about the current issues in the neighborhood and to obtain a sense of the varied perspectives on crime and justice.

FOCUS GROUPS[2]

The purpose of the focus groups was to explore residents' attitudes toward high levels of incarceration and crime, and to identify the specific circumstances encountered as a result of

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[2] For the design, testing, and execution of the focus groups in this study, we relied heavily on the methodological techniques described in Morgan & Krueger, volumes 1-6 (1998).

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offenders leaving and returning to the community. Group discussion was a particularly advantageous method for our study for two reasons. First, the use of a group enabled participants to play off one another's opinions; to disagree, explore, and develop complex material in a fairly short period of time. Second, the use of a group helped us to determine whether certain points of view held by one participant might be widely shared or idiosyncratic. For the purpose of learning the perspectives of residents who had recently served time in prison ("ex-offenders") and those who had not ("residents"), we recruited for these two "types" of focus groups in both neighborhoods.

Community residents who indicated that they had been released from prison within the past four years were assigned to an Ex-offender Focus Group, and those who had not been incarcerated in the past four years, but who lived or worked in the neighborhood, were assigned to the Resident Focus Group. This division of residents was designed to maximize the willingness of individuals in each group to speak freely amongst a group of people with one common experience of incarceration: either having been recently incarcerated or not. This division also enabled us to direct our questions to the common experience of each group. The four-year release criterion corresponds with the time period of our previous study (Clear, Rose and Ryder, 2000). In addition, by sampling those who have been in the community for a length of time, our intent was to obtain a deeper understanding of the problems associated with community reintegration than if we had restricted the sample to those released in recent months. We did, however, screen a large number of individuals who had been released decades ago; indeed the final Resident Group included a few individuals who had been incarcerated and released many years prior to 1996, the outer limit of our time frame. In addition, the one-on-one interviews that

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augment the Ex-Offender Focus Group data include some ex-offenders who had been out in the community for slightly longer than four years. Finally, while we attempted to recruit both males and females for all focus groups, women represent a significantly smaller proportion of the offender population and proved much more difficult to locate.

Pilot Focus Groups

One direct outcome of our contacts with experts was the formulation of two pilot focus groups—one for residents and one for ex-offenders. Five high-level community leaders served as the Resident Pilot Focus Group, including a representative from the NAACP, local drug and alcohol treatment providers, social service agency directors, and a local minister. Four recently released offenders living in a transition house, located just north of Frenchtown, participated in an Ex-offender Pilot Focus Group. These pilot groups allowed us the opportunity to pre-test all of our informed consent procedures and the focus group research protocols. The participants made suggestions to improve our research questions, offered procedural information, and recommended additional contact names. The sampling process and the research protocols used in the final focus groups are discussed below.

Sampling Process

As we had done when recruiting experts, we continued to employ a snowball sampling technique to recruit potential focus group members. First, we asked each of the officials who we had interviewed for referrals. Because we were primarily interested, however, in interviewing those who have formative opinions about the neighborhood and who could speak authoritatively

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about its history and current concerns, we followed that snowball for only a couple of rotations. We then sought additional starting points from which to develop a list of contacts and recruit participants, starting with community leaders. Multiple starting points were important in order to reduce, as much as possible, any bias in the composition of the final focus groups. (If all participants know each other, it is very likely that they hold similar opinions and have similar experiences, and thus, other points of view are missed.) This was particularly important as a mechanism for drawing participants from both the home-owner and public housing residents.

Community leaders, beginning with elected officials of the Neighborhood Associations in each of the two neighborhoods, were particularly instrumental in our focus group recruitment strategy. By seeking referrals through established and trusted contacts in the community, the snowball technique was the least intrusive and most efficient means of locating appropriate candidates for the focus groups. Community leaders were also important because our aim was to avoid entering the neighborhoods under the auspices of official justice agencies in order to minimize the perceptions of bias that might attach to our questions about justice agency policies and practices. On several occasions, community leaders not only referred us to other residents (many times making an initial introductory phone call on our behalf), but accompanied us in the neighborhood to homes of prospective participants. Using leaders' referrals, we then proceeded by asking every person we met, no matter how briefly, to suggest at least one other person with whom we could speak. We also made a presentation and screened people at the Frenchtown and South City Neighborhood Association meetings, a residential drug treatment program and a church prayer service.

To augment the referrals we received from community leaders and neighborhood associations, we created a flyer describing the research study in general terms, which we then made available through counselors at social service agencies and community churches. We also used the flyer as a "calling card;" when prospective participants were not at home we left the flyer in the door or with another household member. The flyer included a local telephone number at Florida State University where we had a local office. In addition, we requested from the Florida Department of Corrections a list of people (and their last-known address) currently on probation in the two communities under study, for the purpose of recruiting them for the Ex-offender Focus Groups. Because we then cross-referenced the names and addresses with the Department's Internet page on releasees, if these ex-offenders asked how we knew their address (which they did on at least two occasions) we referred to the Internet rather than the Department of Corrections.

Screening for Focus Groups

Recruiting potential focus group participants proceeded through two levels of screening. The first level entailed the use of a structured screening instrument, while the second level targeted previously screened individuals whom we considered to be "good" focus group participants. While one does not want to bias intentionally an interview/focus group sample by leaving out key constituents whose views would be important and representative of interesting subclasses, it is also well recognized that these methods have best results when subjects are selected for strategic reasons. For example, it is not very useful to select people for interviewing who know little about the subject at hand or are unwilling to talk openly and candidly about sensitive topics. Likewise, it is important to mix into focus groups a set of people with diverse

views, all of whom are willing to talk and to listen to others. A focus group composed of non-talkers or non-listeners will not provide good data. Thus, we made purposeful choices about residents to target for focus group participation, based on potential participants' willingness and interest, level of articulation, availability, and - by virtue of opinions, occupation, age, residency, gender or other characteristic - group diversity.

Initial screenings were conducted both over the telephone and face-to-face, depending on the person's preference and availability, and the location of the research team. The screening instrument was designed to gather residency and demographic data, basic information on incarceration, offense and release experience, and degree of involvement in neighborhood life. In addition, we used this opportunity to ask respondents to refer us to others who lived in the neighborhood (see *Appendix 2, Screening Instrument*). We told people of our organizational affiliations, offered how the results might be of help to the community and assured them of confidentiality. We also affirmed that the screening interview did not obligate them to participate in the focus group. We requested permission to contact them in the future once the dates had been set for the focus groups, in order to inquire about their availability and willingness to participate at that time. The screening interview helped us to assess people's willingness to talk and their ability to express thoughts well (important in any focus group design but of particular concern in samples of residents in multi-problem locations).

We screened a total of 120 people; 90 were potential participants for the Resident Group (31 males, 59 females) and 30 were potential participants for the Ex-offender Group (27 males, 3 females). Residents' perceptions of neighborhood boundaries and our census block/police reporting boundaries were occasionally at odds, especially in the Frenchtown area. For example,

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several people who we screened at a Frenchtown Neighborhood Association meeting were technically from adjacent neighborhoods. The 17 people we screened who were not actually living or working full time within our study boundaries were deleted from the pool of potential focus group participants, leaving a group of 103 people from whom to recruit (78 for the Resident Groups and 25 for Ex-Offender Groups). We maintained a master list of potential focus group candidates and relevant tracking information (i.e., name of subject, referral person, address, phone number or location where we might find them in the community).[3]

Once we had created an extensive list of potential focus group participants, we reviewed subjects' demographics (seeking to create a diverse group of participants) as well as the likelihood of each person's attendance. We mailed a flyer to inform people of the dates and times of the focus groups and called all who had given us a phone number. In the days prior to the meetings we also visited homes to remind people and to offer transportation to the meetings. Although we were unable to offer financial incentives, we did provide a light meal for participants preceding the focus group.

Resident and Ex-Offender Focus Groups and Interviews

The central data-gathering step was the neighborhood-specific focus groups with residents and recently-released offenders. The focus groups, augmented by additional interviews, were designed to gather specific data about the dynamics of removing and returning offenders to the community and the role of drugs in this process. The actual focus groups were conducted the first

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[3] When not in use by the research team, this list was locked in a file cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office.

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week of June 2000, and were held in a neighborhood center, a church and a Boys and Girls Club activity room.

The two Resident Focus Groups each lasted approximately three hours. The 14 participants in the Frenchtown Resident Focus Group ranged in age from 21-67 and included 4 males and 10 females. Thirteen participants were African-American and one was white. In the South City Resident Focus Group there were 12 participants (3 males and 9 females) ranging in age from 29-73. All were African-American.

The Ex-offender Focus Groups had very low participation despite repeated assurances from many individuals that they would be available and willing to participate. Three ex-offenders turned out for the South City focus groups and two for the Frenchtown group. All five were African-American males, ranging in age from 26 to 48. To augment the ex-offender data we conducted one-on-one interviews with eight additional young, African-American men who had been incarcerated, asking questions similar to those used in the focus groups.

The focus groups were conducted by an experienced facilitator to ensure effective data collection and management. The facilitator was assisted by members of a local justice advocacy organization, one of whom had previously been incarcerated. The list of issues covered by the facilitator included topics that had emerged in the first two data-gathering stages of this project, and questions stemming from our prior research findings. (See *Appendix 3, Focus Group Instruments, Residents and Ex-offenders.*) Participants were asked to speak candidly about both the personal and communal effects and of removing a large number of criminal offenders from the neighborhood and then, after prison, returning them back to the community. The protocol also

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included questions about neighborhood drug use and trafficking, attitudes toward police, correctional institutions and participation in the political process.

The group sessions were recorded by a professional stenographer and transcribed. This occurred with the informed knowledge and consent of the participants.[4] Individuals were noted in transcriptions primarily by number, but occasionally a participant did use a name and the stenographer recorded it. All names, however, have been deleted from the research report; only general demographic descriptors are used to promote a smoother reading.[5]

There are several ways in which a focus-group model for eliciting information presents problems for interpretation. It is difficult to verify statements, and it is difficult in a group situation to explore any one participant's comments in the same detail as might be possible in a one-on-one interview. It is also unlikely that highly charged personal information would emerge

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[4] To minimize potential risks, we reviewed with group participants all aspects of the informed consent form, especially noting the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of the research. As with the screening instrument, we provided the project's bureaucratic affiliations and its source of funding. At the end of the group meeting, all participants were asked to sign a second consent form indicating whether or not they would permit their anonymous statements to be used in the study, now knowing what was discussed. No one rescinded their consent. Group members were asked to treat anything said in the group as confidential, although the researchers could not provide any guarantees about group participants' behaviors (i.e., group members' telling others outside the group about what was discussed). Also, we asked participants to refrain from saying anything in the group about illegal acts they may want to commit in the future, and reiterated that any such discussion would be immediately cut off. Finally, subjects were told that participation in the focus group and data collected on the project could not be used in any way to affect appeals, parole decisions, or any other legal or administrative dealings in which they may be involved. Participants were asked to provide us with contact information (address, phone number, etc.) if they wished to be notified of the final debriefing meeting during which preliminary findings were to be presented. The signed informed consent sheets (and all documents associated with that person) were given a code number and immediately filed.

[5] To alleviate any anxiety raised by the focus group discussion about marital, family, employment and financial problems associated with both the removal and return of offenders to the community, we compiled a list of addresses and phone numbers of local community resources that may be helpful, including drug treatment information. This packet of information also included the names, addresses and phone numbers of the Principal Investigator and the sponsoring agencies, and was given to all focus group participants at the conclusion of each group.

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in such a setting (although it is also problematic whether this information would surface in interviews, even if desirable). Critics also suggest that the sample size of a typical focus group is too small to obtain reliable information, and that it is difficult to know the difference between loosely held beliefs, actual experiences, and group-generated opinions ("group-think"). Some opinions held by participants may be unusual to the broader population, and it is important not to rely too heavily on any one person's comments.

On the other hand, working in-depth with a small group easily enables researchers to tap opinions that are dominant. That is, feelings that are widely shared will emerge in the discussions of even a small number of respondents. While the small number will inevitably mean that some "unique" feelings may have been elicited, we can be confident that any dominant points of view, shared across the population, will be represented in this small discussion group format. Thus, the challenge in interpreting group discussion data is to differentiate the less representative talk from that which represents more mainstream thinking in the group. This is done by searching for and reporting recurring themes in the group discussions and paying heed to idiosyncratic comments Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

Finally, our difficulty in screening, recruiting and optimizing the participation of recently-released offenders in our focus groups should be noted. Such problems may be indicative of ex-offenders' marginal, disorganized or transient lifestyle. For many, being able to plan in advance and to follow through on that commitment may be difficult given their current life circumstances. In addition, there may have been the fear that coming together in a group of other ex-offenders

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from the same small community would be inviting problems.[6] Another possibility was distrust on the part of ex-offenders; it is very likely that people were suspicious of the researchers and concerned that we might have law enforcement connections. These obstacles are not insurmountable but require more time and resources to overcome than available to this study.

DEBRIEFING AND COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MEETING

It is important to "check out" what is learned from the case study with the subjects whose lives we had studied. Incarceration and community reintegration are complex topics and we sought to ensure that we appropriately captured, as closely as possible, the perceptions, beliefs and experiences of the participants, thereby providing a validity test of the themes and implications of the study. Thus, we arranged for a debriefing meeting in which to present preliminary findings and to elicit feedback through comments of an expert panel and an open community discussion.

To assist in this process, we requested seven key individuals to serve on an expert panel. Four of these individuals had participated in the Resident Pilot Focus Group in March. The fifth panelist is a researcher involved in criminal justice issues whom we had previously interviewed. The remaining two were the Presidents of the Frenchtown Neighborhood Association and the South City Neighborhood Association. Both had been involved as a key informant from the beginning of the project. The President of the South City Neighborhood Association was unable to participate and suggested the Vice President join the panel. The President of the Frenchtown Neighborhood Association was unable to attend at the last moment (see *Appendix 4, Debriefing*

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[6] In one of our ex-offender focus groups, two participants were surprised to encounter one another and later one reported that they were initially uneasy due to an unresolved conflict previous to their current reentry.

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Meeting Panelists). We provided the six panelists with a synopsis of our primary findings and our policy recommendations and asked that they review the document and speak briefly on any or all key points. Our intent was to solicit their opinions as to the appropriateness of our recommendations, as well as to generate discussion around any of the findings.

Over 150 flyers were mailed to people within Frenchtown and South City, including every official and community leader we had spoken with, every resident for whom we had an address, as well as key organizations with which we had interacted during the course of the project. Thus, on September 21, 2000, we convened the final debriefing meeting. In this session, we presented our general findings and recommendations, after which the panel of experts responded and spurred a discussion of the implications with community residents. Approximately 25 residents participated in the two-hour meeting, which was held in a conference room close to both communities but in neither (on the Florida A & M University campus). As a result of the debriefing, and based on the feedback from participants, minor alterations were made in our discussion of the results, and additional recommendations were included.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FRENCHTOWN & SOUTH CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

IN HISTORICAL & SOCIAL CONTEXT

Frenchtown and South City were chosen for this study because both neighborhoods have high incarceration rates relative to other communities in Tallahassee. As such, they are ideal locations to examine the impact of incarceration on community life. These neighborhoods are alike in some respects and different in others. Frenchtown is older and more established - it is often described as a "famous" black neighborhood, with its name recognized throughout Florida's African-American community. South City is less well-known, less well established, and has more concentrated sections of public housing. Rental property is more prevalent in South City; Frenchtown has a greater share of thriving businesses. These and other differences have to do with the way Tallahassee has developed economically and socially.

Despite these differences, the neighborhoods have several important characteristics in common. Much of their similarity derives from the fact that they are populated almost exclusively by African-Americans. As a result, they share much of the recent history of Southern race relations and its heritage of segregation: discrimination, economic inequality, and political isolation. Both areas are poorer than most of the rest of Tallahassee, both have large enclaves of sub-standard housing, and both are home to large numbers of unemployed, single-parent households, and families struggling to survive on marginal incomes. Within each neighborhood, however, there are also well-kept properties, solid middle-class housing, intact families with long roots in the area, and residents who are well-known community leaders. Whatever the liabilities

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and assets of each neighborhood, the people who live in these locations, only about a mile apart, share a common history in their larger town: entrenched post-civil war segregation followed by a turbulent civil rights period, a recent history of fast-paced economic change and political conflict, and a reputation for higher-than-average rates of crime and disorder. Both neighborhoods are fairly close to Florida's State Capital building, yet they also have in common a relative isolation from that political society and its dominant powers.

In this chapter, we describe the history and social context of these two neighborhoods. This description is offered as a backdrop for our analysis of the impact of incarceration on the individuals and families who live and work there. Our description of the neighborhoods is based both on formal, audio-taped interviews and informal discussions with government officials, community leaders and service providers. Some spoke with us in their official role only, whereas others wore two "hats" speaking as both an official and a community resident. In all, we talked to 36 individuals including housing and community organizer officials, representatives from the two neighborhood associations, local ministers, justice advocates, a local historian, and youth caseworkers. Most of the information, however, is drawn from taped interviews with 16 individuals; multiple quotations from these experts are presented in the following pages. In addition, data were collected from archival material, informal discussions with local residents during several visits to Tallahassee, and our own observations.

TALLAHASSEE

Tallahassee is located in the northwest portion of Florida, in the center of an eight-county area known as The Panhandle, or the "Big Bend." Situated among rolling hills barely 20 miles south

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of the Georgia State line and 20 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico, Tallahassee has served as the State Capital since 1824. It is also the seat of government for Leon County. Rarely considered traditionally southern because of its unique demographics and rapid growth, North Florida nevertheless shares with its neighboring states many of the characteristics of the Deep South, in terms of culture, politics and race relations (Rabby, 1999: 1-2). Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth century Leon County was Florida's largest cotton county within the State's plantation belt and Tallahassee was a major trading center (Paisely, 1971). After the Civil War and Reconstruction, Florida's population remained concentrated in the rural Panhandle (McClenahan, 1994) where many former slaves continued to farm, some as sharecroppers, others as landowners. At the turn of the century, however, black migration into the city of Tallahassee escalated (peaking in the 1940s), as younger people sought better educational and employment opportunities in town (Barnes, 1999).

Between 1950 and 1960, Tallahassee's population increased by 77 percent and the city moved away from its traditional agrarian economy. Employment opportunities in state government expanded (for both white and black citizens) and "...two universities, one Black and one white, provided a social and intellectual counterpoint to the area's conservative mentality" (Rabby, 1999:3). Although the small town insularity had begun to break down, and there was little evidence of racial violence when the 1950s began, blacks and whites in Tallahassee lived in legally and socially separate worlds. By the mid-1950s, dissatisfaction with the status quo began to erupt on several fronts, perhaps most dramatically with the 1956 citywide bus boycott led by Florida A & M students (Smith, 1989). Even after nearly a decade of demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, and court rulings, most locally owned stores remained

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segregated until passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, and final integration of the schools did not occur until 1970 (Rabby, 1999). The civil rights movement in Tallahassee, however, was influential throughout the South and induced significant and substantial changes for the city's inhabitants (Fendrich, 1993). Today, a legacy of activism remains among citizens working to address the "new" civil rights issues of "employment inequity, economic subordination, and political powerlessness" (Rabby, 1999: 8).

Today, Florida State University and Florida A & M University, less than one mile apart, continue to "form two points in a triangle of institutions that dominate the city. The third...is state government" (Egerton, 1971). (See Figure 2, Map of Tallahassee.) These institutions have helped to shape Tallahassee's population as relatively young, well educated, and affluent. Between 1980 and 1994 the city population grew 64%, from 81,458 to 133,731. In 1994 the racial composition of Tallahassee was 68% White, 29% African-American, and 3% Hispanic, and the median income was $40,400 (Leon County, 1999 :4). While the fastest growing business sectors in Tallahassee include computer hardware vendors, software developers, and trade associations (Tallahassee, 1999a), state government remains the area's largest employer. A recent city report indicates, however, that new job opportunities are primarily in the service sector, which typically offers low wages, and thus underemployment is a significant problem (Tallahassee Area Chamber of Commerce, 1999).

A sprawling development pattern in Tallahassee has resulted in many high-income residents moving out of both the urban core and southern areas of town, leading to the neglect of these two areas (Tallahassee Area Chamber of Commerce 1999). The main residential growth of the city has occurred in the northeast part of town. The prototype area for this growth is

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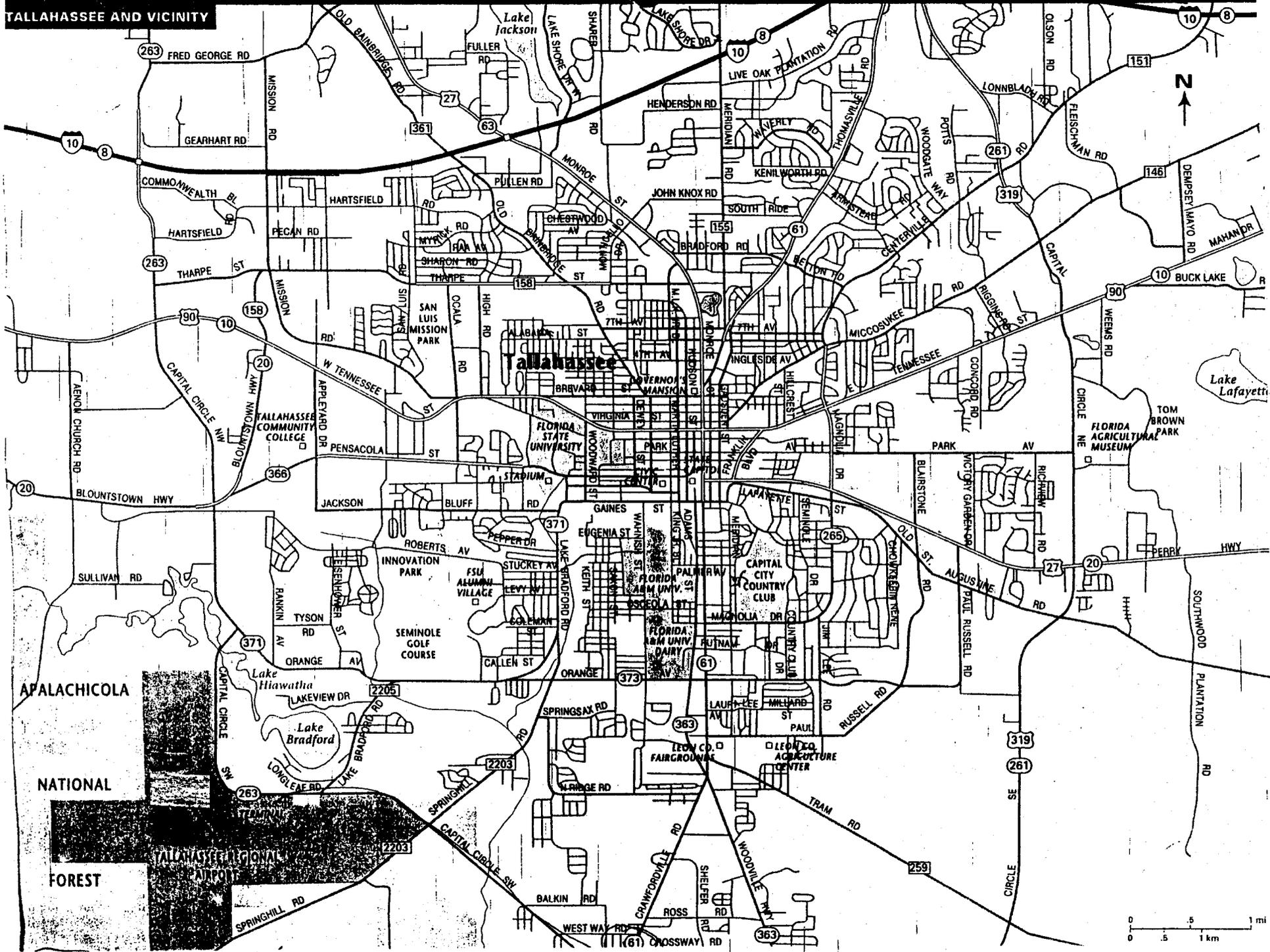
"Killearn," an upper-middle class planned community that our respondents often used as a contrast when making a point about how Frenchtown or South City differ from other areas in Tallahassee. Seven of the City's census tracts (25%) - including those in which Frenchtown and South City are located - contain high concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities (Leon County, 1999, p.4). In a recent editorial the Director of the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department stated that "within the 10-square-mile area of what is defined as the central city, you will find a 30-year trend of higher levels of poverty, and a higher concentration of poverty than anywhere else in the county" (Gray, 1999).

Tallahassee is currently in the process of a major multi-institutional, neighborhood revitalization project. In 1999, the city received several awards for efforts to develop the downtown and to revitalize "the Frenchtown area." In June 1999, Tallahassee was one of only 10 cities to win the prestigious All-American City award, which recognizes community involvement in solving local problems. The following month, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a 1.5 million Economic Development Initiative Grant, in conjunction with a $8 million loan to be used to develop a performing arts center and an Arts and Entertainment Complex. A neighborhood on the south side of the city, Apalachee Ridge (adjacent to South City), is also a beneficiary of Tallahassee's initial revitalization efforts. Finally, in October 1999, Tallahassee was one of six Florida communities to receive the governor's "Front Porch Florida" designation, the goal of which is to assist residents in rebuilding their community through an urban revitalization initiative. All of these projects in Tallahassee are designed to provide "community-wide benefits" as well as to "further help stabilize the Frenchtown community" (Tallahassee, City, 1999b). One government official noted

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that, "[O]ur situation is not like big cities with lots of decay. Rehabilitation starts at a higher

level...Revitalization will address everything from bricks and mortar to social services to

literacy."

THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Frenchtown

The name "Frenchtown" conjures up area with slightly different boundaries, depending

on the context of the conversation and the agenda of the discussants. Though the exact

boundaries are regularly disputed and have shifted, depending on political, social or economic

circumstances and priorities, Frenchtown has a long and rich history in Tallahassee. For

purposes of this study, Frenchtown is defined as Census Tract Number Six, Blocks One and Two

with a population of 1579 (U.S. Census, 1990). It is bounded by West Brevard Street on the

south, Alabama Street and Seventh Avenue on the north, Woodward Avenue on the west, and

Macomb, Ford and Gibbs on the east. (See *Figure 3, Map of Frenchtown*). Old Bainbridge Road

bisects the area, forming the border between the two census blocks. The census tract is just

north of the original Frenchtown, and was formerly considered the Springfield, Goodbread and

Crowders Quarters neighborhoods. The population is primarily elderly. As one official

commented, "Almost 60 % of the people who live in this area are senior citizens, are older

people; they have been there awhile." According to 1990 census data, this tract of Frenchtown is

99.5% African-American.

Frenchtown today is a mix of single-family homes, two-story apartment buildings, a

smattering of small businesses, convenience stores and social service facilities. A somewhat

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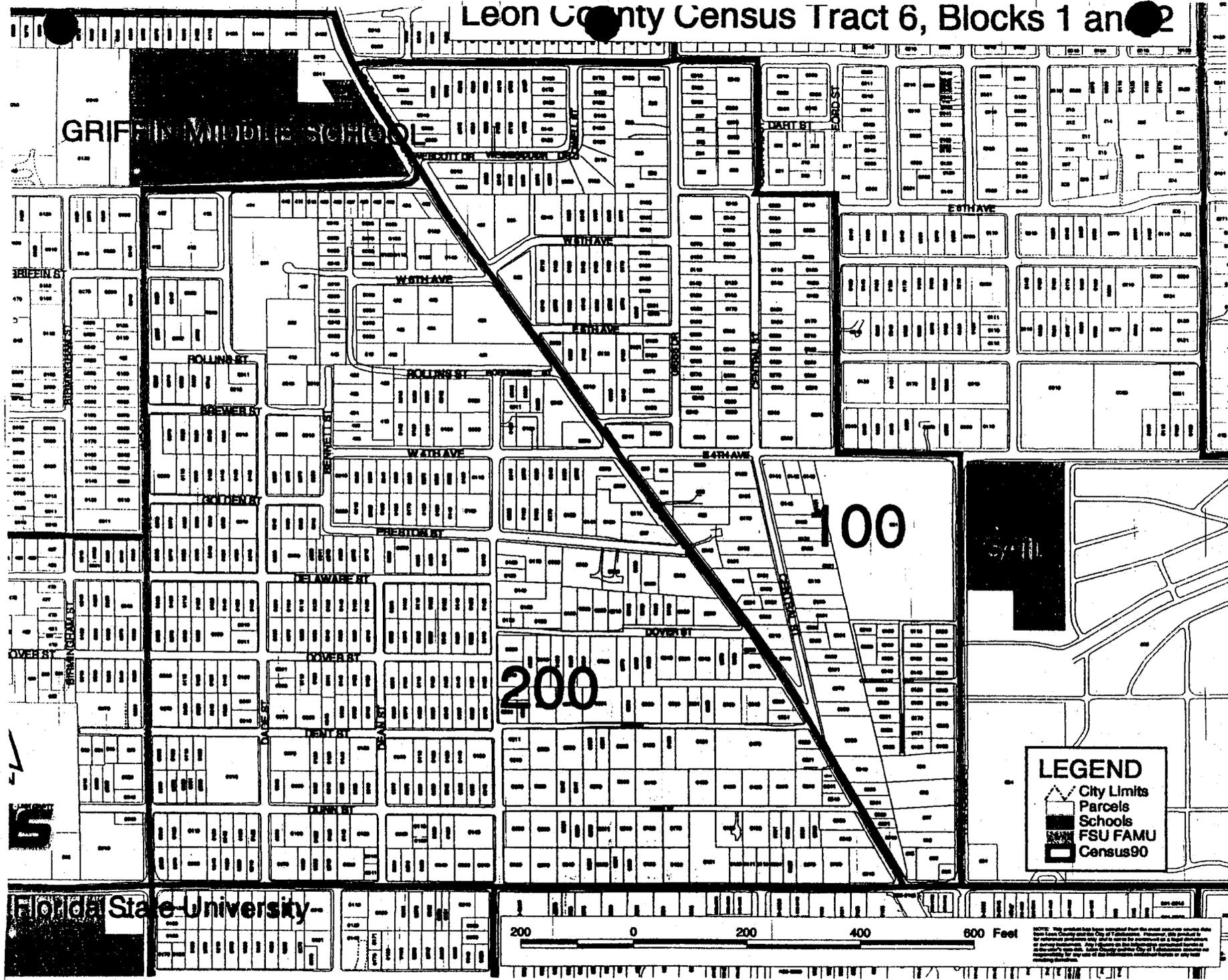
Figure 3: Frenchtown

wooded, but also densely populated area, it borders the campus of Florida State University and is within a half mile of the State Capital and City Civic Center. Just south of our study area, the 400 block of Macomb Street is fenced off and a sign announces that this is to be the home of a 40,000 square foot Renaissance Center, part of the Frenchtown Revitalization project. The block is the former location of a pool hall that many claimed was the center of much criminal and drug-related activity in the 1970s, and in prior decades was the scene of bustling social clubs and bars of Frenchtown.[1] Also located on Macomb, and bordering the study area, is the Lincoln Neighborhood Center. This active center houses, among other services, a health clinic, satellite offices for the City Neighborhood and Community Services Department, a police substation, a gymnasium and meeting rooms

The study area is primarily residential and overall, Frenchtown housing stock is considered to be very good. There are a few very large homes, but most are modest single-family residences built between 1920 and 1940, with small yards and gardens. Located throughout the neighborhood are a number of dilapidated structures and small, wood-frame housing sitting on cinder blocks, some of which are vacant. In addition, according to some estimates, the city's worst public housing project is the two-story, Ebony Gardens complex at 1010 Macomb Avenue. Approximately two dozen new homes - "in-fill housing" - built by the city or by Habitats for Humanity, Inc. on formerly vacant lots, provide evidence of the City's revitalization program. According to one government official, one of the reasons Tallahassee has provided such housing is because this is a relatively stable area. He said:

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[1] The pool hall re-opened in South City after officials closed it down in Frenchtown.

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[T]here is a higher level of owner-occupied housing - that's one of the signs of stability that we use. We classify this as a neighborhood in transition. That's why we focused on this area for infill. It's got primarily single-family houses, (that does not mean they are being used as owner-occupied single family) but the predominant housing stock is single family as opposed to apartments or whatever.

South City

For purposes of this study, South City is defined as Census Tract 10.01, Blocks One, Two and Three. Located a mile south of Frenchtown, South City is bounded by Orange Avenue on the south, Magnolia and Perkins on the north, South Adams on the west, and Jim Lee Road on the east (see *Figure 4, Map of South City*). The neighborhood immediately to the south, called "Appalachee Ridge," is composed of modest working-class homes arrayed along a circle of cul-de-sacs; an area that has received financial assistance from the city for community organizing.

As with the Frenchtown area, experts had differing opinions as to the exact boundaries of South City. Unlike Frenchtown, however, some people claimed not to have ever heard the term, others stated outright that no such place existed. Many referred instead to the entire area south of downtown as the South Side. Others debated whether South City consisted of only two-thirds of the census tract (Blocks Two and Three), or an even smaller subset. Speaking about our designation for South City, one official believed that the true neighborhood was a smaller subsection of the area. He said, "The area you are looking at is bigger than South City. The census tract includes upper middle class, middle class, middle class minority and then South City, which is low class, period. It is mostly black, with a preponderance of single-parent families, mostly women as heads of household." Nonetheless, consistent with this study, the

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Leon County Census Tract 10.01, Blocks 1, 2 and 3

Florida A&M University

100

200

300

LEGEND
- City Limits
- Parcels
- Schools
- FSU FAMU
- Census90

600   0   600   1200   1800 Feet
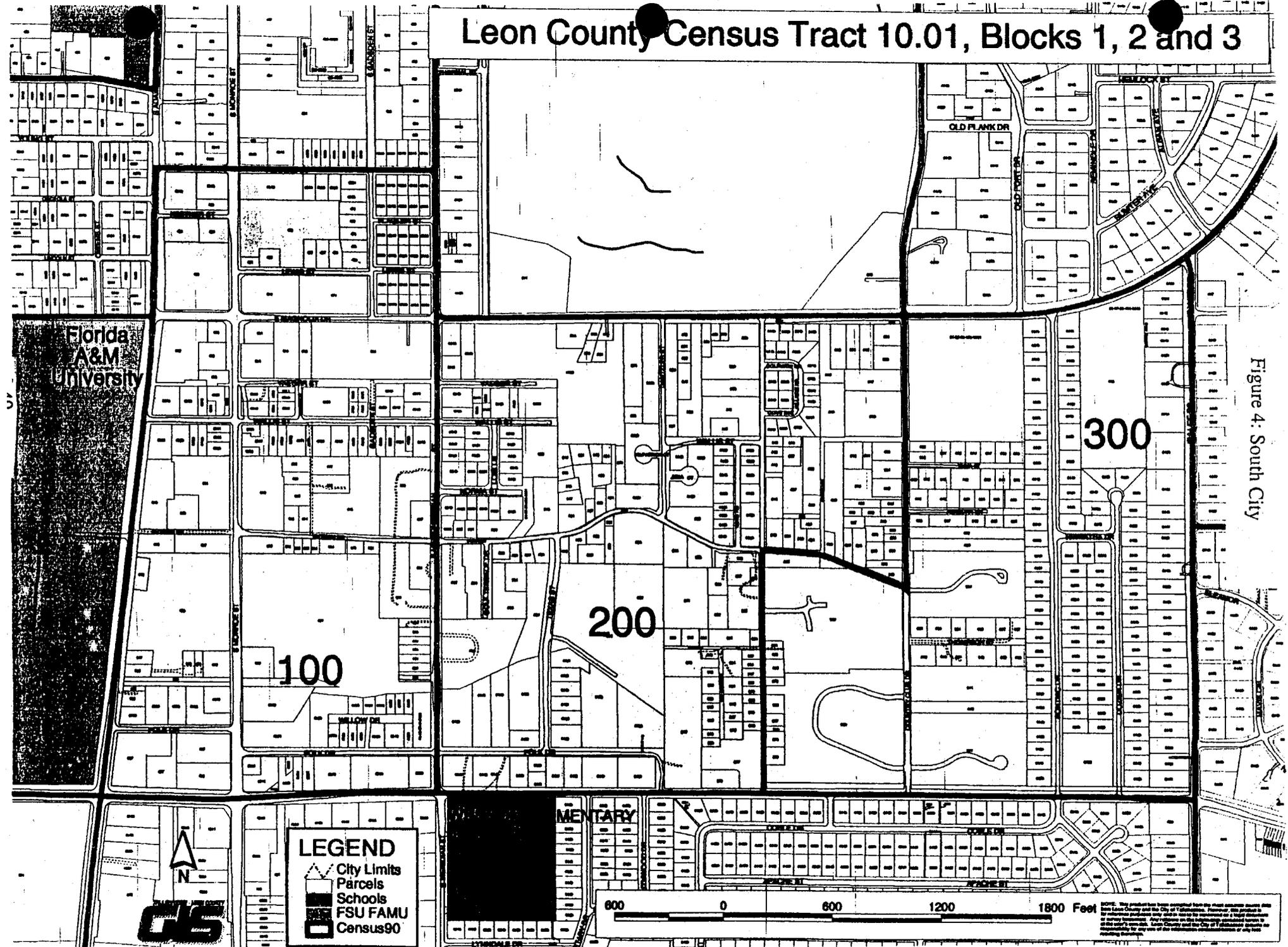
South City Neighborhood Association recognizes its neighborhood as comprising all three blocks of the census tract.

The South City census tract is a rectangle-like area immediately south of the Capital City Country Club - surrounded by large homes owned primarily by whites - and east of Florida A & M University, a traditionally black university. According to the most recent available census data (U.S. Census, 1990), the population of South City is 78% black and 21% white. Our impression from field research and interviews is that, today, this area is home to even fewer whites. Meridian Street and Country Club Drive are the primary north-south thoroughfares, and Putnam cuts from west to east through Blocks One and Two, ending in a cul-de-sac just east of Country Club Drive. We were told by city officials and police officers that the area included a "combination of lifestyles" including some professionals, the working poor and young mothers at home with children and on government support. South City's 1990 (U.S. Census) population was 2,518. Sections of the community appear rural and secluded with thick woods, open fields and many one-way lanes. One expert describing the area stated: "if you drive this area, you will find large areas that are not developed at all, it's still wooded. And you won't find that kind of scenario in any other areas in so close proximity to downtown." In contrast to the more rural interior of the tract, two shopping centers on either side of South Monroe Street take up nearly one half the area of Block One. Both have large parking lots in front of an L-shaped strip of storefronts, several of which are boarded up and out of business. The South Side Shopping Center, on the west side of Monroe, has a grocery store, Family Dollar Discount, car stereo and state liquor store. The Towne South Shopping Center, east of South Monroe, has a store for beepers and other small electronics, one that advertises furniture, appliances, and jewelry, as well

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as a nail shop and a Renter's Choice home furnishing outlet. Big Bend Work Force is a job placement center that opened when this project was ending, with several social agencies housed under one roof. Security guards survey the mostly empty parking lots of both shopping areas.

The western perimeter of South City contains most of its businesses. South Monroe is the main commercial street, with several fast food establishments, auto repair shops, and store front ministries. The neighborhood's southern border (Orange Avenue) hosts a car wash, a church and Head Start program, a coin laundry, furniture store and pool hall (reopened in South City after it was closed down in Frenchtown). The interior of the census tract is primarily residential, with the exception of a few small churches, convenience stores and gas stations. There is no established neighborhood center, however Boys and Girls Clubs, Inc. maintains a club in each of two low-income housing complexes. While a new playground is scheduled to open shortly, one local service provider described the lack of basic recreational opportunities for children in the neighborhood as follows:

> In that neighborhood you can't even take your kids swimming, you can't take your kid to play Little League baseball because there's no baseball field over there. There is not even a place that you can take your younger kids to a playground. It's kind of like the community has borne some of the brunt of people's disparity [sic]. There is just no opportunity.

Overall, South City is considered to have poor housing stock. Along the Magnolia Drive border and within the interior of the census tract are several modest and neatly kept homes with yards and gardens. Throughout the South City area, however, there are also old wooden "shotgun shacks" on cinder blocks. There is a small and decrepit-looking, low-rent trailer park on Meridian (and a few fields are home to two or three trailers), several small apartment buildings and four low- and moderate-income housing complexes; the latter are all within

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approximately four blocks of one another. While a number of residents have lived in the area for a long time, and there are areas where residents feel there are established neighborhoods, several officials consider South City generally to be a population of young, highly transient renters. One official stated that the area "has one of the highest resident/rental ratios. I suspect that 70% of the residential usage in this area [is] probably rental."

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Even though the two neighborhoods share high incarceration rates, their histories are quite different. Frenchtown is an old area of Tallahassee, and the city's history cannot be told without reference to the economic and social circumstances of the Frenchtown neighborhood. The South City's area has more recent origins, and its story ties more closely to recent economic and social development in Tallahassee.

Early Frenchtown

Originally part of the land grant given to Jean La Fayette after the Revolutionary War, the area was settled temporarily by French Huguenots. After unsuccessful attempts at farming, the Huguenots left and the land known as Frenchtown laid vacant until 1839-41 when lots in this "Northwest Addition" to Tallahassee proper became open to public auction. Free people of color and former slaves purchased land in the area and by the 1880s it was recognized as a major residential black community.[2] In 1905 a white developer, responding to the influx of blacks

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[2] The primary streets were Call, Tennessee, Virginia, Carolina, Georgia, Bronough, Park Avenue and Copeland.

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from rural areas, built homes and opened a new subdivision immediately northwest of Frenchtown. This area came to be known as Springfield, though it is now often thought of as a part of the larger Frenchtown area, except by some long-time residents who still maintain the difference.

The mid-1920s to the 1950s have been described, in some respects, as the "golden-era" of black communities in Tallahassee (Newkirk, 1999). Residents of the Frenchtown and Springfield communities were economically and socially diverse, a mix of doctors, teachers, businessmen, laborers, politicians, skilled workers, former farmers and domestic workers. Black businesses thrived, in part, because discriminatory laws kept black professionals as well as the whole social strata of the black community, from living or shopping elsewhere. Dinner and other social clubs provided a venue for famous musicians such as Cab Calloway, Ray Charles and Duke Ellington. Springfield grew in population and thrived as a neighborhood between 1930-1940. Along the popular Brevard Street corridor were located barbershops, cafes, and grocery stores. *Polk's Tallahassee City Directory* documents 45 black-owned businesses in Springfield and the original Frenchtown in 1934, and 65 such businesses in 1954 (Barnes, 1999).

Describing the commercial activity in the area in the late 1940s and early 1950s, one community leader recalled:

> As a young person growing up there were businesses in the Frenchtown area. The highest concentration would have been on Macomb, Brevard and Virginia Streets. Laughingly now, as adults, we say that Frenchtown had everything but a bank. And that's true. There were drugstores, service stations, jewelry stores, furniture stores, mattress companies, and a movie theater. Groceries stores, an abundance of grocery stores. A five-and-dime, pool halls, or as they were called then, billiard halls. Then there were the more recreational areas, some of the clubs. We had the Eastern Star, the Masons—the Masons had a building there where they held their regular meetings. We had shoe shops, just an abundance of everything but a bank, really!

Another woman recalled that most places were run by blacks, and some were black-owned: "There were tons of people on the street and the drug stores had restaurants in them where black people ate and socialized."

Those whose families have lived in the area over several generations distinguish among the many individual small neighborhoods - distinctions that are often lost in current discussions of "the Frenchtown area." As one official explained:

> [I grew up] right at the corner of Macomb and Georgia. The heart of it. Then you had Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee Street and Georgia. That was all of it, right in the middle of Frenchtown. … Growing up in Tallahassee, Frenchtown was really a very small area because Frenchtown went only about as far as Fourth Avenue. …This area [north of west Brevard] is what they used to call Springfield….then there are even smaller neighborhoods inside of these neighborhoods, like you've got Goodbread, Crowder's Lane, and all that, which I knew about growing up, but now, nobody even talks about those neighborhoods at all anymore.

For many of these small neighborhoods, however, even the names are lost; a local historian provided one example. She said, "[Springfield] which probably has meaning only to the longtime Tallahasseeans who lived there, … is one of many communities within Tallahassee that have been lost in time, swallowed up by urban development, community development block granting, university expansions, and overall changes in the social strata. "

One government official talked about the many professionals who have chosen to stay in Frenchtown where they grew up, and noted the historical connections that Frenchtown residents are still very much aware of:

> People say, this is where Cannonball Adderly grew up, ….I have generations here. When you talk about preserving historical preservation of the African- American community, … this is the only area you really hear them talking about. … certainly within the African-American community, they see that there is a historical link to their community here….Of the people who are still here, a large portion of them, [if you were to ask] " why do you stay in Frenchtown?" they say

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because this is the center of my community, or this is where my community's roots are.

Frenchtown Today

At the same time that there is a deep pride in Frenchtown's heritage, many experts expressed a concern and sense of loss about the deterioration of physical space as well as personal connections. One leader who grew up in Frenchtown noted:

> People here are a lot different from how it used to be. When I grew up in Tallahassee, just about most black folks in Tallahassee knew most black folks; that was because Tallahassee was so small. But now, you don't know people. You have people living next door to you and people don't even know, they are not like they used to be....

Many officials, even those who lived or still live in the Frenchtown area, spoke of the change in the community from an economically strong neighborhood to one in need of revitalization and stabilization. Frenchtown had been a place where blacks conducted business and socialized. By the late 1960's, however, "desegregation's ironic side effect was noticeable" in that middle-class black families began to move out of Frenchtown and into new developments (Newkirk, 1999). Confirming this, one government official said:

> It was when segregation began to erode, and there was mobility for the upper levels of the black community, is when Frenchtown really started to deteriorate. ...There was a flight from Frenchtown—the affluent part of the African-American community. ... The African-American community is no different than any other part of the community in that if they have the economic means to do better, they take their families to places where they think they can have a better life. And oftentimes that is not in the neighborhoods that they grew up in.

As other properties became available to upwardly-mobile black residents of Frenchtown, many moved into different neighborhoods where they had access to better utilities, roads, and schools. Said one official, "A lot of teachers lived in the neighborhood. ...And when they started

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building those areas, like Jake Gaither Park, a lot of them moved out here ...when integration started happening, they moved out." As a result, said a service provider, the tax base decreased and those individuals who remained were "boxed in with little resources, doing whatever they had to do to survive."

Concern about crime and safety was, for some, a reason for moving. One official stated that "the perceptions of Frenchtown were that it was not a safe place to live, so even people who grew up in Frenchtown as children were not opting to live in Frenchtown." Several small businesses moved or closed when both owners and staff aged and the next generation did not replace their parents. Competition also became more difficult. With the initiation of new chain stores, for example, "a lot of folks would say, 'You have to pay more for products or services one would get in Frenchtown than if you went over to, say, a Winn-Dixie or BP Station' " (Newkirk, 1999). Illustrating how businesses moved from Frenchtown, a community leader said:

> [I]n the '60s there was that transition (that not only happened in Tallahassee but happened in other cities as well) that transition to malls, and relocating in other areas. And I remember the thing that had the largest impact on me was as a child ... when Sears moved to the mall. Sears moved down there [to a strip mall on the Apalachee Parkway] and then some other buildings moved out there and then, later the downtown... became more of a business area. Well, with this transition going on, in the Frenchtown area a lot of the stores, the people got older and maybe the children really didn't want to continue the business so businesses started to leave.

In addition to increased racial integration and economic mobility, the late 1960's and early 1970's proved difficult for Frenchtown because of university expansion, returning Vietnam veterans, and an influx of illegal drugs. Speaking again, the community leader said that, "In the 70s was when the drugs came in and that's a deadly combination, alcohol and drugs... Vietnam happened and a lot of people returned from the war, from Vietnam, and came with a different set

of problems and a lot of them took to alcohol or the drugs or whatever, so it was a combination

of the two."

While many residents had enjoyed being able to relax in a black-owned or -operated

social club in Frenchtown, by the early 1970s the nature of the establishments had changed

dramatically. The community leader added:

> [T]hat strip [400 block on Macomb] got to a point where it was....it just got to be
> a place where you just wanted to take a bulldozer and just level it down. ...you
> had seen it go from a very vibrant, prosperous area to a bunch of folks hanging on
> the street. And really it hurt. It hurt because there was so much there at one time
> and you wonder 'where'd it go?'

These three changes in Frenchtown over the decades - flight of middle class families,

closing businesses, and an influx of drugs - bred suspicion and apprehension among the

remaining (primarily) elderly, poor, urban core. By the 1980s, several leaders began expressing a

desire to revitalize Frenchtown, drawing upon its historic roots to plan a future for a

neighborhood that was struggling to overcome many years of neglect and deterioration.

South City

Perhaps because of its relatively small population and its location, South City seems to

have little sense of a collective heritage. Outside the downtown area, and south of what were

formerly the city limits, South City was for many years considered "the country" and its historical

roots are neither as extensive nor as deep as those of Frenchtown. In the 1940s, and up until the

mid 1960s, however, there were a few small, black-owned grocery and general stores on

Putnam, Orange Avenue and Meridian Street, as well as a juke joint immediately west of the

study area. Some residents recall moving to the area in the late 1930s and being without indoor

plumbing and electricity. (Even today, there are homes in South City that lack indoor plumbing.) Others who settled in the 1970s noted they often trapped and fished in the woods and did not worry about locking their doors at night. Today, within a community of primarily younger people, there are concentrations of elderly residents who have considered South City home for at least three generations. For example, one community leader indicated:

> The south side of Magnolia is 40 years or older, and west of Meridian, "Grandma and Grandpa" have been there for 40 years or something and now they are taking in the next generation—their kids and their grandkids. That's all around Putnam, Gulf Terrace, Calhoun, Gadsden and Yeager. There are three generations living in a 1000-square-foot-house that was built 40 years ago, and probably not well built then. It's where they come back to, or at least use that as an address.

While few whites currently live in the neighborhood, several experts who grew up in Tallahassee in the late 1940's noted that until the 1960s, South City was a primarily white neighborhood. One official stated:

> When I was growing up, South City, poor whites used to live over there. ...That's who basically lived in South City. At that time there were a few black people who lived in there, but there were not very many who lived over there then. It was not until recent years that black folks started to live over here in numbers. I remember when Leonard Wesson [on Orange Avenue, south of the study area] was an elementary school for white kids. And now it's in a distressed neighborhood and they are talking about closing it or changing it to another type of school.

Another community leader noted, however, that "historically, all property was owned by the African-American community, but it was sold; now there is [little or] no black ownership."

One service provider, commenting on the lack of neighborhood cohesiveness, stated that the South City area "is sort of like a new community. Appalachee Ridge... is a relatively new subdivision that suddenly sprung up. The housing projects have been there for a long time, but there's no real fabric to that part of the community." Others were blunter in their assessment, stating that "the area you've outlined [South City] is not a community. I don't think there is any

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identity." There is evidence that a portion of the people renting in South City may be relative

newcomers, forced to move south from the Frenchtown/Springfield area for economic reasons.

One official pointing out on our maps commented:

> What you find in most of these neighborhoods is that a lot of people that used to
> live [pointing to an area in Frenchtown] now live in this area [indicating South
> City]. .... as these neighborhoods became more distressed, you had people move
> on down. .... Now you find that a majority of the people who live over here
> [South City] used to live over in Springfield somewhere.

Some of the "transients" are children coming to live with grandparents because their

parents have gone to prison or are otherwise unavailable to care for them. For example, a service

provider said:

> There are some people who lived there [South City] for a long time, for a long
> time. I think there is a generation of elderly people who have moved there, not
> necessarily because they had kids or something, but because they needed a place
> to stay that was inexpensive. And so what you find is sometimes there are kids
> who don't live in the community, who have to come there to live with their
> grandparents.... who already live in public housing.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

Frenchtown is in the heart of the city, adjacent to state offices and the downtown business

and shopping district, and South City seems almost as if it were on the outskirts of the city, but

the two neighborhoods share many links. Although experts identified particular problems facing

Frenchtown and South City individually, clearly the two neighborhoods are more alike than

different. While both have limited resources and economic opportunities, they are fighting to

develop a sense of community and stability for their residents, including improved housing,

recreational services, and land use management. In addition, both are working on these problems

within the context of a high concentration of their residents being sent to, or returning from,

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prison. Physically, they are only a mile or so apart, connected by Monroe Street, which runs

north and south. Many families have relatives in each area, and on several occasions we met

people in one neighborhood whom we had met earlier in another, or spoke with people who told

us that at one time or another they had lived in both communities. Finally, as one official stated

about both areas, "You are looking at a population that is basically minority, ... a population that

is basically lower income." Though each neighborhood is unique in several ways, it "...still

comes down to they are impoverished neighborhoods without many resources and without a lot

of power." Below, as we describe the issues our respondents raised regarding these

neighborhoods, we describe the concerns common to both neighborhoods. Any important

differences between the two neighborhoods are noted.

Housing

As in many communities, housing in Tallahassee is economically separated, which often

translates into a racial divide. In addition to being predominately African-American, Frenchtown

and South City have many poor residents living in low quality housing stock. Discussing a

report that described the disparity in housing in Tallahassee, one official reflected:

> Tallahassee is kind of funny like that. ... poor whites live in basically middle class
> neighborhoods and are basically invisible while poor blacks live in distressed
> neighborhoods and are quite visible. In Tallahassee it is very easy to see. You
> drive straight up Macomb Street and you see what's happening there in those
> areas and you drive up Joe Louis [Street] and you see what's happening there, but
> then you look around and they're basically all black people. Now you've got a
> few whites living in those areas you know, but it's very few. Then you ask where
> are the poor whites in the neighborhoods and you don't see them. They are living
> in the middle class neighborhoods.

One strategy for addressing this problem is the city's effort to renovate many of the homes in the Frenchtown neighborhood, including those that stand vacant, and to build new ones. This process, however, has been hindered by lengthy and complicated title searches and other legal proceedings. It is often difficult to gain a clear title of the property because owners have moved away or died. This official continued discussing the problems of housing by saying:

> [Homes are] either owned by the people who live there or you have people who own the property but aren't around, but they are the kids of the people who did live there...And in a lot of cases you have, people did just like I did, we left here and then came back or we left here and the grandparent died or the parent died and the kids aren't coming back for the property so it is just there. A lot of them are vacant.

In the many cases, a government official said, where ownership is difficult to establish, the ensuing legal deliberations may consume years and investors and private developers often prefer the simpler process of building in the county's northern suburbs. He said:

> There's a real problem on title issues with all the properties in here, which is another inhibitor for development...[a] typical scenario is where the homeowner died without a will...and the heirs find out that they don't actually have clear ownership....There are a lot of liens on this property, so you sit there and try to do something. And that's another reason why you can't get the private sector to come in and invest. The private sector developer doesn't want anything to do with it. They say forget it, I can go out to the unincorporated areas of the county and buy acres and acres of land and subdivide it easier than I can get my hands on one lot over here.

Many of the existing single-family houses in which elderly people now live are likely to be available on the market in the next 10 to 15 years. As a generation passes away, this official feared that "if their children are not interested in coming back and living here, and there is not a market of new homeowners that feels safe to come into those houses, then we've lost it. It's all going to become rental."

Continuing, this official said that at the same time that economic segregation has isolated many poor African-Americans in Frenchtown, the growing residential needs of neighboring Florida State University have caused an "infiltration" of primarily white, affluent, students.

> What you have is an encroachment going on, of student housing, moving into that area. Where the predominant student housing had pretty much dominated the area, from say, Dewey Street to Woodward, from Brevard, down to Tennessee, most of that area is almost exclusively, has been taken over by large apartment buildings with students. What's happening here is that single-family houses are being used for student housing. People are either buying houses in other neighborhoods and holding onto these properties as rentals or they are selling them to individuals who are using them as rentals. So you have student housing using the single family housing base.

This continues to generate controversy, he said, primarily because student housing "is the most transitory of all types of rental housing" and yet it drives up other rental rates.

> And that puts the real pressure on that community. Our market for affordable rents is really skewed, and very difficult for low-income families....If you have a three-bedroom house you can rent it out for $900 a month to three students, but a working single mother with three children can't afford $900 a month. So it puts a lot of strain on our affordable rental market particularly for people that are very low income.

The situation has many long-term residents concerned that this influx of students will not only change the character of the neighborhood, but that it will force many residents to leave because of rising costs. An official who grew up in and currently resides in Frenchtown expressed this sentiment by saying:

> Well you've got student housing in there, and folks kind of get upset about me saying it all the time, but I tell them we don't want anymore. I mean, what's going to happen? We'll be pushed out completely....Look where it is now.. It's in Frenchtown now, when it's on Carolina Street, it's in Frenchtown!

For some, the push out has already occurred. As one expert noted, "if you go into Frenchtown and talk to folk, a lot of the folk that were there, generation after generation, have been dispersed out. Other folks [are] moving in."

Although South City borders the Florida A & M University campus, student housing was not mentioned by anyone as an issue of concern to the neighborhood. Rather, what was frequently noted as a key problem was the high concentration of low-cost rental housing. The Country Club Drive Public Housing complex, one of the largest in Tallahassee, is in South City and is operated by the Tallahassee Housing Authority. In addition there are Magnolia Terrace, Talla Villa and Holifield Arms (HUD-subsidized housing projects). There are also several privately owned, low-rent apartment buildings in the neighborhood. Commenting on the proliferation of apartment housing in South City, one expert stated that:

> This transition has already taken place. Who ever was living in those single-family homes, as owner-occupied housing, has long since left.... It's an open debate whether it was because of all the multi-family rentals that went into the area that drove out [people], or whether the area was already [going in that direction.]

Whatever the reason for the concentration of rental housing, one official claimed that in South City, "public housing is the center of the area." Although Frenchtown's only public housing complex (the Tallahassee Housing Authority's Magnolia Terrace at 1010 Macomb) is considered by some to be the worst low- income housing in the city, South City contains more public housing stock and these complexes are commonly thought of as problematic. In addition, because many property owners are absentee landlords (particularly in South City), there is little investment in the property and in the area. One service provider described some of the units in Holifield Arms saying, "No air conditioning in the apartments. It is a terrible existence, I think

...for children...The apartment is subdivided and it's not much bigger than this room here. It's real tiny. And it's hot and it's stifling."

Generally speaking, an official said, "the housing stock that is there does not get upgraded, it simply continues to deteriorate and... landlords extract what they can." In addition, several experts stated that many South City residents distinguished between "project people" and other residents, suggesting that the public housing units were the source of crime in the area. One expert also indicated that similarly, "people who live across in Apalachee Ridge" separate themselves from those in the projects. They... try not to mix, ...the kids go back and forth but not the parents. The parents sort of see themselves as being upwardly mobile." Some tension exists in the neighborhoods between residents living in public housing and their other neighbors and this adds to the difficulty of creating a cohesive and stable neighborhood.

Development and Revitalization Initiatives

In addition to the issues associated with housing in each community, the various experts also discussed the recent development and revitalization initiatives that are affecting Frenchtown and South City. Until recently, these neighborhoods had benefitted little from Tallahassee's general expansion since most of the development had occurred in the more prosperous, primarily white, area northeast of downtown. A government official said:

> It was a tale of two cities really, what's happening to Tallahassee with the
> expansion of the northeast and the deterioration of the south. The pattern... is that
> all of the expansion of the affluence in this community is happening north of the
> freeway, in the Killearn and the Oxbottom, in that area, and it's creating a
> situation that historically we didn't have. Historically, we've always had, of
> course, segregation but what was really showing was the massive difference in
> income spreads that was taking place. ...What you had was the South Side of the
> city where everything was being concentrated that was considered a LULU—a

locally undesirable land use—all the affordable housing was focused in the southern portions of the city, and then all the affluence and the high income was occurring in the northeast.

Said another expert:

> I think the disparity between the South Side is increasing even more with the expansions in Killearn. You have road projects and everything over in Killearn that look great and you have potholes just as big as, damn near this desk, in South Side now. ...They're not getting their fair shake on the South Side.

A great deal of money and effort are being directed toward the greater Frenchtown area. Tallahassee's decision to revitalize Frenchtown, according to many leaders, was made in part because it was an embarrassment to have "an eyesore" so close to the State Capital. Visitors could not miss the contrast. "Whereas [in the case of] South City" one expert explained, "they could go from the airport to Florida State University and not even see the South Side."

In Frenchtown, plans for two new parks, a 40,000 square foot office building, a housing and retail development, and an arts and entertainment district project have been drafted, and the city has received federal grants and loans to implement those plans. In January 2000, the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church Family Life Center opened, built upon an entire block just south of the study area. An education, recreation and religious complex, the Family Life Center is being financed by the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, as well as state, county and city funds. In addition, the City is renovating the Lincoln Neighborhood Center, and Frenchtown is an integral part of Tallahassee's Front Porch Community project. The Frenchtown Neighborhood Association, and many agencies, churches and coalitions active in the area, have been involved in aspects of the planning and implementation of these various projects. Stated one expert, "They're at a point now, in Frenchtown, [that] they actually see Frenchtown as looking better. And it does. And there's more of a pride approach, 'let's get all the bad stuff out.' "

An example of strong community involvement by one Frenchtown minister was described by a community service provider:

> [N]ow he's one of our members who has done exceptionally well in the Frenchtown area as far as renovating the community. He's involved with economic development, empowerment, you know, that kind of thing, so he was very instrumental in joining partnerships with the City and demolishing the old homestead communities, building modern buildings and living facilities for people, you know apartment complexes and so forth. They have transformed that area in the last five years so if a person who used to live there came back, they wouldn't know it.

The situation for South City differs from that of Frenchtown. Although neighboring Apalachee Ridge, south of South City along Orange Avenue, is at the start of revitalization in terms of city involvement, to date South City has received no such attention. One South City community-leader speculated that, perhaps it is because the Apalachee Ridge area "may be worse...and it's a small area, so it's more manageable to start." South City is, however, part of the Leon County Community Organizing Program, which assists neighborhood associations in increasing citizen participation "by defining discrete boundaries for areas within the targeted neighborhood" (Leon County, 1999:16). As a result of these efforts, the South City Neighborhood Association was formed a year ago and a very active core group of officers and members is attempting to establish a greater sense of identity for the area. They are also recruiting the participation of others committed to developing the neighborhood. In addition to the Neighborhood Association, there is a South Side Coalition, described by a government official as, "an umbrella organization where all the leaders of the various neighborhood associations which are serving the South Side meet periodically." The purpose of the Coalition is to "collectively coordinate their activities and find out what [is] going on." He also felt that because of the high number of renters, South City is "probably one of the least defined, or shall

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we say organized, neighbor[hood] associations of the ones that you have identified." Explained one community leader, "It's hard to get people out, they don't yet see what's in it for them."

Perhaps a more difficult problem is the division between public housing tenants noted by a current South City Neighborhood Association member: the association learned that many people in the housing projects felt estranged from the rest of the neighborhood, and the Country Club Drive housing complex had formed its own association.

Not all of the people we spoke with were in agreement on the benefits of the various initiatives in Frenchtown and South City. Those who currently live in the two affected neighborhoods, not surprisingly, sometimes maintained a slightly different perspective from those officials who did not live there. When asked about residents' attitude toward the City's Revitalization Plan, an official said:

> I think they trust it. They have heard a lot of people talk over the years. City people come and go, say what they are going to do and nothing changes. But now I think they have heard us for awhile, seen changes and now I think they believe it is for real.

Yet, one long-time community leader who had seen the blueprints expressed some cynicism, claiming that things "happen swiftly in other areas, but take a long time in this area: the Science Center has been over and done for seven years and still no Frenchtown Revitalization." Another community leader expressed support, while maintaining caution in assessing the new developments, saying,"Everybody is in hopes that if the neighborhood is revitalized, even if it doesn't necessarily come up the way it was in the 50s, but as long as there's growth there and people are able to get jobs, they'd be satisfied."

Despite a great deal of ongoing community involvement, however, there are those who question some of the motives and methods of the various "revitalization" efforts. One expert said:

> In Frenchtown, I don't know if it was the people that called for a change or all the money they started dumping in down there. Money causes a lot of change so, 'we're going to pay you to start up a neighborhood association, we're going to pay you to...' I don't know if it was the people doing it, but, I guess as long as it got done....

A more cynical viewpoint was expressed by a local minister in the following statement about development projects in Frenchtown:

> I think it was a lucrative site for targeting for development. It was kind of like what the city does in most communities. When they find an area, a deprived or depressed area that no longer meets city code, then they normally would come through and attach up condemnation signs. They bring down, they lower the value of the property in order for folks like us who wants to grab properties will go in and start buying up, forcing the cities to level off the block, level off the neighborhood. Sometime we exploit the community when they do that, understand? And they come in for personal gain, not for the sake of trying to develop it, but it's personal gain. You can get free land, you know, little or nothing. Has been condemned, the value of the tax-base goes down, so forth. So I think that's what happened to Frenchtown, or is happening to Frenchtown.

In addition, federal funding requirements as well as the state Front Porch initiative caused the areas known to residents as Frenchtown, Springfield and Griffin Heights to be "lumped together" under the Frenchtown appellation. Many expressed ambivalence about "revitalization." They resent the bureaucratic grouping of individual neighborhoods and fear that it will dilute the uniqueness and needs of each community. Giving an example, one official and Frenchtown resident said about his neighbors, "They don't want the name Frenchtown, they don't want the name Springfield, they are Griffin Heights." Yet residents also expressed

excitement about the possibilities growth may bring to the neighborhoods and to Tallahassee.

Continuing, the official said:

> They are talking about everything from apartments to townhouses to single-family housing…They want to make downtown Tallahassee an 18-hour downtown, like most other cities that are growing cities, and that's going to change things quite a bit. And once they start doing that, then you are going to see a change in Frenchtown. … Think about it—20 years from now people will be walking from Frenchtown to work downtown. It will be easy. … But you can't get people who haven't seen it, to believe it. ….And then everybody will be trying to get back. I tell people, in a few years you won't be able to afford the property down there it will be so expensive.

As a result of new interest in developing South City, property values have recently gone up for the first time in 60 years. Referencing what has occurred in Frenchtown, however, one community leader stated the downside: "People get displaced when the value goes up, they want to sell, make some money quick. Also, it's harder to pay the taxes." To reverse the pattern of homeowners leaving, he continued by saying, "We need to teach people how to make use of their property, so they don't get the cash and then have it all spent up fast. That happened in Frenchtown a lot. Before the city urbanized, people lived right downtown, could walk to things."

Efforts to stabilize the neighborhood with homeowners are hampered, this leader said, by limited outside support and an ailing infrastructure and local lenders who don't want to lend money in this area. "In our area now, there are few resources, like education, economics, and skills training. We have the Boys and Girls Clubs, and a HUD grant is helping the area. We need more people to do that. We need volunteers from the outside, too." There is a dearth of *pro bono* professional expertise, such as legal assistance, to review contracts or to establish funding vehicles so that the neighborhood association can receive grants and contracts.

Despite the much lower level of redevelopment funding available to South City, compared to Frenchtown, South City has organized small private groups that have assumed responsibility for a number of development projects. For example, one community leader said:

> In the South City area private companies are trying to do things, rather than waiting on the government. For example, there is the Keep Leon County/Tallahassee Beautiful. Staff donate their time, they sweep the area. There is also Leadership Tallahassee. Leadership Tallahassee is a consortium of people and companies and organizations. We petitioned for a long time, and got a park. We do for ourselves, we decided 'let us get this done.'

This "do for ourselves" approach has begun to pay off. The result of the partnership between Keep Tallahassee-Leon County Beautiful, the Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce and the South City Neighborhood association, is that property that had been described as "an eyesore" at Dantzler and Magnolia, has been transformed into a pocket park. The partnership was successful in soliciting corporate donations of garden materials, benches and playground equipment for the park, which was dedicated October 1, 2000.

Social Services

Experts and community leaders are concerned about the numerous social service agencies located in, or bordering, the communities, especially Frenchtown. As one official declared "social services—we have a plethora in Frenchtown, and to a lesser extent there are some in [South City]."[3] While certainly beneficial to the residents, these agencies also serve as a draw to

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[3] The apparent lack of nearby social services did not come up in discussions about the South City neighborhood, other than one community leader's reference to the fact that the south side did not have access to a regional medical center. Again South City appears to have the opposite problem of Frenchtown, as there are very few social services located directly in, or even bordering, the neighborhood.

new, and oftentimes unwelcome, arrivals who are in need of public assistance. Services concentrated in the area surrounding the Capital, many bordering Frenchtown include, for example, a homeless shelter, food bank and soup kitchen, several missions and half-way houses, drug treatment and counseling centers, an HIV-AIDS counseling and a transitional housing unit, (which serves ex-offenders and their families, as well as the homeless and destitute), and a day labor agency. Many experts and residents are concerned that the number of services has had a deleterious effect on the neighborhood. One Frenchtown community leader said:

> One of the problems that we are having now ... comes from the fact that the homeless shelter is there. The shelter opens at 7 PM and it closes at 7 AM and so that leaves from 7AM to 7 PM for the residents there to find something to do. They come into the neighborhood—where else are they going to go?...Then there's a park...in Frenchtown and a lot of the people from the shelter during the day go to the park and they sleep, or they are just hanging there. And there are a lot of people who like to walk or run around the park and it's not a comfortable feeling.

Although the need for services is recognized, the programs are also perceived by some as drawing in and keeping in the neighborhood people of low social and economic and perhaps, criminal status. A service provider in Frenchtown said:

> I'm not saying there's not good people in the Frenchtown area, there's people that lived here all their lives. You could drive up Carolina and Georgia and meet these people. But there's just an element that has moved in, ...I think that those people just stay here because of limited transportation and their economic level and probably grade level, their education.

Newcomers are often viewed with wariness and seen as transients, drug addicts, potential criminals and disruptive to the cohesiveness of the neighborhood. Speaking again, the Frenchtown leader said:

> [T]hose elderly people have been there for so long that they know their neighbors, and their neighbors know them, so it's a friendly area, people speak, people acknowledge people and if somebody is going to the store they might ask Miss

Suzy or whomever, if she needs something from the store, but its just those people who they can identify. Like my momma might say, 'there's a group of people I've seen in the street who I've never seen before' and, well you wonder, now where are they going? It's not like you are on Monroe St. and there are a lot of places where you could be going, you are on Dunn St—where, are you going?! It's that, and that people are suspicious and older people are looking out that door all day and they see this person four or five times a day. Now what's up? You are not delivering anything, and if you are delivering, what are you looking for?

A similar sentiment was expressed by older people in the South City community, but the focus of concern were people from the housing projects, as opposed to the recipients of social services.

Environmental Issues

An issue of particular concern for South City residents is the fact that the area is located in a flood zone. One of the city's strategies to stabilize neighborhoods is to encourage home ownership. In South City, however, an official states, "it's a real challenge here because of the flooding problem" since it is a wetlands that provides a natural drainage point for the area. He said:

The land is worth very little because of the flooding and second of all because it has never been tampered with, its been considered wetlands, so even if someone did want to build their house on stilts – they couldn't because environmentally— you can't mess with that property....Although flood insurance is available, city officials struggle with the moral dilemma about whether, the moral obligation, the situation of putting people [who] are least financially capable of dealing with things like a devastating flood of their house and put them in a situation where that's prone to happen.

Thus, over the years many homeowners have left and as this official concluded, "....

nobody is willing to invest any money… it's devoid of private sector investment."

CRIME, DRUGS, AND INCARCERATION

While city officials and community leaders spontaneously identified the topics described above as key issues affecting Frenchtown and South City, we specifically asked them questions about crime, drugs and incarceration in these two communities. Respondents reported that both neighborhoods have acquired a reputation for criminal activity and both are currently struggling to overcome that identity.

Criminal Activities

Both Frenchtown and South City have acquired reputations as areas of criminal activity, including drug use and trafficking. In recent years, according to the experts and community leaders we spoke with, these activities have decreased but remain problematic for the neighborhoods. For example, describing South City seven years ago, one service provider said:

> When we first went into that community there was crime, there were car thefts, there were a lot of guns, a lot of drugs. It appeared that that community was totally out of control. It was graffiti everywhere. It appeared to be that the community at large had written that community off.

In the intervening years, this individual continued, the situation had greatly improved and he was hopeful that his agency would continue to be part of that process,

> Ensur[ing] some longevity in terms of being there like an institution. Be there. So you see generation after generation after generation. We have not been there that long but hopefully that's where we are going to be headed toward.

We asked officials and community leaders about criminal activities in each neighborhood, particularly drug trafficking, as well as anti-crime initiatives and the effect of incarceration on community life. We also asked their opinions about the relationship between law enforcement officials and the residents in each community. Their responses, as might be

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expected, are reflective of their professional positions. Statements are tempered, however, by race and residence. Public officials who live in one of the communities often have a different take on these questions that differs from peers who live elsewhere. As one county official stated, "There's still the stigma attached to the neighborhood [Frenchtown] that I don't particularly care for because I live there. And we don't have the kind of crime that we used to have." For some, revitalization of the community translated to no longer having public places where people could "hang out;" interventions to clean up crime in the area also "cleaned out" a community's social venues.

The impetus for addressing the crime problem in Frenchtown, according to one official, came largely from community and residents' desire to reclaim their heritage:

> Not exclusively, I mean the business area around here, and the university they are all concerned about what happens, what it looks like, they are neighbors and they are concerned, and so are the businesses in the downtown. But there is a strong core of folks both within and outside of the African-American community that says we've got to save Frenchtown. That's an important thing. We've got to save Frenchtown.

Similarly, another community leader noted that there is a general sense among politicians of needing to "revitalize" Frenchtown, and thus the area has received much more in the way of political and financial support, as well as law enforcement attention, than has South City.

Comparing the two areas, one service provider said:

> Frenchtown has had a lot more focus put on it. Whether it's from the police department or from redevelopment folks. To say, "this is a horrible area, what do we really need to do?" And for the last many years there have been all those different discussions about how do we put money into it, how do we make changes, how do we change the physical structure so you reduce the amount of crime in it?

In contrast, stated one official, the impetus for change in the South City area originated from people in neighboring communities such as Indian Head Acres and Myers Park, and around the Capital City Country Club. According to this official, the consensus was that "we've got to *do* something about this problem. There's a crime problem down there." Only annihilation would satisfy some of these neighbors: "Some of the folks around here," he said, "would probably be just as happy if the city decided to make one big storm water pond, to take care of all the storm water problems. In their mind, it would take care of the storm water and could get all that crime out of there." Another city official offered that it was important to begin the revitalization process in a neighborhood that already had an identity, as in Frenchtown, which in turn could influence nearby communities. If the city started with a neighborhood with less public visibility, like South City, there was the danger that the area could not stand on its own for a long time.

While some officials claimed that the communities as a whole are criminogenic, others were careful to describe the location of "hot spots." Police, were often very specific as to the locale of criminal activities, as were other officials and leaders who spend time in each of the neighborhoods. The most problematic areas in Frenchtown were said to be the "D" Streets: Dover, Dent and Dunn, as well as the area between Dewey and Old Bainbridge. These locations were cited by the police as having more crime incidents such as "obvious street prostitution, narcotics, that sort of activity." These streets not only had poor housing stock, but also several vacant lots that "have been historically sites for a lot of illicit activity, cut-throughs, drug dealers..." As part of the city's design to stabilize the neighborhood, it has built several "infill

units" on the lots. The new housing units are a defense against crime, but their owners, according to a city official, demand additional police protection:

> We've had to work with the police department, to try to do a number of enforcement actions around in here because I have homeowners now who are saying 'well, they are willing to be the pioneers and go in and take these vacant lots, but'.... and so we have to push these people [the criminals] out of this area to make them feel safe.

The interiors of the Frenchtown census blocks "are not that bad," but along Old Bainbridge, one official said, "you've got some really bad stuff." Others noted, however, that as a result of the City widening Old Bainbridge (the main street in the neighborhood) criminal activities along that stretch have decreased.

In South City, Putnam Avenue runs east from South Adams through the center of the census tract, ending in the Country Club housing projects. It is a narrow and slightly winding road through a heavily wooded area, connecting to the north-south exit roads of Adams, Monroe, Meridian and Country Club Drive. Because it connects other main streets but is relatively hidden from public view, Putnam is said to be the "drug thoroughfare" of South City. It also divides Census Block One in half, with the desolate shopping centers to the south and small homes on wooded lots to the north. Perhaps this lends credibility to the belief expressed by one community activist (who lives in Block Two of the census tract) that the location of "the problem," was Block One and "there is a flood of criminals living there." Other individuals, noting the "impact of substandard living conditions," claimed that the low-income housing projects were the source of most criminal activity in the community. Referring to these complexes, one service provider remarked, "I call those the belly of the beast because it's where the raunchiest things in the

community could happen." The physical structure of the projects is conducive to crime, he said, with little outdoor lighting, closed off courtyards, and small apartments without air conditioning.

> [S]o during the summer, when the days are longer, what incentive is there for a child to stay in the house? If it's cooler outside at night at 90 degrees than it is in the house at 105 degrees at 10 o'clock at night, why would I be in the house? So if I'm outside, that gives me all sorts of opportunities to get in trouble…because that's where the groping takes place, that's where the drugs take place, that's where the car thefts take place, all those things.

Officials offered varied opinions about whether those committing crimes were neighborhood residents or not. Several police officers contended that neighbors in South City often did not know one another, did not want to "mess" in another's business, and thus would not or could not offer information on offenders—who may or may not be from the area. On the other hand, police in Frenchtown were often able to locate an offender by questioning the extensive and long-term family networks. As the police indicated, the elderly in Frenchtown may be related to younger people who are involved in crime, but several other experts suggested that it is just as likely that they are not. One official made the case for not stereotyping offender-resident relationships.

> Some of them are [related to long-term residents] but some of them are not, … a lot of the guys doing things on the street may not even live in the neighborhood, they may live over here somewhere but they go over here and do whatever they are doing. And I think that is basically because in their neighborhoods people know them, and know their parents, whereas in other neighborhoods they don't, and they have a tendency to kind of move around …in terms of that kind of stuff. But a lot of them, I think too, are grandchildren of a lot of the older people, or usually are their children's children, and that is usually the reason why they go back there.

Others in Frenchtown, however, believe that a large portion, if not all of the offenders come from outside the community. One community leader active in anti-prostitution efforts noted:

> Once we got more involved in that we found that the majority of those people did not live in Frenchtown. They lived in other areas but they would come there to solicit. ...Everybody knows somebody in the neighborhood so they give an address, whether they live there or not. ... And even the police have said that the prostitutes are not of the area, nor are the johns. It's just where they happen to meet.

A service provider working with ex-offenders thought it unlikely that people breaking the law would do so in their own neighborhood. He said:

> I don't know too many offenders or ex-offenders who will stay in their own neighborhoods and commit crime. They just go to an adjacent neighborhood. There's a stigma to it, even though they're committing a heinous crime, or whatever crime they're committing, they don't want to offend somebody in their own neighborhood, they don't want to...get that reputation, if you will, of stealing from your own people, or beating your own people, or robbing your own people.

Several officials who lived in the neighborhood and claimed that offenders were from elsewhere indicated they knew people in the neighborhood - sometimes from childhood - who had spent time in jail or prison. Clearly, even for officials who were active in anti-crime and community development initiatives, but who were also members of that community, crime and incarceration remain sensitive subjects. Suggested one man speaking about residents in general, "most of them, if their daughters are on drugs, prostituting and all that, they probably disassociate" themselves from the offenders and their actions. If the offending daughter, however, has children "and the grandparents have to take care of the kids, it's kind of a different story" because there is no avoiding the reality of the children's needs.

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Community leaders were concerned that single-parent homes were likely to contribute to future intergenerational criminal activity. Barely out of childhood themselves, young parents were perceived as ill-prepared to train their own children, often exposing them to criminal activities. A service provider deplored the fact that parents generally allowed their children to stay out late, untended, and that girls in the community "didn't appear to have control of their bodies - it was almost expected that boys would be able to grope them up or do certain things to them." This reflected a mind set in parts of the community, he thought, "of not protecting their children...Now some people keep tight reigns on their kids, some people do a good job but a lot of people put their kids out and the world just devours them, just gobbles them up And they don't have a chance."

In response to our inquiries as to why Frenchtown and South City continue to struggle with crime, one official declared that:

> [T]hose kinds of activities go there because they are tolerated there. If some of the young women entrepreneurs that work in Frenchtown were to ply their wares on the corner of Thomasville and Killearn Way, they wouldn't be tolerated there for 15 seconds... I'm sure you are familiar with the broken window theory; the idea is that crime is an opportunistic beast and it thrives where it is allowed.

An alternate perspective claims it is the police who "allow" a lot of things to happen in Frenchtown "that are not accepted in other parts of town." Describing several community meetings in Frenchtown one service provider said:

> [T]he concerns had to do with the prostitution, the drug trafficking, there was no role modeling for the kids, how could their children grow up in a safe environment when this was the situation that existed...They see the problem, not as themselves, but as what law enforcement allows that community to have turned into.

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A community leader in Frenchtown suggested that it wasn't a question of residents or police "tolerating" crime but rather, one of fear and apathy among residents. She stated that while she and some others "didn't have a problem calling the police…they will come if you call them," that was not the case with all residents. She explained that many older people watched as prostitutes walked past their homes, but they were afraid to notify the police for fear of retaliation or having to testify in court. Furthermore, because of the high percentage of elderly people it was more difficult to mobilize citizens.

> We do have a lot of elderly people and they will not report…they don't know these people, they know what they are doing, but they are afraid to report them. Because they call the police and the first thing the police say is 'what is your name?' ..Because if this ever has to go to court they [police] might need that person to testify. And older people are not going to do that. They are not going to testify. So consequently they won't pick up that phone and call.——

In contrast, she continued:

> Those folks in Killearn would be right down at that police station and City Hall. If we go to the police station or to City Hall, it's the same two or three people every time! Because we can't get, because of the elderly population …If we can't get you to make a phone call - now you think you are going to go down to City Hall with us? I don't think so!

Further, this leader said that despite a commitment to working within the system, however, many were frustrated by "too much talking" with the police regarding prostitution in the neighborhood:

> Sometimes we will go and we will work with the police, and we are going to help them help us. In some instances, its like 'yeah, well, we have been helping them help us enough, we need to take it to the next level.' But it's just working with the system 'we can all work this out, and yeah we can beef up patrols' and in those areas [Killearn] you are not going to beef up anything - just get them out! And that's really - it's our fault - it's what we should do. These are repeat offenders, and the code says that….You know they can be banned from the area, well we need to do that. We don't need this just pick up, release, pick up, release.

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Among the experts there were many views about the police presence in the neighborhoods. All agreed that police protection is important, and people want offenders removed. As noted above, however, some believed the police ignored or tolerated a certain level of criminal activity, while others concerned about over-policing and surveillance of residents complained that "cops patrol all the time" and engage in "harassment and stereotyping." One expert expressed these conflicting views:

> Like I said we work well with the police. The police is a part of our overall coalition in terms of working with the neighborhoods. There's officers, there's always officers, at all the meetings that we go to. We do Crime Watch things with them, they are involved in things like Weed and Seed, and they have sites for that in the neighborhood...But I remember when I first moved back here I went to one of the meetings that they had at City Hall and they were spending 1.4 million dollars for police manpower in Frenchtown...and the next highest amount that was spent was $70,000 in some other part of town. And I said that we better lock some people up if we are spending that kind of money down there. And I think still today that is where they are spending a lot more money and manpower for that area of town than they are for other areas of town.

The desire for safety and appropriate police activity, and the distrust of law enforcement need not be mutually exclusive. Explained another expert:

> Yes, we want our community safe. We want the drug dealers off the street. We want all those things. ...We want all those things but we don't want the police to come in and disrespect us in the process of doing it. So, yeah, you know, do it— we don't have a problem with it. But make sure it is fair and just and come in and conduct yourself professionally, just like you would in a white community...The bottom line is the safety.

Drug Use and Trafficking

As in most of the country, Tallahassee witnessed an influx of drugs in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. According to several officials, drugs had played a significant role in the decline of community life: the use of illicit drugs and the growing

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drug trade generated fear among residents, fostered criminal activity, and brought a greater police

presence to the neighborhoods. Experts discussed the extensiveness of drug use and drug dealing

in the neighborhoods, and whether the individuals involved in the drug business were from the

community. One community leader stated that the demise of the Frenchtown clubs and the

introduction of drugs in the 1970s attracted threatening "outsiders" to the neighborhood:

> So then you have an entirely different element in the area. Whereas as I said [in
> earlier years] there might be somebody there that was inebriated, but I knew them,
> if not by name, by sight. And there was no fear. In the 70s it got to that point,
> like, well, hmm, maybe I will cross the street.

Others spoke of an influx of drugs between 1989 and 1992, claiming that big city dealers

looking for smaller, slower markets introduced crack to Tallahassee. Outsiders were also

identified as the source of the drug problem in South City, where "drugs were being brought into

the community by older people who didn't live in the community" said one service provider.

A former law enforcement officer claimed that drug dealing proliferated despite the best

efforts of police. He said:

> When I first hit the streets in '92, you could stay absolutely busy if you were in
> zone seven which is North City, you could sit in Frenchtown, in a marked unit, a
> uniform and see drug deals....You would make an arrest and I guarantee you
> while you're handcuffing this person, patting him down and putting him in your
> car, [others would continue to deal] I mean people are blatant that way sometimes.

Some contended that as with other criminal activities, the drug problem has been allowed

to continue because of police inaction. One service provide said, " folks in Frenchtown are really

offended by the fact that they believe that the police allow drug trafficking there and, they say,

they [police] would never allow that to happen in Killearn."

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Still others noted that often community residents, for different reasons, acquiesced to the drug trade. One man, whose agency had organized anti-drug marches in the South City neighborhood, revealed that:

> [T]he thing that struck me most was the people, the adults who lived in the community, wouldn't even come out of the house. [Because?] I don't know. Apathy? We had kids out marching against drug dealers, but no adults. We had kids and police officers and our staff but no adults.

Alternatively, another service provider described how the drug dealer can be a kind of "Robin Hood" figure. He said, "The community, people who live in the community, may be aware of these individual activities, they close their eyes to it, they see it as a help. Kind of like the Robin Hood syndrome, robbing from the rich and giving to the poor." In some situations, we were told, the dealer was "paying folks' rent." A single mother, for example, might have misgivings, but did not want to "know" where her child was getting money to pay for clothes or buy groceries for the household. Residents may not like drug dealing in the neighborhood but they understand the limited choices available under poor economic conditions and rationalize the drug trade as a means for addressing basic economic needs.

The reputation of Frenchtown as the primary place in Tallahassee to purchase drugs continues to draw people to the area, even though the reality may have changed. Commented one community leader:

> Oftentimes I wonder if it's that because in the late 70s and 80s in Frenchtown, the places that were there, catered to a certain climate or whatever, that people still have that mind set that if I want to get some alcohol or get some drugs this is where I go. It may or not be that it's there, but the thought is: drugs - Frenchtown. It's almost an automatic thing. So I think oftentimes people hang around in that area and because they are there of course the drugs do come.

A service provider asserted that a certain "element" had moved in, or had "somehow been transplanted through the reputation of, 'oh yeah, you can go to Frenchtown and score whatever you need.' " That element, however, may very well be former residents returning to the neighborhood after being incarcerated. He estimated that in both communities, 60-70% of the individuals returning from prison had drug-related problems. He was of the opinion that because of the accessibility of drugs and few job opportunities, ex-offenders returning to the neighborhoods were the same people likely to become involved in drug-related activities and, subsequently, drug violations. He also attributed some of the drug traffic to Florida State University students who continue to purchase drugs from connections made in nearby Frenchtown, "Because it just has that stigma, it's the reputation, that's all it is. College kids know." As an example, a community leader relayed a recent experience watching a student who appeared to be attempting to purchase drugs:

> There is a convenience store and I went there went night to get something and I saw this college student, Caucasian, a little skinny boy, looked like he might have been a freshman. .... I thought he was getting gas and then I noticed he wasn't getting gas and I saw him going into this little section where they say that drugs are, and I went to the phone booth and I called the police…and the police did show up, sure did. … Now what was that little white boy doing going over there? He didn't have any Bibles in his hand, so what else was he going for?

There were different opinions as to which of the two neighborhoods had more drug traffic and why. One service worker claimed Frenchtown to be more conducive to drug trafficking because:

> There's just a lot more people on the streets, there's more people roaming about to where on, the South Side, yeah there's some foot traffic but not near the volume of Frenchtown, not near the volume. …It's a shame and I hate to say it, but you could probably drive in three little neighborhoods right now and role down your window and probably score some drugs….there are hot areas on the South Side

but if you ask any ex-offender where he can get his drugs, I guarantee you they'll say Frenchtown.

Others felt that the more rural setting of South City provides greater opportunities for drug trafficking than does densely populated Frenchtown. A government official said, "...in South City drugs are a problem because it is secluded: out of sight, out of mind. Whereas in Frenchtown there is much more traffic, South City has much less auto traffic so it is not seen as much...It would be very easy to do drug trading in the area."

Still others indicated that the difficulties inherent in public housing projects create a situation conducive to drug use and sales and thus (although both activities were occurring in South City and Frenchtown) the greater concentration of low-income housing projects in South City generated more drug-related activity in that area.

Finally, several experts expressed concern about the effect of exposing children to drug-related activities. One service provider said, "I know that young children know about drugs and I know that when young children know about them, some older person has to be... they have to be seeing it from someplace ... I do know that there are drug sales. You can drive over some afternoons and you can see it."

The need for appropriate adult role models is acute and several community leaders feared the influence of drugs on future generations. Said one community leader:

> Come get these kids. They are going through this path, they don't know where they are going, and they are likely to not come out... So we have to look out for each other and especially for the kids because I don't think they have a clue yet as to what they are doing and somebody has to stop them.

Anti-Crime Initiatives

City officials, community leaders and residents have approached the crime and drug problem in a variety of ways. In Frenchtown especially, several community leaders are very active in trying to rid the neighborhood of drug-related activity. As one leader said, "There are little pockets or areas where it's said that the drugs are. The D streets - Dean, Dent and Dover. And me, I'm working hard on those streets - trying to clear them up! And if they are selling drugs - stop it!"

The Boys and Girls Clubs in both communities are using numerous preventive measures designed to provide children with "something to strive for."

> With us being there, they've [the kids] got some kind of hope of someone saying you are somebody and you can do whatever you set your mind to and we sort of reinforce that in the community and with the kids who come through the club."

In addition, the clubs have a Target Outreach program that is designed "to reach out to kids who have some involvement with law enforcement officials" to integrate them into the clubs' programs.

The City of Tallahassee has recently employed a number of initiatives in an effort to reduce crime. As part of the early Frenchtown revitalization effort, four years ago the City closed a pool hall on Macomb Street that had been an active "drug spot." Several officials noted that this closure, along with several other establishments on the block, had a huge effect on crime in the area.[4] One initiative cited as being particularly successful is "COPS (Community Oriented Policing Strategy) [which] has been instituted as part of the Revitalization Plan…and that has

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[4] Ironically, the pool hall reopened in South City and one official confided that anti-crime efforts in Frenchtown actually may have dispersed much of the criminal activity to South City.

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helped enormously." An official submitted that while crime in Frenchtown has been drastically reduced, with community policing "there is more reporting of crime, not necessarily more crime happening." Furthermore, he said that community policing had, according to many experts, improved relationships as well as conditions in the communities. The official added:

> Relations are good. There are more minorities on the force, more women, and they are out in the community. It is nothing like 10 years ago when there was a lot of tension.... the police were in patrol cars with dogs. Now they are on their bikes, stop to chat with people, they are more like friends.

The Tallahassee Police Department and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement are also working together to operationalize CrimeTrax, a statewide satellite system that eventually will monitor every Florida probationer. The Florida Department of Corrections already uses this Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to track high-risk probationers.

The decline in juvenile crime in Tallahassee was attributed to a targeted effort by the city that began six years ago in response to "the 1980-1990 increase in juvenile crime" when "Tallahassee was fifth in the nation." At that time, the city established a Juvenile Justice Council, which continues to meet monthly to coordinate juvenile anti-crime efforts. Frenchtown and South City became the targeted areas, and as one service provider recalled:

> They attacked them [the areas] with a vengeance, I mean law enforcement. There were kids who were in trouble all the time, they started the boot camp, y'know, so what they did was they clamped down on those guys who were really causing the problems in the community. They clamped down very hard. They also instituted this thing they call SHOCAP.

SHOCAP (a program targeting serious habitual offenders for surveillance) was somewhat controversial among those we spoke with, earning both praise for focusing on the small number of serious, habitual youthful offenders, while also engendering resentment toward law enforcement. One element of the program targeted incarcerated offenders' younger siblings. To

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one service provider, this was perceived as undermining children's self esteem and life expectations by presenting the message that "when you get a certain age, we know that you are going to be in trouble and we are going to be right here, with the handcuffs, to lock you up."

In addition to law enforcement activities, one official indicated the need to address the social and economic issues facing the community in order to reduce crime. Initiatives identified as having contributed to the drop in crime in the Frenchtown area include the infill housing efforts and the new Bethel Family Life Center, which has a school, a recreation program, classes for adults, and tutoring services. In addition, two years ago the city established the Human Services Program, which officials describe as:

> [A] community human service partnership, a project of United Way, the City and the County wherein all funding and assessments are decided together. The types of services are all the types of things the United Way typically does: homeless services, meals on wheels, a substance abuse program. Seventy percent of the combined funding goes to Frenchtown, the Bond neighborhood and South City. This is about $6 to 7 million per year.

The Effects of Removal and Reentry

While the thrust of this project was to determine how residents feel incarceration impacts them and the quality of life in their neighborhoods, we also sought to determine how officials, experts and leaders view this issue. Most experts, when we first described this study to them, readily identified crime as a major problem for Frenchtown and South City. It was more difficult for most to grasp the proposition that the incarceration processes of removing people from, and returning them to, the community, could be destabilizing to the neighborhoods. Nor were these processes generally recognized as issues affecting the two studied communities. Said one official about incarceration, "I have not heard that identified as a problem, though it may very well be.

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Seems it would be but it has not been identified as a problem. I don't really know how incarceration has effected the community."

The Offender

While some acknowledged that "there is an adjustment when one mate leaves the family...and there is another adjustment when they come back to the family," most spoke about the effect of incarceration on the individual offender, and began with the difficulty ex-offenders have securing employment. For a great number of ex-offenders this was a problem before they were incarcerated: "they didn't have a job when they left - when they come out, that's two things against you." Some claimed that it was much more difficult for females to find a job upon their return because "guys can always get a construction job, even if its just waving the flag, but nobody wants a woman [felon] working in their office." For those who may have had a trade prior to serving time in prison, incarceration often interferes with the ability to practice that trade upon release. Speaking about the case of one electrician, a local service provider said:

> He has had absolutely nothing while he's been incarcerated that addresses his professional career. And, because he had been there for longer than the license renewal time, he was going to come out without any kind of professional. He wasn't a licensed electrician anymore.

Many experts also recognized that when people are released after having spent several years in prison, they are re-entering a world that has changed in terms of technology and required skills. They may have lacked an education prior to custody, and without educational services in prison, they are that much further behind:

> Basically, corrections aren't preparing people to come back into the community at all...Say for example, you've been out of commission five years, a lot of things have changed in five years, but you don't understand that. You come out, and you

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acting like you did years ago. ...So they are not being introduced to what is happening today.... They go back to doing what they know how to do, and the next thing you know they are back in the system again.

Noted another service provider who works with ex-offenders, most people returning from prison "are terrified - they have an internal fear of failure and there are so many ways to fail; it's staggering." Several experts agreed that when people have been "locked up for awhile without any skills, without any kind of counseling, without any rehabilitation, they were not going to be able to go home and reintegrate easily." One expert explained that depending on how long one is incarcerated, and the level of education one has, when a person is released from prison "it takes a long time to get to feel comfortable" in the community. Even if offenders receive training and social services while incarcerated, the experts conceded that, in general, "people don't want to hire felony offenders."

Reintegration is also difficult for many ex-offenders because their attitudes toward mainstream society, and the criminal justice system in particular, have hardened. Said one official, "He's angry with the system and some of them just are angry mad at the world it seems like." Continuing, he said:

> They've learned some tricks of the trade that they didn't even know before they went to jail. Because they have been in an environment where they've had to watch their back, they had to do certain kinds of things for the time that they were there. And they had to learn and a lot of them became conniving. And sometimes they get worse than when they were on the street.

A service provider summarized, stating that ex-offenders "can't get a job. Depending on the label, your civil rights are lost, you can't vote. In other words, your sources of honor, your sources of esteem have basically been cut off."

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The loss of social supports in the community due to incarceration was presented as a common and often debilitating experience for the returning individual. One official noted:

> A lot of them [family and friends] are going to say "you did something wrong" they don't want to have nothing to do with you. In a lot of cases there's no support system there to help them… Some guys go to prison, and their people move and they don't tell them where they moved while they were in jail, they don't want them to know. And they don't have anybody they can call, or if they call, they change the phone number, and they can't even call no more. It's all those kinds of things that happen. And some people aren't sensitive to those kinds of things. Some would rather you be gone out of their life, period.

Some leaders thought this was especially true for female offenders, particularly if they had children who they had left with relatives when they went to prison. Explained one community worker "it's harder for the women—their families don't want them back in their house; they are raising their kids and don't want her coming around. She has to prove herself."

Familial losses often were additional sources of anger. For example, she said, "if a guy has been locked up for two to three years, do you think his wife is waiting for him to come home? In a lot of cases, no. Then he comes home and he's angry about that."

On the other hand, another community leader contended that families could be extremely forgiving and embracing despite mainstream society's prejudices toward offenders. He said:

> The stigma within the community isn't as great as the stigma that is attached through those folks external to the community. Well, if she [family member] goes off to a program and comes back, she's welcome. She goes off to wherever, she's welcome. That wouldn't change from Frenchtown to the South Side, I think that is just minority folk in general. You made a slip, they're just very, very forgiving. … Folk will talk about you, such went to prison, he's back now, he's doing well. But it's a matter of, 'if you do the crime you should do the time.' … They accept that that's your punishment, you come out and you prove your worth all over again.

Another official did suggest that because of demographics, the experience of returning to the community may be different in Frenchtown and South City, due to differences in social

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supports. He speculated that ex-offenders may have extended family in Frenchtown to whom they could return, whereas those who were moving into South City from prison might have much weaker networks, maybe just the address of a former girlfriend. Furthermore, because of the higher turnover in South City, neighbors may not be the same people who were there when the individual went to prison.

Finally, when people return to the community from prison, they are generally closely watched by police and are considered prime suspects for any criminal activity in the area. Several experts suggested that the difficulties of reintegrating into the community were compounded by official surveillance, generating a common belief that once people have been incarcerated they were very likely to return to prison. One service provider said, "there is just a concern on many of their parts that they're not going to be able to stay out in the open for very long. And, for the police to always go back and round up the usual suspects is a real concern."

The Family

The process of removing and then returning offenders to the community has ramifications beyond the individual. The family, especially if it is poor and African-American, often feels powerless against the justice system when a person goes to prison. Explained one leader, "What are they going to do? They might hire a lawyer, but a lot of times they can't. What are they going to do?... just go along with whatever happens, even if its right or wrong."

One official raised the dilemma confronting the family when an offender does return. Although family members may be willing to make adjustments, they wonder what they can expect the ex-offender to do differently and must wait to see if the person will behave in the

same way as when he or she left. And they worry about their own responses. The official

suggested that at the very least, there is caution and a lack of trust, which can further erode

relationships.

Families left behind are often affected financially as well as emotionally and

psychologically. Several people spoke about the economic hardships suffered by family

members when an individual is sent to prison. Although some officials doubted whether most

offenders were breadwinners, others contended that those sent to prison were likely to have

contributed to at least a portion of the household income. A government official said, "There is

also the income issue. If, to whatever extent, even if it was ill-gotten gains or whatever, that

person is probably contributing to the family income and if that income is taken out of the family,

they suffer." This official also discussed the financial effect in terms of additional state

involvement with the family in the form welfare or foster care, for example. He said:

> They may end up having to move out of their housing that they have lived in for
> quite some time.... In other words they were living in a more stable environment
> and then the husband or father or the male figure in the family gets arrested and
> his income isn't there, and then they can't afford to live in that community
> anymore and they have to find...some inexpensive place to live...

It was noted, by another official that oftentimes the person sent to prison was not, in fact,

contributing to the family income. Another expert added:

> A lot of them are young or just repeat offenders that they've never contributed to
> the community anyway in any meaningful way. ...Some of them, you know would
> deal drugs and make a lot of money, some of them didn't do anything or dealt
> drugs to support their own habits so it wasn't money going around in the
> community.

Children are very much affected when a family member is sent to prison. Experts and

community leaders identified material losses but stressed the developmental harm that can occur.

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Regardless of which parent is incarcerated, "prison," stated one service provider, "prevents both parents from being able to deliver basic survival needs for their family." One is physically gone from the home and the other is too overwhelmed by the difficulties of holding the family together that the children's emotional needs are not attended to as fully. Incarceration of a parent, he said, "places a gaping hole in the infrastructure" of children's physical and emotional "safety net." Furthermore, a parent returning from prison may have diminished self-esteem and consequently, lower expectations for their children. He added, "so if you remove their parents and a parent returns with no esteem not only in what their children are going to be, but beginning with themselves, guess what you have? You have the removal of what is necessary for children internally to believe in themselves."

With the loss of self esteem, and belief in their own potential, children are at risk for thinking their lot in life will include incarceration. Prison becomes the norm; losing its capacity for deterrence. One provider said, "there was no real fear of the incarceration, …it was a common kind of occurrence there when you got a certain age …." Speaking about the prevalence of people in the community who have been in prison, another community leader described its effect on children by saying, "because children see these things happen, and in a lot of neighborhoods these things are so prevalent until they think this is how it is supposed to happen."

Perhaps even more alarming than an expectation of going to prison is, as one leader claimed, the opposite: "…the lack of an expectation of a future." To him, too many young people assumed the credo of:

> 'I live day by day, whatever happens happens. I'm not planning to be this, I'm not planning for this whatever happens. This is what I see. This is my America.'

— Some of them get beyond it. Some of them don't. And in increasing numbers, they haven't.

The Community

The effects of incarceration are felt in the larger community as well. For example, incarceration can affect the cost of services. There may be a greater need for medical services by family members attempting to cope with the hardship and depression caused by a loved one's incarceration. Said one leader, "many of these people end up in the medical units [within their] families, trying to get psychological counseling as well as medication to help cope with the loneliness and cope with the absence of the family."

Furthermore, depression can lead to isolation, affecting participation in community life and its institutions. A service provider noted:

> It impacts the church. It could be that the families that normally would have come on a regular basis, once their loved ones or whomever that individual was, became incarcerated, it certainly affects the attendance of people coming…They no longer want to be involved or interacting with the rest of the community. Creates isolation, you know…They withdraw.

The community also bears the stigma of being a place where a high percentage of the people are sent to, and return from, prison. One expert added:

> [A]nd then everyone perceives the community as bad. But even within those "bad" communities you have folk within the churches, you have folk [at the] Urban League that are there in those communities. Tying in with those folk is something that I've been screaming for years. It is as if they stigmatize the whole community, it's a "bad" community…. Well go do something in the community. Everyone in that community isn't bad. —

One service provider summarized the toll incarceration takes on individual offenders, their family members, and the larger community:

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Something is lost in that individual, in their family, in their community because each person is essential to what makes the community a community. You remove them and label them and bring them back. Most times they are unable to contribute positively. Because the twin towers, education and economic opportunities, are now inaccessible.

The experience of incarceration contributes to a sense of personal hopelessness and apathy, while often generating a great deal of frustration and anger toward the justice system. Several questioned the criminalization of certain behaviors, suggesting that "whoever is picking and choosing the label, that is where the problem is." Frustration with the system was also expressed by some who noted that many minor offenses, such as open container laws, were more likely to be enforced in poor minority neighborhoods. People also objected to mandatory sentencing laws and were angry that mitigating circumstances were not considered. One official and local resident said:

> Sometimes things happen. Some folks may have done something five years ago, and they haven't done anything, hadn't gotten into trouble, but then something happens and they get in trouble and they [criminal justice system] go all the way back to something five years ago, and then they lock them up. Or older people, …Here's this man, 80 years old he doesn't even know why he is getting locked up. But his grandson was selling drugs; he didn't know what was going on… Same thing happened right down the street, 80-year-old lady they took her and the kids and stuff… –

Furthermore, it was suggested by a service provider that perhaps "we don't really intend to provide access back into any kind of opportunity, whether education, economic, or otherwise. I think when you follow the dollars, those dollars are going to prisons, they are not going to rehabilitation." Said another:

> Think about how much it is costing us for one person to be incarcerated for a year. It's somewhere between $30,000 and $60,000. Wouldn't it be more beneficial to use that resource to help that person not come back, rather than not do anything? …But those are the kind of things that I don't think we pay attention to…People seem to have a tendency to think that to build more prisons is the answer - it's not

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the answer, what are we going to do?...keep building prisons, after a while everybody have a prison? Your own prison?

Given that the prison experience is not designed to empower people but to follow all the rules and do what one is told, returning offenders are unlikely to demonstrate much initiative on their own:

> [W]hen I'm incarcerated I've got to do what everybody tells me to do, right? So then I get in the habit of everybody telling me what I've got to do. ... So what happens when I come out? What do I do? Just whatever anybody wants me to do.

This sense of apathy and hopelessness spills over into community life, fostering an expectation that the city or the government will take care of the neighborhood's needs. This effect was explained by one official:

> [P]eople feel powerless because they have allowed the public sector to take care of them and the public sector has not given them the tools to be able to do things on their own so as a result they depend on the public sector on a lot of things... So they are ready to give it to somebody else to do it rather than do it themselves.

While this leader seeks to encourage greater community participation ("the only time things change in the neighborhood is when the people get involved in it and that's what I try to get them to understand") the high percentage of residents cycling through the prison system makes his a very difficult task. Motivation to engage in community life was diminished by the effects of incarceration, including the inability of ex-offenders to obtain employment and a sense of self worth; damaged interpersonal relationships; anger and frustration with a seemingly inequitable justice system, and a pervasive sense of powerlessness and apathy.

The Need for Services

_ Tallahassee is often the "first bus stop" for those released from 15 prison facilities within 16 miles of town. Ex-offenders know, "through word of mouth" that Tallahassee has more services than other cities. Thus, the Capital City may have many more people returning to its neighborhoods from prison than those who were sent away. Although Tallahassee has made some attempts to respond to the needs of this population, there has not been a systematic effort. One government official thought, however, that the many existing social services "could be a magnet for people just getting out of prison." Ex-offenders and their families frequently use the available services such as the homeless shelter, AIDS-related services, food banks, food stamps and job training, but these programs are not specifically designed to address the problems encountered when a person transitions to or from prison. Administrators at various agencies told us that many of their clients had at one time been incarcerated, but there was no official accounting of this information. When asked about services specifically for ex-offenders and their families, officials seemed puzzled, stating one saying, "I think that there are some," and another saying, "I'm not sure. I don't know anything about them. It seems to me it would be in the neighborhood somewhere to do it but wherever it is, it's not there." Still another official admitted "we don't know what it is they need."

A review of the Tallahassee Community Resource Directory (compiled by the Tallahassee Counseling and Referral Service, Inc.) revealed a number of human services available in the Tallahassee area, most of which are located in the downtown area, in or adjacent to Frenchtown. Very few of these agencies, however, self-identified as working specifically with ex-offenders or the families of inmates. Of these, only a few were located within the Frenchtown

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boundaries (as defined by this study) and none were in South City. Several people noted that individual churches sometimes "sponsored" families whose loved one was incarcerated, or were helpful to individuals released from prison who approached the church. As one official noted:

> [T]here are more than an adequate amount of churches in both of these communities given the per capita folks that you have, and a lot of them have ... ministries that naturally would attract folks that find themselves released and unemployed and not having shelter.

Long-established, mainstream churches and the many storefront operations both were mentioned as helping ex-offenders on an ad hoc basis. Though both types were frequently provided some form of social service within the two neighborhoods, we did not learn of any churches that maintained programs designed to address the needs of ex-offenders and their families.

Other than a few church-based services, South City is nearly bereft of social service programs, requiring people to acquire transportation and to travel a distance to access services. Reflecting on the need for local services for ex-offenders and their families, one official commented, "That sounds like something that needs to be in the neighborhood because that's where you gonna have to deal with them. Then if you put it somewhere where they have to find it to go to it...do you think they are motivated to do that? I don't think so."

Even those agencies with a mandate to work with offenders and their families made it clear that resources were limited and clients often had to travel long distances to make use of them. Said a service provider in Frenchtown:

> And that's unfortunate ... from greatest potential of assistance to lowest as far as counties, Leon is definitely number one because we have the criteria to meet these people's needs. We have the resources available, the listings, where we can refer them,...where a gentleman came in the other day, he lives over in Madison, which is east of here about an hour, and I couldn't tell him anything. What, who could help him out in Madison? I said, unfortunately, you'll have to drive an hour over

here. I know that's not fair, I know that's not right, however, I said, we're a private agency.

Those who work directly with ex-offenders agreed that among the most critical needs was housing. One private agency located in Frenchtown assists ex-offenders in finding housing in the area, while another missionary organization located north of downtown provides housing to a small number of males who are willing to participate in a two- to three-month transition program. In this way, the men are provided with a foundation from which they can begin to rebuild their lives, starting with an address for the various identification and application papers required in mainstream society. There are also a two half-way houses for women under the auspices of the Department of Corrections, as well two private homes maintained for a small number of female ex-offenders without children (one of these homes, however, was approximately 45 minutes outside Tallahassee). Each of these locations also assisted ex-offenders with clothing, transportation to medical and employment appointments, driver licenses, birth certificates and identification cards. Housing is critical for ex-offenders and ultimately the stability of the neighborhood, for "it's better to give them a safe place to live than to leave them on the streets." Yet officials often became embroiled in contentious situations with residents who did not want "these people" in the neighborhood. (During this project, one residential facility for ex-offenders was closed down in response to community demands that it be moved.)

While available services were limited and often inconveniently located, a related problem experts noted was informing people that services even exist. One community leader suggested that this could be overcome through pre-release transition plans:

> Sometimes, it's making people aware of the services and once they are aware, a way of getting them to come. These are adults that we are dealing with so you can't make them come. I think the only way that could be accomplished is before

they are released that there is some incentive given to try to find something to do, to find a job, or go to Labor Finders or go to some place where they can transition you back into the community with some thought of what you are going to do...

Sometimes it is only when a individual seeking drug treatment mentions that a family member is in prison that these other forms of assistance come to light. Thus, a few private agencies working with families find themselves addressing needs related to incarceration, as well.

Although we did not conduct a comprehensive search, the experts and other community leaders with whom we spoke had difficulty in readily identifying services designed to meet the needs of ex-offenders or families with an incarcerated member. Of those programs or services that did exist for this population, nearly, if not all, were privately-run and facing financial strains. The services were limited and often were available only in an ad hoc manner. People working with ex-offenders spoke at length about the need for services and programming for this population, including ways to help families reconnect and move beyond the prison experience. Many of these same concerns were expressed in the ex-offender and other residents' focus groups, presented in the next two chapters. It is clear, however, that the processes of transitioning to and from prison have not yet been identified as core problems to be addressed in the context of neighborhood life in Tallahassee.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF REMOVAL AND REENTRY

To understand residents' views of incarceration, we begin with two observations about the foundation from which their views are formed. The first point about our respondents, and in many ways the most obvious one, is that everyone in these neighborhoods knows someone who has been to prison. Many residents report they know many people who have been incarcerated, and it is typical that at least one person in the extended family has been to prison. High-incarceration-neighborhoods make this otherwise "abnormal" event normal. Whatever is a common experience of those who are in contact with prisoners or ex-offenders becomes a common experience of everyone in the neighborhood. Some of the effects of incarceration may seem trivial, but because they are ubiquitous (and unequally so, compared to other places) they lose their triviality. It is important to bear this in mind when considering the impact of incarceration in these locations. As one young man observed[1]:

> It's [incarceration] a commonality. You have more and more people coming in and coming out of the process. It's common for families and common for neighborhoods.

The repeated experience of incarceration among these neighbors surely contributes to our second general observation: these residents hold complex—and sometimes contradictory—views about the impact of incarceration on their lives and the lives of their neighbors. In this way, their views contrast with "popular opinion," which seems to see incarceration in simplistic terms and

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[1] To comply with IRB requirements of anonymity, we have removed all personal identifiers from quotations. The reader should note that the analyses makes use of multiple statements from the 26 individuals in the two neighborhood "Resident" focus groups.

in a mostly positive light. Our respondents' viewpoint, informed by their experience, turns out to be more intricate. They can describe positive results of incarceration for various aspects of community life, and yet at the same time they see - and can point to - the negative implications of incarceration. For instance, as we describe in more detail below, they can identify ways the incarceration of a family member might benefit the family's functioning, but they just as easily see the ways it can harm the family as well. For this reason, it is wrong to think of the views of our participants as unidimensional. They understand incarceration as a complex phenomenon in their lives, and they see nuances in its impact.

That is why when we asked, as an opening question, whether incarceration was generally good or bad for our participants' neighborhoods, they saw it as having both kinds of effects. Incarceration is viewed most negatively with regard to the perceived discrimination against African-Americans by the criminal justice system and these sentiments moderate how residents judge the seriousness of many offenses. Yet, alternatively, as one South City resident said, "...he may be one of those kind of people that you're kind of glad to get rid of for awhile." Other respondents expressed relief when drug dealers and prostitutes were arrested and the neighborhood was safer. One Frenchtown resident said:

> Well, for one thing, like on the street where I live, we've got the drugs, we've got the prostitution and all of that, and we have the police riding by, they ride, and when they get one off the street, they incarcerate them, that's good, they're off the street, I don't have to look at them passing the house...I don't have to look at them hopping in and out of cars.

In the same vein, our respondents also have mixed feelings about whether incarceration serves as a deterrent. Explained one man in his mid-fifties "Sometimes when they go to prison one time is enough, and then, you know, they try to make amends when they come out, and then

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again you've got some that go in there and it makes them worse when they come out." While some people feel that incarcerating drug dealers makes other drug dealers more cautious, fearing their own potential incarceration, others feel that it is not a deterrent because prison is perceived as a relief, a picnic, a place where inmates have it easy. One 54-year-old woman felt that, "If they're locked up at the jailhouse, they sit down and play cards and watch television, it's not happening." Another person said, "It's no problem for some of them to go to jail, as a matter of fact, it's a relief. You do not have to work in jail." Another said, "...jail is a hangout." There is consensus that prison does nothing to rehabilitate or educate offenders. Rather, as one woman said, prison was a place, "to have a good time at the taxpayer's expense."

Despite this complex understanding of incarceration as a social policy for pubic safety, our respondents agree on several points. They think, for example, that there is a need for better services for ex-offenders and their families, and that their neighborhoods suffer due to the lack of services. Programs that are available are deemed too short-term or too limited in scope. And so while our respondents hold complex views about the value of incarceration and its impact on their lives, they speak in a more unified voice of the need to deal more effectively with those consequences. In the sections that follow, we examine the effects of incarceration on community life as described by residents and which, in their view, call for change. In Chapter Six, we discuss in detail the changes in community programming our respondents believe are needed.

Residents' comments about the impact of incarceration on themselves, their families and their neighborhoods fall into four broad categories. They discussed stigma, the financial effects of incarceration, issues associated with identity and problems in relationships. The four domains clearly are interrelated (stigma impacts identity and relationships, for instance), however, in order to enhance our understanding of each area, we discuss them separately. Respondents were prompted for both the good and the bad effects of removing and returning people from prison. While there are positive outcomes associated with these processes of incarceration, in general, residents seem to see them as harmful and damaging to the community.

STIGMA

It is clear that being convicted on a criminal charge and sent to prison carries a stigma and "criminal" can become a person's master status. This alters the way ex-offenders think about themselves and the way they are treated by residents in the community and by the broader society. While community residents stress that they think people from outside the neighborhood are primarily responsible for stigmatizing people, it also effects the way they think about ex-offenders. Participants used language such as, "that's what he is," "another one," these people," and "he's still going to be a criminal" when talking about people who had been incarcerated. Stigma sometimes also gets transferred to family members of incarcerated individuals. When communities send large numbers of residents to prison, stigma can also become attached to the community-at-large. For instance, stigma is the primary reason why residents report that ex-offenders cannot get jobs, but it is also affects the ability of non-offending residents to get jobs

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when businesses do not locate in these neighborhoods because of the stigma of criminal attached to the area.

The irony, of course, is that the incarceration experience is so widespread in these communities that it is not entirely stigmatizing. Simply having been to prison is not a permanent disbar from neighborly acceptance. Depending on the nature of the crime and the offender's subsequent behavior, the stigma of a criminal past can be overcome in these locations - perhaps more readily than elsewhere. Most of the residents talk about welcoming ex-offenders back into the neighborhood. One resident said:

> I mean, I really don't think the stigma comes from the community gossip. If there is any, I think it comes from the society, the greater society, the dominant mixed societies, the society they have to go up to and get a job from, that's where the stigma comes from. When they come back to the community, I mean, it's bad to say, but it has been known that people come out of jail, there's a celebration, there's a party and that's characteristic in a Black community. When someone is released, there's a party just because they haven't seen them. It's a homecoming.

Families tend to be more welcoming when relations return from incarceration, than when other members of the neighborhood return. One woman told how her son had held his wife at gunpoint and when he returned from prison he was treated by the family, "Like their brother," with no stigma at all.

One thing which shapes how residents respond to ex-offenders returning to the community is the nature of the crime. Some crimes clearly carry more stigma, residents said, and those crimes about which the community has gossiped carry the most stigma for ex-offenders. Emphasizing this, one resident said:

> If there's any stigma attached to it then it would have to do with the crime, but the majority of people that are being released regularly are either something minor, in domestic violence or something of that nature, even if it's petty theft, things of

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that nature and they've been gone a long time, the community has not even - we have not sat around and talked about it.

While the greatest stigma attaches to crimes of violence, especially against children, this is not always the only distinction residents make. For instance, a resident in South City told of a family who ostracized a relation for committing a white collar crime.

Thus, how residents respond to ex-offenders in the community is complicated. On one hand, they keep in mind the individual's status as an ex-offender, and on the other hand they try to treat him better than residents believe people outside the community do. Illustrating this another participant said, "...it's always going to be in the back of my mind that that's what he is," but qualified this statement by adding, "but I'm still going to treat him like a real human being."

The feeling that stigma comes primarily from outside is widespread, and is emphasized particularly when discussing ex-offenders' inability to get jobs. Said one respondent:

> A lot of them change once they go into a penal institution. They go in, their minds are changed, their mind-set is changed. They come back to the community and they want to be productive citizens but they don't get an equal chance, they don't get an opportunity, because there are so many strikes against them.

People outside the community are not thought to be as accepting of ex-offenders as are residents. While it is acknowledged that residents judge ex-offenders (assuming that people who are away for awhile have been incarcerated and evaluating those people's clothes, cars and jewelry) they point out that the consequences of stigma from outsiders is more poignant. While outsiders may assume ex-offenders do not want to work, one respondent said, "...it ain't that. If you've got in trouble, you make one mistake and somebody holds it against you." Even if they manage to find a job, employers can use stigma to control employees ("I went out on a limb to hire you in the first place, so you better do what I say.") One woman who works with ex-offenders said some

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officials told her, "they don't want sex offenders in Leon County," and another resident said, "...the officials are still going to be looking at him and he still has a price to pay." The price, residents say, is harassment by employers and by the police who constantly are thinking that you're going to steal or do something wrong. As one respondent said, "They're just waiting for that."

Nonetheless, while stigma might not be easily overcome, it can be reduced if the ex-offender manages to get a job or shows the community he is trying to change. As one South City resident pointed out:

> What the community wants to see is ... an ex-offender come out and be productive, and that's not always going to happen because what they have is they have resentment towards the system, they have the environment to deal with. The same environment that was there that created them to do the wrong is still there when they get back and then you, it's coupled with lack of opportunity. You have the individual dealing with these emotions and these feelings, coming back into a society and against the efforts of the society that's saying, 'look, what are you going to do? Are you going to be productive now? Are you going to do this?' So the pressure is on for that person to do well and it's not facilitated by anything that goes on in that environment, because they're coming back into the same thing they left.

Accordingly, it is recognized that it is difficult to make a change when the environment is not conducive, yet to overcome the stigma individuals need to show they are trying. When comparing two ex-offenders on the likelihood of the community giving them a chance, one Frenchtown participant said, "Trying to get something over on the community and not really being sincere, but the other guy is really sincere [determines who gets a chance]." Being given a chance, then, is a big part in overcoming stigma and "making it" in the community. Said one Frenchtown resident:

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They still at certain points in their life are stigmatized, but they somehow never got around that. Some of them got around that by hard work effort. Somebody gave them a chance, somebody in the community gave them a chance, I, myself, and a couple of other people that I know have received chances. Somebody was kind enough, one particular gentleman I know, ... was given a chance by church leaders and became successful in the community and [is] doing good.

But the shamefulness of going to prison is reinforced by the fact that it is not discussed openly. Neighbors do not talk about it with people who have a loved one in jail, and the silence reinforces the taboo of the experience. Thus, there is a kind of collective stifling of conversation about prison. It is everywhere, and it is nowhere. The lack of openness about it helps keep its power as a disgrace. Even when neighbors offer assistance to families experiencing hardship due to the incarceration of their family member, people are careful not to address the fact of incarceration directly. One respondent said she would say she knew the family had needs. She said, "If I know the situation, I wouldn't say it." Another respondent said she would offer assistance and that, "...nobody else would have to know about it."

The stigma of incarceration can transfer to both the family and the community. While respondents insisted they had not personally experienced stigma rubbing off on their own family members they had, however, seen it happen to others. Sometimes, they said, when a family member goes to prison, neighbors reconsider what they think of those who are left behind. Siblings often bear the brunt because there is an idea that if your sibling could be a "criminal" than you could too, and now, "it was just a matter of time." This is particularly true if the crime committed was violent or unusually heinous. The whole family can suffer. One participant said:

And they [neighborhood residents] not only look at the specific offender, but also the entire family, and if one has offended, you know, the neighborhood's reputation, then the entire family is looked upon as receiving—all of a sudden they're not the most respected, even from the church.

Locations with large numbers of people going to prison also become negatively stereotyped and this affects how the area is perceived, thus transferring the stigma to the community. One person observed that when people leave the neighborhood because they are concerned about crime and the number of ex-offenders living there, they sell their house at a reduced value. Consequently, property values go down. Businesses find that some customers are reluctant to conduct their business in such a place. And police develop and spread a reputation about how bad these locations are. Whatever silence afflicts the family with stigmatic shame, open knowledge of the problem afflicts the community at large with ignominy. One technique for managing this stigma, then, is for residents to distinguish the community from the offenders. As one South City resident said, "They ain't the neighborhood for what that one person did. It doesn't make it a bad neighborhood because a person came in and went back."

Communities that serve as "landing places" for large numbers of prison releasees also develop a reputation outside the community. In Frenchtown, for example, it is known that the walk from the bus stop to the inner city is a short one, and offenders who want to become anonymous feel they can do so in the community that has received large numbers of their predecessors. With public notification laws and offenders' identities on the Internet, it is perhaps most likely that in those areas many former offenders, an ex-inmate can arrive and assimilate. The people who live in these communities know they have the reputation as a home for ex-convicts, and this is often a sore spot. Indeed, distinguishing between insiders and outsiders is one technique residents use for managing stigma. Residents in both neighborhoods were quick to point out that most crime that occurred in these parts of town came from people living outside the neighborhood and that it is the reputation of the locality that attracts them to the area. One

respondent said of ex-offenders in the neighborhood, "...if you stopped them and asked them where they were from, they wouldn't say 'Tallahassee,' they would say, 'Tampa, Miami, Chicago, New York.'" In the Frenchtown focus group there was consensus that crack was introduced into the area, not by a local resident, but by someone from Miami. As one resident said, "...it's a whole lot of outside influence, because the people of Frenchtown love Frenchtown, they don't have any way to bring the stuff in. The stuff is brought in by other people."

Another respondent said that many of the ex-offenders in the neighborhood are mentally or physically impaired and instead of being sent to get psychiatric treatment they get sent to prison or jail. When released, they have nowhere to go and then end up on the streets. When asked if ex-offenders from outside the community were different than ex-offenders returning to the community, this same respondent said of outsiders, "They don't care, these people are on drugs, so they don't care about nothing anymore." Another respondent said:

> Now, we have a history in this area of being the place to come. I actually know
> people who have traveled a long way to come to see what Frenchtown is all about
> and most persons who come in through the Greyhound bus station they get re-
> leased from the area prison, they get off the bus stop and they never get back on.

The reputation of the community leads residents to feel they are stigmatized by members of the criminal justice system. This perception was true whether discussing attitudes of the police towards residents ("...according to your address, you had to have done it") or commenting on the length of sentences ("...sometimes persons from this particular area are incarcerated for longer stints for the crime that they have committed..."). In the end, residents are torn between their conviction that discrimination and a downtrodden neighborhood are conducive to people committing crime, their concern that bias in the criminal justice system metes out unfair

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sentences and their belief that individuals are responsible for their own lives. One way residents manage the stigma of people coming and going to prison from their neighborhood is to vacillate between blaming individuals for not trying to change their lives and blaming the system for not giving them a chance to do so. Said one South City resident, "The community, they might put the blame on the system," but she also said, "At first, it's your life, you have to choose your life." When presented with this contradiction, this respondent concluded, "So actually, it's just the individuals. They have to be strong-minded."

FINANCES

The most common answer residents gave regarding the impact of incarceration on their lives had to do with the way it effects them financially. Incarcerating an active offender can provide financial relief to a family being stolen from or called upon to assist members with court fees and other costs associated with arrest, but respondents spoke more frequently about the financial cost of incarceration itself. The inability of ex-offenders to get jobs, the loss of income for the family, and lack of employment opportunities in the community were problems frequently cited by residents.

Residents told us that offenders, before they went to prison, often provided material support (legal and illegal) for their families. Men who work "decent" jobs and provide for their children and support a home, represent a severe loss for the family when they are incarcerated. This loss of support was almost never made up by the family. About incarceration, one 53-year-old man told us:

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Another way that it hurts the community is that once that individual is incarcerated, or upon incarceration, the family, the rest of the family of that individual loses a productive member of the family. In a lot of cases, you know, he may be a construction worker when he leaves, but that's income that that family depends on and relies upon significantly, so once he's removed from the family, then that family is adversely affected from a financial standpoint.

Of course, not everyone who is incarcerated is working a legitimate job. Even those who do not, however, often provide income to their families. When asked if incarcerated family members were contributing financially to their family, some participants responded, "Well, in a way," or "Well, not in the way you're saying." Families that suffer from the loss of an income sometimes have to rely upon local charities to survive, sometimes have younger kids who start to "follow in his footsteps," and sometimes reconfigure, as women who are left behind "find a boyfriend" to help make ends meet. Other families seem to fall apart from the weight of financial strain. One man explained that:

> [T]hey're so disorganized now and everybody is hustling and scuffling and trying to make it, you know, after he's been taken away from the family, that it's really difficult to pull that family back together or to recover from his incarceration.

There was agreement that the loss of income in the family negatively affects the children because the mother cannot support the family as well as the father could. One woman said, "...so when that father is pulled away, that leaves him [the child] depending solely on the mother who cannot give him sufficient of what the father was giving him." An older woman who works in the neighborhood said she sees kids going hungry when the father goes to prison.

> So getting back to the kids, if they miss a day of school, I'm there, 'why are you not in school?' 'I like to go to school because I like my breakfast, I don't have any breakfast or dinner now,' and I'll give them a little something to eat. I have maybe some cookies or candy or a soda. The kids are not getting food when that husband or boyfriend goes to jail.

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To compensate, this respondent said, some children turn to crime.

> Those kids go out in the street and try to steal, and if a drug dealer says, 'hey, go take these drugs across over here to that person,' that's how they make their little extra money. They will use them as a runner...[It happens] when their [parents] are away and then when they come back it's continuous because he doesn't have a job.

In addition, the financial strain on families can force them onto public assistance and into public housing. A 26-year-old woman described the process:

> I feel that because of the fact, if they were taken away from that family, then that family had to go get on assistance, because if there was an income taken away, that they were directed to those areas. So when the offender comes back, he's going back to where his family is, and if that cycle begins, they never get out of public housing because they're never able to earn an income to pay for regular housing, so they have to stay in assisted housing.

This is not a simple picture, however. Many offenders are not financially successful, and those who are not can be a drain on family resources, stealing family money and needing a constant flow of cash to deal with various troubles. Families experience financial relief when these offenders are incarcerated. One family member told us that the financial burden on the family occurred when her nephew was, "...out doing whatever he was doing," because her sister lost time at work when she was called to help him out. Another family member told us that his mother experienced financial hardship due to "[c]ourt fees, probation fees, time off of work because she has to go to court," when his brother was incarcerated and that she barely got by borrowing from other family members.

Yet for many families of offenders, a stay in prison can simply shift the financial drain from maintaining the person on the streets to helping him cope in prison. Money spent to pay for collect telephone calls, reimburse an attorney, cover costs of transportation to the prison, or

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handle child care, can amount to a significant loss of financial security for families without significant financial resources. One participant reported that it became harder and harder to visit a family member in prison because of the cost (they had to rent a car) and time involved. One woman in her sixties, telling how her family supported the incarcerated family member during his incarceration by rotating visits among members of the extended family, said:

> We sent him money, we went to see him, we was just there for him. When he got out, we had him a house, we had his lights. We had him food. We bought him clothes, and now...when he got out, this is the whole eight years he was there, we was still trying to hold onto his job on the FSU campus for him and we did. He got it back.

Community members also try to help out family members of incarcerated individuals. Residents said they helped other families out with food and clothing and would provide cash to those in need. Family members end up absorbing more financial costs when ex-offenders return to the community, needing new clothes for job interviews, church and leisure, a place to stay and assistance finding a job. Indeed, housing is a primary need of ex-offenders returning to the community and their limited resources often means they end up living with family members. And, as one resident said, "They might not be on your lease, but they're going to be in your house," even if the public housing where the family lives might have rules against ex-offenders on the premises.

Due to the stigma associated with incarceration, however, getting a job is difficult for most people released from prison. One man in his early fifties told us:

> I think primarily one of the ways that it's [incarceration] a problem for this community is once an individual is incarcerated, if and when they return to the community their life as a productive citizen is pretty much over, because they're unemployable, quote, "unemployable." It's almost impossible for them to get a job. They are severely stigmatized, and that sort of goes along with the

unemployability, their inability to fit into the mainstream of the community, into the active participatory portion of the community.

Another participant, a long-term resident in her 70s, said:

> When a person has a scandal or what have you, society puts a mark on them, and when they put that mark on them, you go put in an application for a job, oh, no, we cannot, say you can't do this because you have been in jail but every time they look on there, prison, they keep putting it to the bottom, they keep putting it to the bottom. And their application had been in and been in for jobs, and they keep passing it to the bottom, and they never call because they look at that one record that they had been in jail, see. And society is a lot for the reason to fault. Like you say, they come out and they try to get a job and they go in and put in an application, they all, everybody says they're sorry, they don't want to work. Everybody that's been in jail is not sorry, and if they're not working it's not because they're sorry. Society has got it where they can go nowhere, they can't do anything.

The inability to get a job increases the probability that an ex-offender will return to illegal means of bringing in money, "just to survive." Said one young woman:

> And then if he's trying to make an income because he can't get a job, he participates in illegal activities that's going on. That's where I feel that a lot of illegal activities also surrounds the public housing area, because those participants that are there can't get a regular job, so they're going to go out and find some type of way to earn some money to bring back to their family.

Those who do get jobs have difficulty obtaining any degree of job stability. One participant relayed how ex-offenders are, "...not able to get a job, and then if he gets a job and somebody finds out that he's been incarcerated, 'well, Johnny, you know, we're going to have to let you go, you know.'" In addition, many of the jobs are low paying and are less than 40 hours per week, so that there often isn't enough money to pay the bills and ex-offenders have to take on multiple jobs. Others keep jobs until the background checks reveal their offender status and they get fired. These people, we were told, "...know they're going to get fired, but they take that job for a few weeks, four weeks, three weeks, two weeks, whatever, as long as they can get that one

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paycheck to help them out, they will go from job to job just to get that one paycheck, just because they know they're going to get fired."

As a result, residents thought, some ex-offenders turn to crime. As one respondent said:

> You know, I mean, say this person was a drug dealer. He comes back in and it's either going to be selling drugs, getting $500, $600 a day to $200 a week working at a part-time, working part-time at the grocery store. You have to look at what the environment poses for that individual when he comes back out and when he goes in.

The situation is complicated further because there are so few businesses located in these high incarceration communities and fewer still that are willing to, "take a chance" on hiring an ex-offender. One respondent thought that offenders incarcerated from a white community on the other side of town had fewer problems finding employment when they returned from prison because residents in those communities have jobs to give out. Thus, there was the sentiment that the sheer dearth of businesses in these high-incarceration neighborhoods meant residents could not help ex-offenders out of their employment problems. Residents of the Frenchtown focus group said that, in a previous era, their neighborhood had been a vibrant community with black-owned businesses that had a stake in the community and whose owners knew the ex-offenders or their families and would give them jobs. In contrast, today businesses owned by outsiders have no incentive to provide jobs. These employers should be pressured, one respondent thought, by the community to give out jobs.

> Just say, okay, what are you going to do for these individuals? You're in the community—we're giving our money to you to stay productive in our community. You're creating a service for us, but we're doing – our business is coming to you. We're the consumer. What are you going to do for these individuals that need these jobs?

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On the other hand, one local businessman who had hired at least four ex-offenders said his experiences had been, "overwhelmingly - well maybe not overwhelmingly, maybe 60-40 - on the negative side." One employee he spoke of had stolen from him and another he mentioned had been unable to get along with customers. As a result of these and other bad experiences, he is now reluctant to hire people coming out of prison.

Other local businesses also suffer when ex-offenders who cannot find employment hang out in front of area stores. One businessman noted that when ex-offenders, particularly those who are mentally impaired, loiter on the street, residents are reluctant to shop at those businesses.

> The customers don't want to go in the business because these people hang-around
> the business either begging, begging for money or food or drugs or
> whatever....You're scared to go into the businesses because of those people.

Finally, the community suffers financially from incarceration in two additional ways. The area's bad reputation means that large corporations do not locate their businesses in these neighborhoods; and housing prices are diminished because when residents flee, they sell their homes for whatever they can get, often at a reduced price. This, said one resident, reflects the value of the community. Thus, the overall housing market reflects a local economy and a local community, both of which are suffering. Indeed, this resident said "You say, how does it [incarceration] affect, that's how it affects, it affects every area, economic, education, politics, the whole mind set."

To counter the financial effects of incarceration, respondents thought the government should focus efforts on both ex-offenders and potential employers. There was agreement that the government caused the problems of unemployability and lack of employer trust, therefore they should develop programs to overcome them. Said one respondent of the criminal justice system,

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"..because they are the ones incarcerating them, so therefore, it's their responsibility, I feel, when they get out." In regard to this, it was noted that the most successful ex-offenders were those with skills, particularly those who were able to side-step the problems with employers by becoming self-employed. These people, respondents thought, created opportunities where none exist. Thus, one man who works in Frenchtown thought:

> [T]he main purposes in the criminal justice system is to try and rehabilitate them with something that they can use when they get out of the criminal justice system. The thing that I think that made a difference is that when you have an individual skill, which I'm thinking of things that can work independently, plumbing, contracting, electric, you're not going and filling out an application that says, 'Have you ever been convicted of a felony?' therefore that allows them to basically work for themselves. All you're going to have is the license number, and if they're conducting themselves as a business, then they're going to be successful with that skill better than having to go to an employer and have somebody look at them and say, 'why were you in prison?' you know, then the job is basically over, or sending in a background check and it's coming back every time.

Skills learned in prison are particularly important because they make ex-offenders more competitive in the job market. One respondent said he knew of ex-offenders who had benefitted from getting off drugs and getting their GED and vocational training while incarcerated. Of these people he said, "It has been tough for them when they have come out to get a job and everything, but some of them have had positive outcomes, but not many. What frequently happens, others said, is that skills learned in prison are not translatable into jobs on the street.

In addition, respondents thought it was the responsibility of the government to counter these problems by creating jobs and by finding a way to restore trust among employers towards ex-offenders. Some respondents suggested that there be programs targeted at employers to encourage them to hire ex-offenders. One respondent thought the government could target

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businesses which might be sympathetic to the problems ex-offenders experience and another person thought the government could protect businesses by "bonding" ex-offenders. Thus, the government would assume the risk if offenders stole from their new employers.

> What needs to be done is that when these people come out, especially if they're looking for a job and they expect to work for a reputable business, the businesses have to have some kind of guarantee that these people won't, you know, abuse their trust...[T]he government locks them up and puts them in this condition, the government ought to have to guarantee that if these people cause you harm, then we would have to make you whole again.

IDENTITY

The third way incarceration impacts the community is through the self identity of residents and the expectations they have for their lives. Incarceration has a direct impact on the way people who experience prison view themselves. Just as importantly, however, incarceration impacts the identities of other community residents, too. Residents report that having been incarcerated impacts people's feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, primarily because it is tied to their inability to get a job. As one resident said, the number one thing ex-offenders need is, "...a job that they can be proud of, an income that they can be proud of...[because] now, this guy, he's got on a decent pair of pants because he's got a job now where he's earning a decent income and he feels like somebody." Having a job, "...builds your spirit right up..."

Conversely, not being able to get a job and provide for their families makes ex-offenders feel not "as worthy as someone else." Also, not being trusted by employers makes ex-offenders feel bad. "...[W]hen you go to jail and come back, people don't want to hire you even to cut their yard. If you're an ex-offender and they know that, they have to peek out, it makes them feel bad that you can't trust them." Thus, a job leaves and ex-offender "feeling like somebody" which

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leads to a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. The pride which comes from a job can compete and overcome the stigma of incarceration; when someone has both the stigma of incarceration and the stigma of being unemployed, the result is a double blow to self- image. Not being employed is related to self-esteem in other ways. For instance, one respondent told us that she gets clothes for ex-offenders who, because of unemployment, are not able to purchase on their own, so that when they go to church they can look like the other people there and thus build their self-esteem.

When ex-offenders return to the community often they are filled with hope, but this soon suffers when they find the community in as bad shape as when they left, or perhaps, even worse, and they absorb the negativity of the environment. For example, a resident told of someone she knew who was not able to overcome his low self-esteem and low self-worth because he had internalized his "black sheep" status. This can be overcome, however, and ex-offenders can change their self-image. Pointing out that there are success stories in the midst of a negative environment, one resident said, "...it's not where you are, it's how you live it..." Confirming this sentiment, another resident told how he overcame his past of getting into trouble by changing his attitude.

The community as a whole benefits from someone who feels good about himself, and suffers when individuals lack self-pride. People, we were told, who feel good about themselves make friends in the neighborhood and help other people; and those who don't, lack pride in their surroundings which can translate into a lack of concern for their neighbors. One man explained:

> We are going to give these guys a job and we're going to give them a decent job so
> that they can feel proud of themselves. Now, once they feel that pride, but let's
> say that they don't feel that pride, what is the result? How does that affect

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Frenchtown? If I don't feel pride in my own self I'm not going to feel pride in my surroundings, so I'm not going to keep up my yard, I'm not going to keep up my car, I'm not going to keep up my house. I'm not going to care about the young boys that are walking down the street slugging [sic] drugs, because I've got enough to deal with in my own psyche. ...So it sort of spills over into the community, because when you get people back in the community and give them a sense of worth, then they come back feeling proud of themselves and being able to say, hey, look, man, don't do that, because see, man, I've been where you're and I'm telling you it's not worth it... And the other thing is, if I'm so depressed when I come out of prison that I can't help myself, I'm not going to help my community, I'm just not going to be able to do it. And it's not so much that I don't want to do it, you know. We're all human beings and we've got to feel good about ourselves, and when we feel good about ourselves we take into consideration other people's pain and other people's conditions.

One ramification of this for the neighborhood is the lack of role models, a deficit that

sometimes discourages children from a belief in their future. Respondents reported that without

positive role models, kids come to believe prison is their future. Said one young woman:

It [incarceration] affects the whole family, because we have young Black males in the Frenchtown area, their fathers, it's a cycle, they're in and out. There are no positive role models in the community other than a lot of the offenders that have children, and it's just basically being passed down from generation to generation because they're getting right into the same system, the criminal justice system.

Another participant added, "You will find the average little child, now I would say seven

out of 10, their goal is, [when you ask]'what are you going to do when you grow up, what are you

going to do?': 'I'm going to jail.' They have no role model." Even children who do not believe

incarceration is their future suffer from a belief that they have no meaningful future. One

respondent recounted a conversation he had with an area youth who was waiting to pick up date:

I said, 'you need to go clean yourself up and then come back and talk to the young lady.' He said, 'Do you see where I live? Why do I need to clean myself up? I can't get no job, I'm out here hustling, nobody wants to hire me. Do you see who I am?' See, that attitude is pervasive throughout the young men in the community.

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There was agreement that ex-offenders could be good role models when they come back if they use their experience to counsel others. Speaking about an ex-offender who has done just that, one resident said this man's contribution to the community is good. "He's saying, 'I did it, but don't do it. I have changed. I see where it was wrong. I made a mistake.' " Alternatively, there was skepticism. Said another resident, it is good when ex-offenders"... turn their story into an accomplishment, but in another light it can be a door opening for a child to say, 'well, this is the way I'm going to go, the criminal justice route.' Once they're on that track, they stay on that track. Some get off."

Family members also suffer when they begin to feel incarceration is inevitable and part of the experience of those living in the neighborhood. While many in the community seem inured to the experience of incarceration, some residents discussed a sense of hopeless and depression. Speaking about his mother who lives in another area of Florida, one respondent said she was depressed when his brother was incarcerated because she was Panamanian, saying:

> [S]o she's not African-American, and she deals with her culture being a bit different and it's just harder on her, because she wasn't brought up that way and her family wasn't brought up that way, and it's just harder for her. Kids just weren't going to jail in Panama. Kids aren't going to jail in Panama.

The community also is affected because residents begin to feel hopeless; there is nothing they can do to affect change. Apathy is exacerbated because the residents are low income and live amongst drugs. There is a feeling like things can't change, either on the individual level or the community level: "That's just the way it is," some say. This is compounded with a sense of discrimination in the criminal justice system and, "...the life occurrences...of an African-American in a white-dominated society" where the police focus their attention on youths in

certain neighborhoods. One respondent said this results in people feeling demeaned, with less incentive to "lift [themselves] up." Continuing, this respondent said "If you treat me more like a human being, I will act more like a human being. If you treat me more like an animal, I'm going to act more like an animal." The cumulative effect on the community can be drastic.

RELATIONSHIPS

One of the primary ways in which incarceration impacts the community is the way it changes relationships. For the most part, the relationships are changed for the worse, though there are instances of family members reporting that incarceration helped the family by allowing the relationship between remaining members to improve.

When someone from the family is incarcerated, remaining members report feeling bad and experiencing a sense of loss and anxiety. About having someone go to prison, residents said, "it's hard." Sometimes this resulted in a physical illness of a family member; sometimes other conditions such as depression occurred. Residents also talked about feeling disappointed and guilty when someone was incarcerated, feeling that family members might have been able to prevent it had they been able to do more for the offender. A woman in her late 40's revealed the following:

> I think for me, in terms of the family, no matter what the behavior was like, for the family members perhaps they still suffer a sense of loss, because that's a relative or that's someone that maybe was important to them, whether they were being mischievous, misbehaving or whatever the situation was, so maybe experiencing a sense of loss that they're not there for them to contact.

Speaking about his brother who has been incarcerated, one participant said "I still feel like there was something that I could have done, because I feel like peer pressure took over [for his brother]

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and I wasn't able to do anything about that, not being there for him." And another person said, "Well, it just made the family feel bad...because you know, they tried to keep him from doing that [getting arrested]...they tried, but he did it anyway and he went to jail."

Relationships among family members suffer when someone was incarcerated, simply from the incarcerated person's absence. If the spouse is incarcerated this may affect the marriage, which grows distant from the separation. As one resident pointed out, "Of course, when he returns, it's going to be different because that relationship between the mother and father has been damaged by that separation." Residents report, too, that children can lose respect for both parents: mom because she is a single-parent; dad because he is an offender. The lost respect (and the loss of a caretaker) often translates into behavior problems with children. Thus, these children are at risk for delinquency and repeating the cycle of their parents. Explained one man:

> By him being gone for that period of time, by the time he comes back the kid has no respect. He loses respect for the mother who is a single parent and when he comes back he has no respect for his daddy, because now he knows where the daddy has been, that makes it even worse. Like you say, that makes it a vicious cycle. That kid goes out and gets into trouble and he goes through the cycle. Then it goes on to the siblings.

When one parent is gone it is often difficult for parents to supervise children. One respondent said that when the father was incarcerated, the children stopped going to school and, in one case, "the younger boy started carrying a gun." One participant noted that sometimes when one parent is incarcerated there is no one left to supervise the children, particularly if the mother has a problem with drugs.

> [W]hen the boyfriend or the husband leaves, if the lady is on drugs, then the children don't have anybody to control them. Those kids go in and out the door,

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in the door, out the door, across the street, across town. They don't know where they are.

In addition, the financial loss associated with incarceration means that parents may have difficulty providing children with basic necessities, let alone "extras" such as toys. Sometimes, one respondent said, this affects the way parents are able to show their love.

Alternatively, some residents report that the relationship between family members improves when someone was incarcerated. This occurs because, while active, the offender usually drains the family both emotionally and financially, leaving little for other family members. Thus, incarceration provides a sense of relief for the family (sometimes simply because they now know where the relation is residing) and time for them to improve their relationship in a calmer and less stressful environment. One participant said that when her family member went to prison, the other children in the family became closer, "because when he was out, he was more like wanting attention and with his mom working and going to school, I guess he was one of those kids that just needed more attention than the other child, so he acted out in a different way." Following the incarceration, the family member learned to express himself, so the respondent saw his incarceration as positive for family dynamics.

The relationship between neighbors also is impacted when someone goes to prison. Neighbors navigate a difficult relationship as they reach out to the offender's family members. While some of the empathy expressed by residents for families dealing with incarceration comes from the sense that, "what happened to them could happen to you," most people are more altruistic, expressing concern for the family, particularly their financial well-being and the well-being of their children. Upon seeing the family of an offender, one woman said she would give

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them a big smile, "[l]et them know that if they need you, you will be there, also." Residents describe trying to reach out to these families, saying she would, "[l]et them know that the church is a family, their family, and when one is hurting, when one is going through something, the whole church family is going through it."

Alternatively, there is a sense that offenders get what they deserved, and that families of offenders often get shamed and experience a loss of respect in the community. When this happens, families sometimes isolate themselves from the citizenry. One participant said, "If something happens in your family it's like they will be ashamed of the whole family, and you know, you're going to kind of avoid going around people, you know."

Upon return from prison, ex-offenders rely heavily on the support of family members to transition successfully back into the community. The support is typically described as emotional (believing the ex-offender has changed; giving him a chance) and ex-offenders are described as fearful and in need of nurturing. Support also is defined in the form of tangible help like financial assistance, providing a place to live, clothes and assistance getting a job. In fact, without someone providing this type of support, respondents believe that ex-offenders will recidivate. Speaking about offenders, one resident said, "They are demoralized while incarcerated, and so they need a real strong support system. When they get back to that community, they need a real strong support system to help raise them above that level of demoralization."

Ex-offenders who are able to turn their lives around seem to do so with the help of family and friends. Alternatively, acknowledging that there wasn't very much family members could do to help ex-offenders, because what they needed the most was a job, one resident said, "You're

encouraging him constantly. You're putting all you can, you're giving him all you can give."

One 34-year-old woman stated:

> They need someone that's going to be there for them, instead of pushing them aside or being negative towards them, you know, when the time comes to get out. You know, most—nine times out of ten—they're going back in, because of how society, family community are treating them.

In addition to recognizing that ex-offenders need support, residents express a variety of reactions to releasees returning to the neighborhood. First and foremost they discuss the event as one of celebration, a day when a homecoming party would be held. For those who did not know the individual before he was incarcerated, they said they would be welcoming and nonjudgmental. They respected the individual's privacy and "did not get in anyone's business." On the other hand, residents said they look for signs that the person is trying to change his life around and attending church or looking for a job are two ways to accomplish that. One woman said she wonders, "...what is he going to do, after he's out what is he planning to do?...What steps is he going to take to...make a change or keep himself from going back in." And that there was a tendency to trust he'll be different, "...until I see him going to make that mistake again." One South City respondent said, however, that it was the commonality of the experience that makes him less likely to be compassionate and more likely to wonder how the ex-offender is going to act now. "It's not uncommon, so being that it's not uncommon...I'm not thinking more along the lines of, 'wow, you know, this is hard.' I'm thinking, 'okay, what's going to happen now.'" One man said, "I know he's probably going to do something wrong, but I'm just going to pray for him and that's basically all I can do."

While the respondents generally see themselves as being supportive of someone returning from prison, they report that others are less welcoming. One participant said that others would gossip. These people, the respondents said, say bad things about ex-offenders like, "...he won't be out long, he'll be going back directly." Some other people, they said, can be blaming, shaming and generally distrustful. Some people are met with suspicion and fear. A resident in South City said:

> I think as far as fearing or thinking it, is the fact that they're right next to you, and say, for instance, if you may be a single parent. You're working every day. Your child is in school and that child comes home and you're saying, 'Oh, my child is home now and that person is next door.' You know, you're going to have these negative thoughts running in your mind now.

Clearly there are conflicting responses to ex-offenders in the neighborhood. On one hand, residents purport to welcome them back, non-judgementally, and on the other hand they report some degree of suspicion, cynicism and fear. One resident said if an ex-offender moved in next door to her home she might, "...do a background check." Another said he was, "...going to watch him." One resident in Frenchtown said she had found out about a neighbor's crime because she, "...happened to run by it on the Internet." At the same time she said, "I never get into anybody's personal business, I never ask. He probably don't even know I know."

Respondents are more likely to attribute negative reactions to others than to themselves. When we asked focus group participants to respond to ex-offenders' statement to us that their neighbors thought they were evil, residents denied this was true, saying that this sentiment reflected the ex-offenders' own perceptions of themselves. One South City resident said, "In other words, if it were me and I was them, that's what I would feel."

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Noting the difficulty of accepting ex-offenders back into the community, one South City respondent said that acceptance is difficult to obtain because a bond of trust has been broken between the ex-offender and the community and mistrust is hard to overcome. Another said he had known about families being stigmatized to the point where they left their churches, "...because people didn't treat the families the same no more." Another 53-year-old woman declared:

> We are talking about prejudice, but we're prejudiced in our own groups. We can't talk about this group and we have to be a sister to our own, really, as well as a sister to you. So this is one thing that I have found, that we're prejudiced in our own groups, and if I'm not of your group, I don't work in your setting, then I'm cast aside. We don't have the compassion and love that we should have.

Frequently, what determines how someone is treated upon return to the community depends upon the gravity of the crime, the degree to which the community has gossiped about the crime in his absence and signs from the individual that he is trying to make a change (the same conditions related to stigma). While residents called for harsher sentences for (hypothetical) drug dealers, when asked how they would treat a drug dealer returning to their community, one resident said he would welcome him back. This resident drew the line at sex offenses. There is consensus that offenders who have committed especially egregious crimes, particularly against the community, would not be welcomed back. Speaking hypothetically about how the community would deal with someone returning from prison after having murdered a child, one participant said the community would, "[p]lan a lynch party." Another respondent acknowledged that there was a difference between the public and private ways in which residents respond to ex-offenders returning to the neighborhood. In public, residents are welcoming and supportive. In private, however, they are stigmatizing and blaming.

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They come together at church. They say, 'oh, we're there for you, we want to do all these things for you,' but then behind your back they're like, 'he deserves it.' ...So it's hard. It's real hard. It would be silly for us to deny the fact that there's a stigmatism that's put on you and we facilitate it.

When returning to the community it is important for ex-offenders to steer clear of their old friends; people who may not have changed their ways. Sometimes to facilitate this, families move to a new neighborhood while their family-member is incarcerated, or in anticipation of his release. As one South City respondent said, her mother moved when her brother was released, "...to kind of straighten him up..." Sometimes this works, but other times the ex-offenders go back to the old neighborhood to be with friends. When no family move occurs, offenders sometimes choose to reside with relatives who live away from the old neighborhood. This kind of solution often involves members of the extended family, thus, extending the reach of incarceration. While moving out of the neighborhood is intended to disrupt ties between the offender and his (seemingly "bad") friends, moving out of the neighborhood may disrupt ties between the family and their friends, as well.

When family members choose not to move and when the offenders return to the same environment (not moving in with extended family members) such as often happens when the offender is a juvenile, the relationship between the offender and the family members (particularly the parent) can become strained as the offender feels caught between the pressure and expectation from the family to change and the pressure and expectation from the friends to "hang out."

> [I]t's hard because when he gets out of jail, his homeboys are like, 'oh, we're glad, we're glad you're back. You know, let's go light up a blunt. Let's go do this. Let's go do that. Let's go work the streets again,' so he's got to deal with that and he's got to deal with his mother saying, 'no, stay in the house. You

know, stay in the house. Go get a part-time job, go do this,' when that's not something that he's used to and that's not something that his peers are telling him to do.

In general, respondents report that one of the effects of incarceration is that individuals are more likely to be isolated. Isolation also is heightened by residents' decreased willingness to "hang out" with friends on the street. Respondents report that having ex-offenders on the street means that the police were more likely to question them.

> [Y]ou can take five or six boys walking up in front of the store going to the park, they're going to stop on the corner and talk. The police rides by, they're going to stop, they're going to run all six of those boys in just to see what is going on. Naturally, they're going to take somebody to jail because they've got something on them.

Not wanting to be stopped by the police, one respondent said, "...you have to be careful what you do. We better not gather here." Another said some people are wary of their own response were they to be stopped (anger, possibly resulting in arrest) and that this served as a disincentive for socializing in public.

> I mean, if I'm hanging out on the corner with my friends and one of them happens to be an ex-offender, if the police come by and he's rousting me, it's going to make me very, very, angry and I may do something that's stupid, yes, but it gets me into trouble....

Overall, relationships in the community are changed by incarceration as residents are called upon to support the families of offenders and to support the ex-offenders when they return. The tension of being welcoming and nonjudgmental versus being cautious and self-protective while waiting for signs of change means that neighbors are reluctant to know each other in more than a superficial way. These are communities where people respect each other's privacy but try to find out what they need to know to assess their own risk. What develops is a culture of taking

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care of yourself and trying to help out neighbors (when you know them) as best you can without putting yourself at risk. As one resident noted, it takes the community to send the message that trouble-making will not be tolerated and for that to happen, residents have to be willing to act. In this environment, however, where offenders are related to neighbors and people stay out of other people's business, it does not happen frequently.

> So the people that live here now, when a troublemaker comes to the
> neighborhood, you turn your back on them. If drug dealers don't have anybody to
> sell dope to, they're out of business. If the dope users don't have anybody to buy
> from, they're out of business. So it's got to be all about the people. You can
> create any programs you like, but it's got to have some participants that are
> willing to say, 'That's wrong," and pick up your phone and let somebody know
> that you don't like it instead of just blockading your own yard, because it's not
> only about your own yard because the trouble is spilling over from the neighbor
> next door's house to my house.

When this is added to feelings about the criminal justice system, the community is in a bind, where calling the police can be viewed as an act of disloyalty, getting involved in neighbors' affairs is seen as being intrusive and judgmental and where limited resources require family units to coalesce around their own needs and overlook the needs of the neighborhood. The result is disrupted networks and isolation and as one respondent said, "no community, there's no community."

CHAPTER 5

EX-OFFENDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF REMOVAL AND REENTRY

In the previous chapter we reported on the experiences and perceptions of residents living in two high incarceration neighborhoods. In this chapter we report on the experiences of ex-offenders (those who have been released from prison within the last four years) who describe both the process of leaving the community to go to prison and the process of returning and trying to reintegrate back into the community. The ex-offenders' perspective illuminates the situations and challenges of re-entry, as they promote and inhibit recidivism. Taken together with the residents' perspectives on incarceration, they present a more thorough understanding of the complex effects of incarceration on community stability.

We have categorized the ex-offenders' comments about the impact of incarceration into the same four broad categories identified by the residents (stigma, financial effects and problems associated with identity and relationships). While there are some overlapping observations for these groups, comments reported here represent viewpoints limited by personal experience. This is particularly true for ex-offenders. While the residents' comments sometimes reflect an understanding of the effect of incarceration of someone they knew who had been imprisoned, the ex-offenders spoke more about their own personal experiences and had less to say about how incarceration impacts the community-at-large. Ex-offenders had to be prompted, often multiple times, to think about how incarceration affected their family, friends and neighbors; their comments on this topic are sparse. The ex-offenders are, however, vividly aware of, and spoke freely about, the substantial pressure that fills their lives as a result of having been to prison.

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Some of this pressure comes from coping with problems of drug and alcohol addiction and some stem from a myriad of competing demands such as the immediate need for money and the difficulty of finding employment, both of which hamper successful reintegration into the community. We conclude this chapter with a category discussing pressure and the problems it poses for the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into the community.

Throughout the discussion presented in this chapter, we note the recurring mention of the problem of drugs as an aspect of re-entry. For example, an offender who was drug-involved struggles to overcome the negative community assessment of his past; drugs stand as a constant financial temptation; the offenders' use of drugs offers a significant source of strain in personal relationships. Thus, the problem of drugs is not a separate part of our analysis, but rather is a factor (among other factors) in almost every aspect of our respondents' lives.

Ex-offenders were encouraged to discuss both their removal from the community and their re-entry back into it. Most had relatively little to say, however, about what it was like to leave the community. We believe this is true for two reasons. First, the process of leaving their families often is overshadowed by their fears and concerns about going to prison. Since we asked ex-offenders not to focus on the incarceration event itself, except where it was germane to their experiences in the community, most of the respondents were unable to express, in any detail, problems stemming from leaving their homes. This absorption with the impending problems of imprisonment also impedes their ability to recognize problems their families may have encountered. Second, we interviewed ex-offenders who, because of their recent release dates, were still very much involved in the process of reintegrating back into the community. As a result, their attentions are more sharply focused on that part of the incarceration process.

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Hearing the stories of ex-offenders is important, both because of their educated perspective on the impact of incarceration and their blind-spots concerning it. They are educated on the topic, in that they know first- hand the way incarceration has affected their lives. They also often have family members or friends who have been incarcerated, and so frequently they know what it means to lose someone to prison. Their blind-spot, though, is that they can only know second-hand how their own incarceration affects those left behind, because they obviously were not there to witness those effects. Moreover, it could be argued that ex-offenders do not recognize these additional affects, as a way of minimizing, or at least managing, any guilt they might feel about increasing the burden and problems experienced by their loved ones.

Overall, the ex-offenders see both positive and negative effects of incarceration on their lives and the lives of family members. Sometimes the positive benefits are simple and concrete: regular meals, showers, medical treatment. For one man who had been homeless, prison represented a place to sleep that was relatively safe. Respondents speak of incarceration changing their way of thinking, of giving them an opportunity to reevaluate their lives and to choose a new course. Some used the time to get their GEDs or vocational training and many learned to value their freedom more than the money and thrills obtained from crime. Said one young offender, "You know, selling drugs is like an addiction, it's like using more, you're used to the money, you're used to the cash money, a whole different lifestyle.[1]" For another ex-offender, incarceration was positive, "...because I was deteriorating myself from not taking care

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[1] To comply with IRB requirements of anonymity, we have removed all personal identifiers from quotations. The reader should note that this analysis makes use of multiple statements from the 9 respondents who participated in the "Ex-offender" group and individual interviews, as well as a few comments from others who have gone through re-entry.

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of myself from not taking care of myself, you know, the hygiene and stuff like that. I was deteriorating. Actually, I was seeing myself dying, you know..."

They recognize, too, that their incarceration can benefit the community members who felt safer with, "...another one gone." One respondent said, "It's positive for me to go in for the other people. The stores and the cars I was breaking into and the people who I was stealing from, you know, that was positive."

Conversely, many of the ex-offenders know their incarceration was stressful for them and for their families, and drained their already limited financial resources. Some did not receive any kind of educational training and feel they were unprepared to return to their communities. The stigma associated with incarceration is almost impossible to overcome and makes changing their identities from "criminals" to law abiding citizens difficult to achieve.

STIGMA

As with the residents, stigma is one of the primary effects of incarceration on the lives of ex-offenders. But while residents see the pervasive impact of stigma through its effect on ex-offenders, as well as their families and their communities, ex-offenders recognize only their own stigma. This perspective is easy to understand because criminality is an extremely damaging status that ex-offenders find difficult to change. Said one ex-offender, "And the saying that was usually said, once a convict, always a convict, once a drug addict, always a drug addict, not - you know, I guess most people just don't believe that you can change."

Stigma is important to understand because it impacts the way ex-offenders are treated by almost everyone they encounter, particularly landlords and prospective employers. Maintaining a

successful course is difficult when trying to offset (or at least minimize) the effects of stigma.

For instance, ex-offenders wrestle with whether or not to inform prospective employers about their backgrounds. They recognize that to be truthful may mean not getting the job, but that being deceptive means trouble down the road. An ex-offender with years of successful re-entry told of one of his first jobs after release, obtained without disclosing his felony record. He had worked hard at the job, and he had done well - so well, that the employer considered promoting him to a managerial position. In anticipation of the promotion, the employer obtained a "routine" background check, and learned of the individual's undisclosed conviction. Instead of being promoted, he was fired.

The struggle with disclosure is a double-edged sword, as ex-offenders face the dilemma of how to respond to the job application questions about their felony convictions; some report they answered truthfully, others say they lied and still others report "you look over it, you don't sign it." Not responding at all to this question, one man reasoned, was neither lying nor truthful and with a little luck and the potential employer's oversight, might result in a job. One ex-offender said he was honest about his background and, "[n]othing came through, as much - hard as I could, it was hard for me to get a job at McDonald's or Burger King, but I just, you know, kept trying." Another said, "they look at a felony and they will say, 'we'll get back with you later.' That's just as good as throwing it [job application] in the trash can."

One ex-offender's solution was to become self-employed. He said:

> I had to struggle and I could work for myself. I can paint, I can do carpentry work, I can work for myself. I go over there and get established with people in the community that need carpentry work or something like that, and these are my personal jobs. I work for myself, they don't ask me about my record or anything, because they don't even know I've got one.

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Housing is also difficult to obtain because landlords are wary about leasing to ex-offenders. It was common for ex-offenders to be told that the landlord did not want to take a chance on them. One person had his mother put her name on the lease; another told how he was unable to get an apartment, and when he tried to add his name to a lease where his uncle lived, the application was rejected. "[T]hey told him [his uncle] that they would rather not, that I couldn't live there. They'll tell you that they'd rather not take a chance that you'd do something." Another young man who was able to get his name on a lease said the landlady initially was worried about his background. Once she was sure he had not been incarcerated for a violent offense, however, she allowed him to live in the apartment.

Another impact of stigma is that ex-offenders perceive they are harassed by the police more frequently than they deserve.

> You know, because this is a poor area and all, I guess the police can just stop you whenever. It's embarrassing. You might be just walking down the street and they come along and pat you down. You may be trying to do right, they don't know, but they just come along, whether you are with other people or not and right there just pull you over, make you stop and they'll just put you up against the wall. It's embarrassing.

Said one ex-offender, "When I walk down the street at night, automatically they [the police] think I'm doing something wrong." Continuing, this young man said, "If you don't do nothing wrong, you have nothing to really worry about, but it's funny sometimes how innocent people do go to jail because they're in the wrong area at the wrong time and because of their history." Thus, ex-offenders see that one of the more devastating effects of stigma is that it may lead to another period of incarceration.

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Although many of the residents report a willingness to give ex-offenders a chance to prove themselves, the ex-offenders we interviewed are not confident this is the case. Instead, when asked at the end of the interview how community residents could make the process of reintegration easier, many ex-offenders said it would help them if their neighbors did not view them so negatively. The belief that others will look down on them, many ex-offenders report, makes them keep to themselves. Sometimes, however, they are surprised by the reception they receive. One young man said, "...when I first got out ... I didn't think the church would have anything to do with me either because of my past." In practice, however, he found a place in church, adding, "...I came to find out that, you know, God forgives me for what I did, so therefore what anybody else thinks, it really doesn't matter."

One sign of the stigma surrounding incarceration, and also a way of managing it, is secrecy. Confirming the resident respondents' sentiment that it is best not to mention incarceration, one ex-offender described how people do not tell their children about being in prison out of embarrassment. Though some people, including many of the residents we interviewed, say that all young children growing up in these neighborhoods have a sense of the inevitability of incarceration, our ex-offenders had a different perspective. They report that children do not know who in the community has gone to prison, or any of the details of imprisonment. One ex-offender said that adults know and keep it a secret, but the children "...don't know nothing about that. Unless they daddy went or their cousin went or you know, someone they know." Another, speaking about his toddler son, said "[H]e was little, he just knew his daddy was away." One ex-offender pointed out that teenagers know about prison because they have been in trouble. But here, as well, there may be little sense of the inevitability

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of incarceration, because, "[Y]ou don't know what's going on in someone else's house. If you didn't see the uncle for awhile you don't know if he out on a date, out on a six month drunk, or just out." Secrecy is desirable from the ex-offenders' perspective, and so they try to prevent their criminal records from being discussed, whether or not they are known. One individual, whose children were brought to visit him throughout his long imprisonment, noted that now that he is back home, the family prefers not to speak of that experience, including how the (now adult) children felt about their father's absence, or how the experience effected any of them. Asked if the family ever talks about it, the man replied "[N]o, no. Since I've been home we talk about it very little. It's something we are glad is over. We've done a lot of celebrating, eating...but my kids, they don't talk about it. If they do, it's in passing."

While overcoming stigma is difficult, it is possible. One respondent told how he recently purchased a home and had no trouble at all getting a mortgage. Others, years into successful re-entry, report that they were able to build stable and trusting relationships with neighbors and work associates. In these cases, ex-offenders have developed a belief that if they are resolute in being "changed," the effects of stigma will dissipate.

FINANCES

The story of the relationship between finances and incarceration begins even before the ex-offenders get to prison. The low socio-economic status of Frenchtown and South City means that people who live there frequently cannot afford a lawyer. As a result, they believe they end up serving more time in prison than others who have access to more resources. One ex-offender said:

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Stay out two years, wipe the slate clean, flunk a piss test, they put me back in prison again. I ain't done nothing wrong. And that is what my parole officer saying, 'wow, you ain't committed no crime.' I didn't commit one then but they say I did. I couldn't afford a lawyer at the time. I work for the city of Tallahassee, I couldn't afford a lawyer. And that is another thing about we being in the project, we can't afford a good attorney to represent us in the right proper way to get us off. A lot of those cases that go on down there, they would throw them out. Because you don't have an attorney, you don't know the law, they get you....It's bad on us. It is really bad...."

Reiterating this view, another stated:

It was hard for me, and it was hard for my family because they didn't understand the law and we couldn't afford proper legal representation...I think that if you don't have the finances to receive proper legal representation, whether you are black or white, you will get shafted. I think that public defenders (as most guys would feel) are public pretenders. They do just enough to give you representation....to say you are being represented.

Many ex-offenders recognize some financial strain on their families either through the loss of an income or through the additional financial burden levied by their own financial needs while in prison. For instance, one ex-offender said he was a warehouse manager for a furniture company before being incarcerated and that he was, "...making a good honest living, but maybe over 80 percent of the income [for the household] was coming from me." According to him, his incarceration, "devastated" his wife and her children who were financially dependent upon him. Also, once incarcerated, offenders leave behind financial responsibilities, such as child support and, frequently, their extended families absorb this cost. This ex-offender continued by saying that his mother and sisters assumed his financial obligation for his ex-wife and her children while he was in prison. Another respondent said his mother paid his child support while he was incarcerated. Still another said "I wasn't really working, not in a real business. I was living here

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with my sister and her family. I was doing some day labor, making some money. She let me live here and I helped pay for some things, food and stuff."

The ex-offenders also tell how families often provide financial support to them directly while they are in prison. One respondent estimated that it costs about $150 per month to live in prison and that is the amount many men ask for from their families. An ex-offender told how his mother would send money orders for food and other items from the prison canteen. Another said the only time his incarceration affected his family was when they wired him money. Currently, this man's brother is incarcerated and when the family talks to the brother he tells them what he wants them to do for him. "Every time they get extra money they send it to him. And when they get the opportunity they go see him. Which is a great support system for him." Yet visits are costly and difficult to accomplish. Likewise, the cost of phone calls from prison is inflated, sometimes so much so that the family cannot afford to accept many of these collect calls.

While many families strain to provide financial help to their incarcerated loved ones, other families just cannot afford this additional burden. One ex-offender said that many men get money only once a year, at Christmas, from the State of Florida. "You got a guy been in jail 16, 17 years and they never heard from nor got a dime from their family member. They [the State] usually give us at Christmas money. Every year they give us $5 for Christmas only time guys got money."

Upon release, the need for cash is an immediate crisis. In Florida, ex-offenders are given $100 when they are released from prison. To some, that seems like a lot of money, but it does not go far. One ex-offender said, "That hundred dollars was gone within - I tried to squeeze like three pair of pants and a couple of shirts, and that was it. The money was gone." Another ex-

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offender said, "No money at first, there ain't no money." Some said they solved their financial

problem with food stamps. One man said he had used his stamps both for food and for cash.

Another said, "I went to the food stamp office, because that was still easy to enroll, it was easy to

get a few stamps and I didn't do any good with it, because I sold them....for cash and drugs. That

was the cycle started all over again, that vicious cycle"

Ex-offenders have immediate needs which are costly. One need is for new clothes

because the ones they had prior to incarceration either no longer fit or are extremely out of date.

People spoke of needing clothes appropriate for work, for leisure and for church. The need for

clothing, and other amenities, however, frequently takes a back seat to the more immediate needs

of paying monthly supervision fees and finding housing.

Florida requires released offenders to pay for correctional supervision, a monthly fee that

varies from $50 to $100, for outstanding court fees. The strain can be overwhelming for ex-

offenders who know that if these fees are not paid they may be returned to prison. Sometimes

fees are not due for two to three months after release, but one ex-offender said that he did not

think, "they let you off the probation thing until you fully pay all your money." Given all the

other immediate financial needs of ex-offenders, coming up with supervision fees is difficult.

While some respondents said their probation officer seemed to understand their financial

dilemma, one said "...they were telling me not to get too relaxed. You know, it was like, well,

we still want our money, and as soon as possible."

Financial problems are compounded for those ex-offenders who are released owing

money. One man said about the county jail, "...they charge you...for what it is, breakfast, lunch

and dinner, a dollar fifty a day, and if you run behind on it, you've got a tab with them. So you

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can run out of jail and go back to jail, you still owe them for them three months that you was in there eating and you didn't have money in your account."

The result of having immediate financial needs but little ability to earn sufficient sums quickly and legally can be problematic, especially when ex-offenders see others living the lifestyle they desire. When asked how men resist the urge to get money through any means possible, one ex-offender said, "They can't. Because you got, let's say you see someone here got $500, this guy got $700, this guy here doing what he want to do, he got a good girl, yeah, they want girlfriends, they want girls, whatever, and they had to have money." One respondent said the financial pressure made him feel like giving up. "...when I feel like they don't care, I don't care either. It's like, you know, so what, and I'd get that negative attitude and I'd be gone, you know, catch me when you can, you know." One man stated the need for strict determination, saying "[Y]ou going to be discouraged, you going to be disappointed, especially if you have to go out job hunting...very few people want to work hard for slightly above minimum pay." Most of the ex-offenders we interviewed expressed an interest in working so they could meet their responsibilities, but said finding employment is difficult. To resolve the immediate need for cash, some ex-offenders turned to day labor companies. These day-to-day jobs, however, are only sporadically available and there is no guarantee that someone who shows up willing to work on any given day will be employed. Even when ex-offenders are hired for this type of work, and receive immediate cash, the pay is rarely sufficient to cover all their living expenses. To make ends me, many ex-offenders say they end up working multiple jobs.

While stigma from employers is one barrier to employment, the inability to read or write also precludes some ex-offenders from getting a job because, if nothing else, it makes it difficult for them to fill out job applications. Said one respondent:

> You know, I learned a long time ago that it is important the way you fill out an application—tells the man whether you can do the job or not. It really means a lot. Just the application itself, if you don't know how to fill out all the details and fill it out properly. Some guys can't do that. They can't fill it out properly.

In addition, some people have difficulty getting a job, he added, because many ex-offenders do not know how to present themselves, physically, during an interview and others have too much pride to say, "...please give me a job." Other missing skills, like being able to read a ruler, preclude jobs such as construction, often one of the few options open to ex-offenders.

Once they obtain a job, many ex-offenders struggle with finding and paying for transportation. Said one man "[Y]ou gotta take two weeks to get a job, I mean before you get a paycheck. What you going to do? You ain't got no money to go to work with. I mean, you gotta have money to get there, back and forth." Some ended up relying on friends for rides to and from work; others spend long hours in transit, using the sporadic Tallahassee public transportation system. One man told how getting rides from friends with cars is almost impossible. As a result, getting a car and a driver's license was considered a major step toward freedom.

Some of the financial problems ex-offenders experience stem from a lack of basic skills. For instance, many of these men do not know how to budget their money. In prison, where there are few decisions to be made, inmates either lose their ability to budget or never learn this important skill. Upon re-entry into the community, learning to make decisions can be a challenge and overseeing a budget can be complex. This is particularly true as ex-offenders try

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to balance their financial obligations against the need to begin socializing. One ex-offender said he was having difficulty budgeting his money, making mistakes by spending his money all at once, "[t]rying to have a good time with the ladies because that is the only time you get money to have a good time."

Finally, because finding a job and paying for housing often are impossible on their own, many of the respondents said they end up relying upon family members, once again, for financial assistance and/or housing. As a result, the financial burden incurred by families continues even after an offender returns from prison. One ex-offender said he relied upon his sister to feed him when he was released, and another said he had to request money from extended family members, people he wouldn't normally have asked. This dependence can be a strain for families who are not financially secure anyway. One solution is that ex-offenders end up moving around a lot, living in different homes for short periods of time, in order to disperse the financial and emotional burden among many different family members. For instance, one ex-offender said he lived with a girlfriend before living with his mother, and another told of living with one sister before moving in with another sister.

IDENTITY

The problem of identity is an important one for ex-offenders to resolve because it not only drives how these men think about themselves, but how they relate to others as well. As a result, identity shapes their ability to reconnect with family members, find employment and associate with neighbors in the community. Reshaping their identities, however, maybe difficult because their identities as criminals often were cast early in life, when family members accused

them of turning out just like someone who had been to prison. "Right, and that's the way it wound up, being like cousin so-and-so, you know," said one ex-offender. As a result, many ex-offenders suffered from low self-esteem before they went into prison, seeing themselves as having limited life chances, and with little reason for a positive attitude about the possibilities of their lives. Others told a different story, saying that as children they knew no one who had been incarcerated. One ex-offender said:

> When I was a kid growing up I knew I had opportunities there when I saw how hard my mom was working to make ends meet. So it was a choice I made, that bad choice to drink. I was not forced to drink or forced to do other negative things in the neighborhood, and with my incarceration, I didn't get arrested until I was grown. So as a kid I was no really bad kid because I didn't rob, do nothing bad like that. I would just drink and have fun in school or whatever and graduated with the military.

From these vastly different starting points, prison becomes an equalizing experience. In prison, many inmates solidify their identities as offenders. One ex-offender said:

> I got a friend of mine, he is a lawyer, he is in prison right now. We write each other....[H]e had a drunk driving one night and he must of hit a guy, killed him. So he had to do time. Now, he's a lawyer. He said before he got into prison he did no wrong. Now he is in prison, he's a crook. Because he had to break the rules in order to survive in there. It is so hard in there and he is having problems because he said he never broke the law, he never did anything wrong, but in there, you have to.

Respondents speak about the importance of prison programs for countering their identities as criminals and fighting against low self-esteem. In prison, they say, the criminal identity is hardened and forces that might ameliorate it are rare. One man said he had been making use of a program in prison to learn a trade. To him, this program represented his future, but when it was canceled, "....they snatched...that little bit of hope I had, and it's like, when I got out, man, I don't have an education, the only job I ever had was working at IGA bagging

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groceries, and I know I can't make it you know, alone on this." When he got his GED in prison, he was proud that this accomplishment had made his mother feel good. It also showed he had dreams and ambitions and that he could succeed. "I want to go back to school and complete something again." Another person said that after being in a residential treatment center, he started liking himself. Most of this came from learning he had choices in life, something he had not realized before.

Prison is a place where self-esteem and self-confidence can quickly diminish. In order to make a successful transition back to the community, it is important for ex-offenders to shift their identity from "criminal" to "law-abiding citizen," for this is tied to their chances of successful adjustment. Often upon release, however, the hope for a better future is undermined by the failure to find employment and/or returning to old habits. "I didn't have any hope or meaning, I didn't really want to work, and when I did work, I spent it on narcotics, so my self-esteem had diminished all of a sudden again," said one ex-offender.

Problems with self-esteem are important to deal with because they can have a pervasive impact on the person's life. One ex-offender spoke about how low self-esteem prevented him from taking a job he had been offered because he worried he would be tempted to commit a crime there. Having been offered a job in the receiving area of a local department store this man said, "So I'm not good enough to do this because of my self-esteem, because I was afraid if I got a job there and I was going to like get caught up in that cycle and start selling stuff out of the store. So really my self-esteem was shot...I really was afraid to take that job...And even though I needed the money, I was afraid of being a failure."

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Changing can be difficult to do and requires a fair amount of self-awareness. Before, one ex-offender said, "...I had to be hard, I had to be rough and tough, you know, but I don't have - I feel like I shouldn't have to live like that now." Now, this young man says, he left the "hard" side of him in prison and he works on showing his better side. On the other hand, the stigma associated with incarceration constantly reinforces the old identity. Messages that reinforce "once a criminal, always a criminal" start within the prison and continue at the prison gate. Explained one ex-offender:

> I had made up my mind years ago that if I was ever going to come home depended on me and what I did so, ... I endured the question of, 'why should we let you go?' and sneers and the jokes and some guys say, 'They never going to let you go. You might as well do this, you might as well do that.'

Respondents said correctional officers tell departing inmates, "I'll see you when you get back," and that, "they're going to leave the light on for you." This expectation of failure continues once they're back in the community. Ex-offenders know that a slip up on their part will mean others continue to view them negatively and this also can influence how they view themselves. One ex-offender said, "[I]f you fail then everybody go, 'Well, we know you weren't going to make it no way.' You know. 'You just ain't no good.' I mean, 'Yeah, well.' And then you start getting that attitude. 'Yeah, I knew I was too. Bad, very bad.' "

The criminal identity is reinforced in the community by the police who continue to focus their attention on ex-offenders. Learning how to deal with the police in a new way can be difficult and depends, to an extent, upon a new identity. For instance, when being stopped by the police while out walking, one ex-offender said he had to learn not to run, "...when you're

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walking right, you don't have nothing to worry about anyway, so that's why I didn't run this time. I stayed there."

There are other ways in which ex-offenders need to change their identities, too. For instance, it can be difficult to ask for help. One ex-offender said that before he was incarcerated he was someone who would go to any length to get what he wanted.

> If I needed clothes, if I needed something to eat; if I needed - you know, I would take it instead of asking, so asking was like something new to me, you know, and it was kind of like, you know, just something new. You know, when you try something new, it feels kind of funny.

Another respondent said the key difference between those who find employment and those who don't is the ability to ask for help. He said, "You have to come to the point where you need help." A third person said that asking his sister for help was difficult. "[I]t also affected myself, too, going to her like that, because I'm the oldest and she's the youngest and would feed me." This reversal of caretaker roles, he said, made him feel disappointed in himself, saying he had let himself down.

Ex-offenders speak about wanting to change their lives and that doing that means changing how they think about themselves and whom they hung around. Many speak about a resolve with which they returned to the community ("a change in mind and heart") but it was a resolve that was challenged daily as they ran into temptations in the form of old friends. One ex-offender explained that when people get out of prison they hang out with their friends. Often this means wanting to do what their friends are doing and sometimes this means using drugs and alcohol and spending money on dates. These activities deplete what small cash reserves ex-offenders have, and can lead to more trouble because of competition with friends who have

money and the ex-offenders do not. Without a job to provide an income, this man says, "[Y]ou gotta do things illegal man." On the other hand, life without the old friends can be lonely. This same man said. "They tell you not to mess with your crowd. But how in the world, if I grew up with these guys all my life, that's all I know, I can't mess with them? Who I'm supposed to mess with? Who else will be around?" His solution was to spend time alone, in his house, primarily watching TV. This is a good solution, he says, because, "[I]t takes me away from the streets and I don't have to worry about that."

Another respondent said that the issues of old friends was an important one to consider:

> I didn't want to have someone else controlling my life anymore. I wanted to be, you know, my own decision-maker, so therefore it was—I know not to hang out with them [old friends], you know, but it's still like pressure, you know, still pressure, 'do you want to come around?' It's like the devil, you know, really. You know you're trying to do right, he's still going to do whatever he can to bring you back out there with him. Peer pressure is a major thing as in dealing with this.

Another man, out for only a few days thought that he could make good without changing his group of friends, even though many of them had also served time in prison:

> I don't have to change my friends but I'll them I'm not into that no more [drug dealing], I'm doing it different this time. I think I can do it because I don't want to go back no more and the cops re always watching to see you mess up and I don't want to mess up no more.

Recognizing that sometimes old friends are not real friends is one thing that can help ex-offenders reintegrate into the community successfully. One ex-offender said that it was important not to live in the vicinity of old friends because, "[T]hey ain't going to help you. Their job is to work you down. Their job is to make sure you go back. My job is to make sure I stay out. So, I stay away from them." One way to realize this, he said, is to recognize that friends are not true supports. "Where was they when you did your time? They ain't send you no money,

they ain't send you no letter...they don't care whether you dead or alive. Now why would I want to go back and be around them people?"

A final way in which some ex-offenders struggle to change their identities is "adjusting to society." Many respondents talk about spending so much time in prison that they grew up there, never learning to relate to people on the outside, while others talk about not knowing how things work in society anymore due to technological and other cultural changes. One ex-offender said:

> I basically, from 17 to 23, grew up in prison, so I knew—I grew up in there. I didn't know too much about this world, which is —I'm really just now really learning about it, you know, how to talk to people, how to handle certain situations, the opportunities that we have, you know, such as schooling, you know, jobs, you know, different things. I didn't have knowledge of that.

Many of the respondents who were successful in shifting their identities did so with the help of a local church. This, they say, provided them with an opportunity to see themselves differently and provided a group of people who were accepting. "...I was beaten down and hopeless, helpless, then I came to know God or see God, and he gave me a relief, you know...I don't feel that way anymore..."

Finally, it is important to ex-offenders that they be thought of as people who fit in. One ex-offender said he keeps his status quiet unless he sees someone who is going through a similar experience and he thinks he can help. Beyond that, he said, he wants, "...to fit in society as being a man, in society like a man is supposed to be."

RELATIONSHIPS

Being incarcerated impacts relationships in ex-offenders' lives because of the feelings the process generates for both those going to prison and for their families. In addition, the physical

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separation of family members creates an emotional distance that is difficult to overcome. Said one man: "I missed out on watching my kids grow up, that's what I miss the most - watching them grow up and being a part of what was taking place." Another respondent who was incarcerated a distance too far for his family to travel said: "We talked on the phone sometimes. But they couldn't come see me at all. My moms and my sister, they just waited. It was hard on them too, cuz they didn't really know what was going on and I didn't know what was happening here."

Respondents recognize that their incarceration sometimes has a major impact on family members they leave behind, reporting that their families sometimes suffer from guilt and shame because, "they weren't raised that way." Sometimes the ex-offender tries to offset these feelings by reassuring family members they are not at fault. One person said his mother felt bad,

> ...because she didn't know why her only son, I have four sisters and I'm the oldest, so her oldest child, her only son had to end up the way I was, you know. And I would tell her sometimes when I was writing her from jail, 'it's not your fault, mom, it's choices I made, the bad, the bad choices, decisions I made. It's not your fault,' because she raised us in an environment, really she had to raise us on her own with the help of God.

Other families experienced problems if the individual who is incarcerated was a caretaker. For instance, one individual told how he had lived with, and taken care of, his elderly aunt prior to his incarceration. He reported cooking and cleaning the house, purchasing the food and making sure his aunt took her medication. After he was incarcerated, the aunt was placed in a nursing home.

Families respond to incarceration with a range of reactions. Sometimes families experience relief when an individual is incarcerated. One ex-offender said his mother was

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grateful when he was incarcerated because she thought it would give him a chance to turn things around. Other times, families are estranged from their incarcerated relatives. "We got some guys in prison they don't even know their parents exist. The family don't even know they exist." said one respondent. Other times, ex-offenders said, their families experience stress from worrying about how their sons are coping with prison and from living with the fear of never seeing their imprisoned family members again. The end result, respondents said, is an increase in physical and psychological problems in their families and these often impede visits and other forms of communication.

Keeping in touch during incarceration is difficult enough in itself, but sometimes there was little contact prior to the incarceration; family members only saw each other "every now and then," making contact during imprisonment even more problematic. In other situations, prison visits can be painful for family members. One respondent said his sisters would not visit him because, "they couldn't take it," and another said that his mother did not come visit him while he was in prison because it, "...hurt my mother to come see me in a situation like that...she hates to see me in pain, and she - it would break her down, you know." Although he had telephone contact with his mother, she also did not visit because she, "...didn't want to support me in any wrongdoing." This respondent said his family was happy when he was incarcerated, "[b]ecause I was going to either wind up dead, and by them knowing where I was at, it gave them peace."

Respondents speak in particular about the effect of their incarceration on their mothers. One respondent reported that his mother developed cancer and both his mother and his sister suffered from mental illness. He said, "I know I have a strong mother, and she had to be strong, you know, so - but she dealt with it the best she could, and she went through a little physical -

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physical, you know, problems, but she made it." Another man said that both his mother and girlfriend were hurt, "...but she [his girlfriend] knew what I was doing, you know, and she knew it was going to come to end sooner or later, but she dealt with it, she was there for me for the whole three years." Speaking about his girlfriend, who later became his wife, this same ex-offender said, "She kept in touch with me. Never missed a visit. She was there until the end." Conversely, one respondent spoke about the negative effects of not having familial, and especially maternal, support. He said:

> A lot of young men in prison who don't have a family who come see them on a regular basis, um, there are a lot of guys, young guys, who appear to be angry at their mom and their anger is taken out on the female officers and the women that they see on TV. The way they see women, the respect, the lack of respect that they have for them.

Sometimes members of the extended family visit in lieu of the immediate family. For instance, one ex-offender said his mother's brother visited because it hurt his mother too much to come. In fact, he said even writing letters was painful for her. About his uncle, this ex-offender said:

> He's about five years older than me, because he has always been a positive influence, family man. He knew mom was not going to visit me because she couldn't stand it, you know, because she was too hurt. He came and visited me, he showed a lot of love and compassion.

On the other hand, this offender felt that his uncle was trying to help his mom out, and because he knew he was the only visitor he felt it was his responsibility. "I believe he really didn't want to come see me, but out of love he forced himself, you know." This type of visit does not substitute completely for visits from members of the immediate family but can help keep the family together as reports are passed around about the incarcerated member's well-being.

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Most of the ex-offenders feel that their incarceration had no effect on their children, perhaps because many had not played a big role in their lives before going to prison. Others lost contact with their children while they were incarcerated, because of the cost associated with visits and phone calls, or they were estranged from the children's mothers, or because of the fear of exposing children to the harsh experience of seeing their fathers confined. One ex-offender said:

> [N]o one...likes to bring the children to see their father in prison. Most people don't want to take their kids through that, to have their kids frisked down, ran through a metal detector. You know, nobody wants their children to do that have to search the baby down like he's got a gun or a knife or something like that, you know. It's designed to break up the home, to me.

Consequently, families are faced with tough decisions: expose the children to prison and hope the parent/child relationship can be maintained or protect the child at the cost of the relationship. When the cost of visits and phone calls are added in, the price of maintaining contact during incarceration is high

> [M]ost people, you can't afford the phone bill to talk to the child's father, you know, they're not going to be able to keep in contact with those kids, so therefore they have to get cut off. The father has to get cut off, and then he's going to have an attitude when he gets out, well, why didn't you or why wasn't you there for me, why didn't you , you know, try to keep me in contact with my kids, and it's like - you know, it's like a - it's going to be an argument waiting to happen, you know. It's like you can't avoid it, you know. On the telephones, they charge you so much, it's unbelievable.

One ex-offender with an adult son and a baby daughter said he thought his separation from his son had had a big effect on him but that his daughter had not been effected because she did not know anything about his incarceration.

> I felt like he was lost, because from the beginning I really wasn't there. I felt like he was confused, 'Why my daddy?' You know, being locked up. I means, he's

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the spitting image of me. It's not saying he was trying to deny me, but it's that I think he was confused as a little kid growing up because I was not there and his mom taking him.

At the same time, this ex-offender said he, "...felt like a failure" as a father. But the loss of closeness during incarceration need not be permanent. While some ex-offenders report never regaining the relationship with their children and step-children, today, this man feels he has reestablished a close relationship with his son.

Typically, however, disrupted family relationships are replicated generation to generation. Many ex-offenders report having little or no contact with their fathers growing up, and now many have little or no contact with their own children. They see the lack of a father in their lives as significant, creating a childhood without support. While mothers did the best they could, fathers were seen as people who could have provided real support. Thinking everyone else had a father around but him hurt, explained one ex-offender. He continued:

> Just having that support to let me know that I'm on the right path, you know, and I wouldn't have had that, you know, growing up seeing how, you know - I was playing basketball, I look up in the stands, everybody else's daddy is in the stands, where is mine? You know, that kind of like, that kind of hurt.

Continuing, this young man said:

> When it comes to, like girlfriends, everybody else can talk to their daddy about their girlfriend, but I've got to talk to my mom about it, and I don't want to talk to my mom about no girls, do you know what I'm saying? I don't want to talk to her. I want to - - where, you know, I would ask my father those kind of things, you know. I didn't even know how to shave you know. Those kind of things, I had to learn those on my own from being in the streets or just on my own.

Upon their return to the community, some ex-offenders feel they were welcomed back by family members, others said the response was mixed. While some said their families were accepting of them, others said their families were skeptical, wondering how they were going to

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act. One respondent said his family, "...accepted [him] with open arms, but they had fear." They were afraid he would steal from them or be disappointed if he was stealing from others. These mixed feelings were characterized by one ex-offender who said:

> Yeah, they're going to be glad to see you. That's natural. That natural. Ain't seen you in awhile. You going to be looking good. Body in good shape. After awhile, they all eyes, all eyes are watching you. The spotlight is on you now. Is you going to go back out there and be that same old thing, you know, start drinking and acting the fool or what?

Others also expressed mixed reactions to their homecomings. One respondent said his mother told him, when he got out, "From this day forward you better not do nothing because I missed you for four years, I'm not going to lose you no more, so I'm glad to see you back.... because I couldn't make it without you." At the same time, this respondent added that while many of his siblings were supportive upon his return, others were not. In addition, his wife had divorced him while he was incarcerated.

Respondents have relationships with neighbors and other community residents which also are complicated by periods of incarceration While the ex-offender respondents tend to believe that other residents should be able to relate to their experience of incarceration because it is so widespread, ex-offenders also express the belief that others think they were evil. One respondent said he did not know too much about his neighbors, but he believed they, "[l]ook[ed] down on people who come out of prison." Another said, "[T]hey think bad, you know, evil [about people coming out of prison]...it's like, lock up your property...lock your car doors." To which the first respondent added, "Any little thing that happens, this could have been going on before you came home, but you'll be the prime suspect."

While some respondents said that neighbors do not know they had been incarcerated, others reported that residents treat them in a mixed way. "...I know some people are going to put us down, some people are going to stomp us down, but some people's going to accept us...it hurts still, but, you know, if you get like prepared for some of this stuff, you can see it coming and you can kind of brace yourself, but it still hurts when people don't accept me..." This type of treatment is difficult for people when they returned to the community feeling as if they are changed men and yet, are not treated accordingly.

These conflicting messages from family and the community can be hard for ex-offenders as they struggle with their return to the neighborhood. "For me it [coming back to the community] was confusing, because I was accepted or welcomed home by my family, but another part of society was like, he still should be where he is, where he came from."

To manage neighbors' treatment of them, many ex-offenders consciously decide whether or not to tell people about their history of incarceration. One ex-offender said that he does not tell his neighbors about his status because he does not want them to fear him. He said:

> They feel, I mean, I think they feel pretty safe, because I've been free from drugs about four years and the guys that live over there now that knew of me and where I've been, they have been down the same road I've been. So I think when they look at me as being like a role model in that area anyway, you know, of trying to stay clean, you know, and trying - and know where I'm going today, where I'm headed, you know. So outside of that, sometimes I talk with some of the neighbors, but I don't tell them all of that and anything, but if they ask me I won't be ashamed to tell them where I've been, you know, but other than that I don't too much discuss it unless I'm trying to help somebody.

Alternatively, one ex-offender said he told his neighbors he had been to prison precisely to keep them away from him. This means he does not know his neighbors. Explaining, he said:

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...and I don't want to know them either. No, cause they ain't no friends. Them people hurt you. Those people out here, they be the main one hurt you. Because I don't plan on doing nothing wrong. But you think they see me doing something, they going to tell on me.

He also does not want to know the young men in the neighborhood because he said they are, "crazy" and can easily hurt people.

Rebuilding trust, then, is important, but can be difficult to do when ex-offenders return to families and communities they may have betrayed. This is true, particularly for drug offenders. Said one young ex-offender, "Espeeially a person that's been on drugs real bad, yeah, they've got to rebuild trust, because they've done stole from probably everyone in the family." Another said, "So I was doing things like taking from her or taking from other family members, sneaking and doing it, and that's like falling really deeper into the streets because I was tired of hurting them, and at the same time I was hurting my mom and she was getting frustrated a lot."

Beyond the family, ex-offenders need to establish trust with the community. One way this is accomplished is through the church. For instance, one ex-offender found a job through his church and he has been working hard to show his employer that he is dependable. He said:

> Well, like with the new job I have, it's like I have to show this man, you know, he told me - he's an ex-cop, and he asked me did I have a problem with police, no, I don't, and it's like, when I told him about my crimes and everything, he started - he said the only reason why I'm giving you this job is because of where you're at and you know Jesus Christ. He said, but if I find out you're missing church on Sunday, you might as well miss this job on Monday. So it's like I'm trying to build the relationship there, you know, to where he can trust me. He gives me the truck, you know, he does - he knows that I'm going to do the right thing. He'll leave me the job, I'm working. I'm not trying to scam him out of no hours or anything like that. I'm just doing my job.

Whether or not to return to the old neighborhood is an important issue for ex-offenders newly released from prison. Illustrating how important it can be to start in a new place one ex-

offender told how he returned to the same community from which he was arrested. "[T]he same day I got out I went through Frenchtown and I picked up some narcotics and that same day I almost got arrested again," he said. While most respondents acknowledge that people who are determined to change do so wherever they live, they also feel that for some, it is easier to make a new start in a new neighborhood. One person said:

> Seeing the same people as before, you know, to me it's like a cycle, and you would be - you'd get caught right back up in the same cycle when you're hanging with old friends, bringing up those old memories of what we used to do, so you fall back into the old things, but I finally was - you know, got out of that neighborhood before I got caught up.

Frequently the issue about where to locate revolves around whether or not to associate with old friends. While some of ex-offenders report that they had few friends, and others said most of their friends were incarcerated, all struggled with this issue. Friends provide a sense of social support even though associating with them can tempt the ex-offender to engage in prohibited or illegal behavior. One ex-offender said, "...but I made a mistake as in moving back in with an ex-girlfriend that was much older than me, had more experience in life than me, and that was a drug addict, and, you know, I was fighting, fighting a battle...I had to go. I couldn't deal with it. It was because it was leading me back where I didn't want to go."

Those who decide to go home to the neighborhoods from which they were incarcerated often opt to forgo past friendships in an effort to stay out of prison, (they conceded that they knew many who were, "still in the life,") which is hard. The situation is complicated further because sometimes the old friends resent this change. One ex-offender ended up feeling rejected by his old friends. He explained:

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Well, when I was - before I got incarcerated, I did a lot of drugs. I like marijuana, you know, drinking, even some cocaine, too, but when I got - when I went to prison, all that changed, and some of my brothers, they still like go that way. They go - some of my friends I used to hang around, they still go that way, and right now they don't accept me because some of them think that I think that I'm better than them. But it's not, it's just that I don't want to go down that road no more....[T]hey don't want me around or they don't want to be around me, I guess because they're not comfortable around me...Because before I went in, I was with them. I did what they did, we smoked, we drank, you know, we was rowdy, but now I'm 100 percent turned around and I think I represent the truth to them and they don't like it.

Another respondent said he had thought about asking his friends for help when he returned to the community but that he did not feel accepted by them. He said, "I don't hang out like I used to. I don't do the things that I normally used to do. I used to do drugs, I don't do that no more. That's probably why they [friends] don't want to be bothered with me. He added that he thinks that his old friends believe he feels superior to them because of the changes he has made in his life. They think, "Yeah, you've got a job, you've got this, you forgot where you came from." But it is not true, he said, "I hadn't forgot where I came from, it's just about change."

Feeling unaccepted by community members and coping with the effects of that feeling is difficult for many ex-offenders. One respondent reported turning to drugs. "I think drugs was what helped me to adapt to society, to me, you know, I didn't have to worry about the drugs accepting me, you know, that was - that's who I turned to, that's what I medicated my pain with as in - because I did - when I had drugs, I isolated myself from everybody else." Thus, ex-offenders who return to drugs upon their release may become even more isolated, and as a consequence, have fewer supports. Another respondent said, "The first day I could have stayed at the Shelter or I could have gone to Mom, but I was too ashamed, because I had already started

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all over again, spending my money. I was just ashamed. I was on drugs and I wanted to continue to get that high, you know."

Other community relationships are altered by incarceration because ex-offenders are fearful of being sent back to prison. Some of this fear comes from strained relations with the police and some of it comes from being wary of neighbors. One ex-offender said his friends do not hang out together anymore because of attention from the police. "We stay away from each other anyway because we know when they look at us, somebody might be dirty in that crew and that's probable cause for them to arrest. So we stay our little distance anyway, but we're still friends." Another ex-offender said he has had to alter when he goes out, and now night is a time that is off limits for him. He explained, "I wasn't doing anything wrong, I just, you know, was walking down the street, and it seems like I know now, it's like I have a fear of going outside after a certain time of night because I don't want to be harassed and I don't want to be a suspect, you know." Another man said he was not worried about the police, directly. Rather, he worried about the other people in the neighborhood, because, "[t]hey're the ones that put the police on you." In the end, many ex-offenders withdraw from the community, restricting their activities and personal interactions to ensure their freedom.

Ironically, such isolation is one of the very conditions that can lead to reoffending. Ex-offenders need a strong support system in order to make a successful transition back into the community and those who make it, generally do so with the help of their families and friends. Sometimes these people help with housing and jobs, other times they help with emotional support and the crucial need to develop and maintain a positive outlook. For instance, one ex-offender said that he relied upon self-improvement and spiritual books and people like his pastor

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for support, while another participant said he relied upon the help of a friend to get a job.

Explaining further he said:

> But for the job, it took me a month to get a job. I filled out applications and did
> all the things that he said. I tried to practice honesty and I didn't get no contact
> back, nobody called me. So I kept waiting and kept praying, and I didn't even fill
> out an application for the job that I have now. A friend I knew before I went in,
> he told me to wait, you know, one day before I go to this place and sign up, he
> was going to talk to the man for me, and he talked to him and I got the job.

In sum, positive relationships in the community are necessary for ex-offenders to be successful and yet, all too often they end up feeling isolated and alone. Coming home to a community still fraught with drugs and alcohol is disheartening, coming back to a community full of disrespect is debilitating. One ex-offender said, that, "...all you talk about in prison is respect," so people get out, hoping to be respected but do not find this in the communities when they return. Until the ex-offender can find respect through meaningful relationships with others, there will be low odds of a successful re-entry.

PRESSURE

Pressure is the pervasive backdrop to the situations ex-offenders face when they return to their communities. They frequently discussed the feeling of being under a lot of pressure to make changes in their lives when they were faced with extraordinary challenges in all of the four domains discussed above (stigma, finances, identity, relationships). This sense of pressure permeates their conversation, and it is the foundation from which the rest of their understanding of re-entry emerges. The existence of this pressure comes through in the way they talk about stigma, financial issues, identity challenges, and relationships with others.

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Offenders spoke of the pressure that surrounds having a criminal record. The pressure starts when the offender is released from prison, and returns to a community and criminal justice system anxious about his re-entry. In addition to the obvious pressures of getting a job, finding housing, and reestablishing relationships, there is the pressure generated by the surveillance of the criminal justice system. For those under community supervision, for instance, regular reporting and drug tests, for example, are additional burdens an offender released from prison must bear. Respondents said they often feel they were being harassed and did not understand why they were under, seemingly, constant surveillance. Even when there is no formal supervision authority, the police stand ready to watch, suspect, and intervene whenever it seems warranted by the newly released offender's conduct. As one ex-offender put it:

> It wasn't tempting when I first got out because I wanted to do right, I didn't want to go back. I didn't want to be - I didn't want to have someone else controlling any life anymore. I wanted to be, you know, my own decision-maker, so therefore it was - I know not to hang out with them, you know, but it's still like pressure, you know, still pressure, do you want to come around? It's like the devil, you know, really. You know you're trying to do right, he's still going to do whatever he can to bring you back out there with him. Peer pressure is a major thing as in dealing with this.

Ex-offenders feel under heavy pressure to do whatever is necessary to avoid going back to prison; most of the sense of pressure comes from the ever-present possibility of being sent back, the uncertainty of re-entry and the lack of control over their futures. In fact, many felt that the number of possible probation violations was so extensive that it was impossible to avoid all infractions. One ex-offender said:

> You have any type of drugs in your system, marijuana, liquor, cocaine, you can go back....Even alcohol, you can go back. Ain't that something? Not nothing physical. That is what they got me for. It wasn't like I went out there committed, robbed or stealed or stuff like that.

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He continued by recounting other kinds of infractions that can lead to being incarcerated. For instance, he said, "If you move, without them knowing, you can go back."

Our respondents experience pressure from the practical problems they encounter such as getting jobs and a place to live, and they face challenges earning acceptance from their families and rebuilding trust with their neighbors. Much of the pressure comes from the competing struggles in the ex-offenders' lives: the immediate need for money and the inability to get a job; the desire for companionship and the fear of being seduced back into drugs or crime. Resolving these competing needs can be difficult. One man related how difficult it was for him and others to overcome the myriad of problems ex-offenders encounter, especially when they have limited skills, opportunities, and support, and then return to, what seems to be a foreign environment. He explained:

> Basically, everything had been changed. You can go in for six months and come back out and see a great change in society itself. But the main thing was trying to adjust to, say stuff like the phone system, try to adjust to the ways people are acting and what is going on in your community...and um, they put you out with no money and they say go make it. And that is kind of hard, it is real hard, if you are not strong you usually fall back into the things you used to do in order to get you right back into, caught back up in the same old circle. If you had a strong family support, a strong background, someone who would look out for you as far as giving you a job, giving you some money, then you might be able to survive a while. But, if not, more than likely you will go back.

The culmination of the uncertainty and pressure causes some ex-offenders we interviewed to want to flee. Indeed, one of our respondents reported that after trying to get a job, pay all his fees and find housing, the pressure became too much and he absconded, saying "they were going to get me anyway so I thought I'd have some fun first." He was subsequently returned to prison to serve additional time.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the aggregate impact of incarceration on the quality of community life in areas experiencing high concentrations of incarceration. Specifically, we were interested in finding out what impact residents (including ex-offenders) felt the removal and return of offenders to the community had had on them, their families and the community overall. Because we wanted to focus on how incarceration affects the networks of association which are the basis of informal social control, we were particularly interested in identifying problems associated with the process of removing offenders from the community to be incarcerated and the process of returning ex-offenders from prison to the community, rather than the experience of imprisonment itself. Thus, our approach was designed to identify factors associated with this two-pronged process of incarceration that either promote or reduce community stability and, as a result, either promote or reduce crime.

STUDY DESIGN

To accomplish this goal, we completed a case study of two Tallahassee, Florida, neighborhoods identified in earlier research (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully, 2000) as having high rates of incarceration relative to other locations in that city. We then conducted a series of focus group and individual interviews with people either living or working in those areas. Rather than ask respondents directly about the impact of incarceration on social networks and public

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safety, our approach was to ask for general commentary about the impact of the removal and reentry processes on them, their families and their communities, and then to explore the responses we received to these opening probes.

We placed respondents in two groups: those who had been released from incarceration sometime in the past four years and those who had never been incarcerated (or, if previously incarcerated, had been released longer than four years ago). By holding separate focus group discussions, our plan was to provide an environment in which participants would feel free to express their views of the impact of incarceration on community life and would be stimulated to think about these issues in response to the participation of others.

For the most part, this strategy was successful. Residents enthusiastically participated in the focus groups and discussed the many issues they experienced due to incarceration. As we noted in Chapter Two, the turnout for the ex-offender focus groups was disappointing and had to be supplemented with additional, individual interviews. In both settings, however, ex-offenders were also willing to discuss openly the questions we posed. Our design provides rich data regarding each group's understanding of the way incarceration affects them and their communities.

Several limitations to our approach need to be recognized. Because we chose the focus group method to maximize our ability to obtain in-depth information, we are working with a small sample size. Our sample reflects the limited size of the relevant populations and the inherent difficulties in recruiting their participation. Together, our neighborhoods reported (in the 1990 Census) a total population of 4,097. Excluding those under 18, we estimate that about 2,700 were within our study population, and from this number we screened 120 residents. Our

final sample of 26 in the two Resident Focus Groups reflects, we think, a successful recruitment strategy.

The population size problem is acute with regard to ex-offenders. Our data show that in 1996, approximately 40 offenders were released into the two neighborhoods. Assuming these numbers were consistent in later years, our maximum ex-offender population would be about 160. We know, of course, that many of these ex-offenders may have already returned to prison, so the actual population might be reduced by as much as half or more. Alternatively, ex-offenders from elsewhere may have moved into these areas, so the number might be higher. We screened 30 ex-offenders. The thirteen men who ended up in our study, thus, are not an insignificant percentage of the available population, though they represent a small number in absolute terms.

We also hoped to recruit a balanced representation of men and women for each focus group, but were unable to do so. Most of the participants on our Resident Focus Groups were women. We recruited men for these groups, but in the end, made far more contacts with women residents than we did with men. In our two neighborhoods, women play a more prominent role in the associations we worked with, and the housing projects we visited to recruit residents had many more female-headed households than intact families. As for ex-offenders, we screened only three women who were currently in reentry, reflecting perhaps, the small number of women released from prison.

Our failure to recruit more men for the Residents Group and any women into the Ex-Offenders Group (or individual interviews) reflects the gender dynamics of the problem of incarceration. Incarceration directly affects men much more than women, by a ratio of about 12

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to 1. Thus, men are much more likely to be found among those recently released from prison, and women are more likely to be among the affected resident population. We are confident that there are important experiences to be told by female ex-offenders and by male residents in high incarceration communities. The fact that our method failed to hear much about these stories means we can only report part of the total narrative and more research on this topic needs to be done.

More significant issues are raised by interpretation of the data our participants provided. We worked hard to include a cross section of offenders and residents in the study, but, as with any study of this nature, it remains quite possible that our sample is non-representative of the population in unknown ways. Moreover, when we report the comments of our participants, there is no basis for documenting the accuracy of the experiences they report or the objectivity in the way they construe them. Experiences are, by nature, subjective. The focus group and individual interview method does not generate "facts," rather it identifies points of view and personal opinions. We report those perspectives and opinions, verbatim where possible, but we cannot vouch for the accuracy of the stories we have been told. We emphasize that our study was designed to learn how residents and ex-offenders in high-impact communities view the problems of "coercive mobility," not as a means of verifying the problem. We use their accounts to inform our understanding of the way incarceration affects neighborhood life and what might be done about these effects. Were an objective account of these issues possible, it might shape our discussion differently, but any complete comprehension of these questions will necessarily include the data our work has uncovered.

Our participants were animated in their discussion of incarceration, and their various comments point to a complex relationship between incarceration and community life in their neighborhoods. In some ways, they see removal of offenders as a positive force. Arrests that remove prostitutes and drug dealers benefits public space, and seeing offenders receive a just punishment is considered appropriate. Residents also told stories of ways in which some people posed trouble for families and friends, and when they were incarcerated, things improved for — everyone else. Nobody objected to the existence of prison, and there were frequent enough calls for stiff sentences for drug offenders and often harsh penalties, especially for sex offenders and those who hurt children.

Yet, as Meares (1997) has observed about inner-city residents and the police, our participants are troubled by the problems caused by the criminal justice system as well as by crime. By far, our participants reserved their most spirited comments for voicing their objections to the way removal and reentry sometimes damages their communities. Through their experiences and perspectives, they repeatedly pointed to the problems that stem from high incarceration rates. Although the Resident Groups emphasized slightly different concerns than did the Ex-offender Groups, both groups described ways that removal and reentry had an impact on their lives in four broad arenas: financial, stigma, identity, and relationships. Ex-offenders particularly expressed difficulty with the pressures of reentry. In the preceding two chapters, we discussed these issues in detail; here we provide a brief summary.

Most directly, respondents discussed the strong and multi-faceted financial effects of incarceration on their lives. For general residents it was true that incarceration sometimes

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provides temporary relief from a relative needing help to get out of trouble, but at the same time families are often disorganized after the loss of a financial contributor (even if not through legal means) and hampered by the increased financial burden of visiting loved ones in prison, paying for the cost of phone calls, housing and feeding returning ex-offenders. Neighborhoods suffer too, from high concentrations of returning ex-offenders when employers are betrayed by ex-offenders they hire, when housing values drop due to an increasingly negative community reputation and when patrons stop frequenting stores where unemployed people congregate outside. Not only do ex-offenders suffer financially from their inability to find employment upon their return to the community, but they also have financial needs for housing, clothing and transportation that they cannot meet.

The second area discussed by our respondents was stigma, a problem that is omnipresent in their lives. Ex-offenders reported being incapable of overcoming the label of "offender." This results in their inability to successfully reintegrate into the community due to subsequent (and sometimes chronic) unemployment, the unwillingness of landlords to rent homes to them and general distrust by police and members of the community. Furthermore, stigma often is transferred from individuals to their families, sometimes causing them to withdraw from community life in shame, both when the offender goes to prison and upon his return. Stigma is transferred to the community as well, resulting in a loss of the area's reputation as a good place to live and do business.

Our respondents discussed the problem of identity, telling about a pervasive loss of self-worth and self-esteem, not only among ex-offenders but among general residents, particularly children, living in the community. The loss of positive role models for children is seen as an

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especially important problem caused by incarceration, because it interferes with appropriate adult supervision of children, and often leads children to see crime and imprisonment as their destiny. Most residents, however, feel that ex-offenders can be positive role models when they return to the community if they make an effort to share with the children their process of change and their improved attitudes. Finally, incarceration has an impact on community-level identity by causing residents to feel hopelessness and apathy about the prospects for change.

The fourth area of concern was the ways in which incarceration altered the dynamics of community relationships. While removing an active offender from a family sometimes has the benefit of improving relationships among remaining family members, this process frequently damages them too. For instance, spousal and parent-child relationships are strained or severed, families sometimes experienced isolation from neighbors due to stigma or shame, and residents' relationship to ex-offenders and their families are attenuated out of caution, suspicion or fear. Public social interactions also are effected; increased police surveillance acts as a disincentive for law-abiding citizens to congregate openly since it often invites unwanted police attention.

To these themes, ex-offenders added a concern about the pressures of reentry, citing the difficulties in finding jobs, getting housing, and reestablishing relationships with family and friends. Criminal justice vigilance is also described as a source of strain, which become particularly problematic at the time when adjustment is most tenuous. The existence of pressure makes an already daunting set of adjustment challenges seem impossible for some ex-offenders.

The way ex-offenders describe their experience of reentry using a different frame of reference illustrates something about the community-level dynamics of removal and reentry. They are connected processes, but they may be different in their community-level effects. All

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respondents identified consequences of both processes, but residents were more specific about the effects of removal, while ex-offenders spoke more directly to the effects of reentry, and our findings reflect this fact. Removal portends a set of gains and losses that affect tangible matters in a person's life, such as finances and relationships, and social issues as well, such as stigma and identity. These individual effects add up across cases to constitute a broader, community level impact. Regarding reentry, however, the collective impact is less clear. Families discuss the way they welcome returning offenders back into their group, and neighbors describe the ways they seek to tolerate a new arrival upon reentry, even as they grapple with suspicion about that person's role in the community. And it is likely, of course, that there is some upper limit on the ability of a community, particularly one that is economically disadvantaged, to financially and socially absorb, and physically house large numbers of hard-to-employ residents. But while our respondents were sometimes able to describe community-level implications of high rates of removal, they had difficulty identifying similar level impacts of reentry, even though concentrated rates of reentry are the natural consequence of high rates of removal. Instead, reentry was more commonly seen as producing individual- and family-level implications that did not seem to extend to the broader community.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The four impact domains described above are important, both because of the immediate problems they cause for communities experiencing high rates of incarceration and also because they have implications for long-term community stability. At the outset of this report we laid out the idea that community stability would be affected by incarceration through its impact on human

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and social capital and indeed, we found evidence to support this hypothesis. We found, as well, that our respondents report feelings of isolation, anger, and a sense of oppression that fuels a feeling of injustice, but also detracts from the elements needed for effective informal social control. Below, we identify four general ways in which the concentration of incarceration may affect the informal social controls operating in high impact communities.

First, the human capital of offenders is impacted directly through incarceration in both positive and negative ways. While the negative impact of incarceration on an individual's employment prospects and other aspects of human capital have been well documented (Freeman 1992), this study reveals ways in which incarceration also can build human capital. For instance, ex-offenders told us about using incarceration as a time to change their lives by getting an education, getting off drugs and developing skills they needed for a successful transition into the community. On the other hand, this study also revealed ways in which incarceration reduces the human capital of non-offending residents. Single parents (usually mothers) in the community become more stressed and burdened, and they have more difficulty getting and keeping jobs. Children sometimes go hungry, attend school sporadically, are disciplined less frequently and sometimes engage in crime. For these children, the result is attenuated skills and diminished life chances.

Second, incarceration alters and sometimes damages the networks of association which are the foundation social capital in the community. Networks can be improved when removing a disruptive family member gives other family members a chance to heal and repair their relationships and when "good" children may receive more attention when the disruptive sibling is removed from the family. Alternatively, networks are damaged when families feel bad about

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their loss, often experiencing illness and depression, when relationships with extended kin become taxed, and when spousal relationships are disrupted. Networks suffer further when neighbors become suspicious and/or fearful of those returning from prison. Thus, while these issues surrounding removal and reentry are problematic on their own, they also are problematic because of how they influence the ability of community residents to form, sustain and build networks both within the neighborhood and between the community and the larger society.

Third, incarceration, in concentrated doses, contributes to isolation. We saw evidence of isolation when we asked returning offenders about their neighbors; frequently they said they were careful to stay away from people, and claimed not to know the neighbors. In addition, families of offenders still in prison claimed that they stayed to themselves. Isolation was reinforced by the strains of having a family member in prison: the remaining people had less time for social activity, as they had to spend more time in child care and at work. The stigma of involvement in criminal justice also tended to isolate people as some told about feeling unwelcome at church and in other settings. Taken together, these forces in behalf of isolation contribute to neighborhoods where "collective efficacy" struggles to emerge.

Finally, those who live in areas with high levels of incarceration typically feel that oppression plays a role in the quality of their lives. Many times respondents referred to feelings children experience when they "lose" a parent through incarceration, but often they also were referring to feelings they had toward a system that they experienced as unjust. In some ways, the most complex and most combustible issue arising from our study is the sense of oppression expressed by our respondents. The people in our interviews know that African-Americans are disproportionately involved in the prison system and that their neighborhoods contribute

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residents to the prison system at rates higher than elsewhere. Residents also feel that government officials do not respond with the same degree of urgency to problems related to jobs, income, housing, and childcare in their neighborhoods as they do in locations just a short distance away. In explaining these differences, residents recognize the personal failings of the men and women who end up in prison. But they also describe systems of inequality and injustice that establish the foundation for these concentrations of criminal justice activity, and the too-frequent result is a profound lack of confidence in the system itself. Thus, racism is a subtle but inescapable theme in our findings. This sense of oppression, fed by a distrust of the system, makes some neighbors distrust any formal social control initiatives that might be underway.

Criminal Justice and Drugs

The criminal justice system does little to soften these dynamics. With concern for public safety in mind, police focus their attention on newly-released offenders, to the point where these individuals commonly feel under a form of civic harassment. Police cars, cruising around the neighborhood, seem in constant tension with young people, particularly African-American males. Although many of our respondents want to reduce crime and believe this requires more arrests and more enforcement, they also are asking for a scaling down of the police presence because they see the harm it does. Thus, another way removal and reentry impacts the quality of community life is by exacerbating and concentrating residents' feelings of oppression and further increasing their alienation from mainstream society.

The subsequent loss of legitimacy of the criminal justice system (LaFree, 1998) decreases both the incentive for law-abiding behavior and for reporting criminal activities. This

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situation creates an "us" versus "them" mentality where residents want crime to go down in their communities but where they are unwilling to collaborate with the police to accomplish it. This is, perhaps, the most significant contradiction expressed by our respondents. They clearly see crime as a problem in their neighborhoods and want their areas to be safer. They simultaneously believe the police are harassing them unnecessarily and that the police could do more to eradicate crime if that was their intent. This sentiment is particularly true with regard to drugs.

For many of our participants, concern about public safety is linked closely to the problem of drugs. Often, this discussion makes a connection between disorder, criminal justice, and crime, not unlike the Broken Windows thesis. They see their neighborhoods as beset with low-level criminality, such as prostitution, and they see the criminal justice system as doing little to make these problems disappear. Many of our respondents respond to this disorder with a call for more criminal justice activity and more stringent criminal justice responses to deal with the problem of drugs, especially for dealers.

Drugs are a pervasive backdrop to this study. As a problem on their own they were hardly ever mentioned. Many ex-offenders discussed their personal problems with drug addiction and described how this posed additional challenges for them upon their return to the community. When discussing crime, many community residents quickly brought up drug dealers and the problems they contribute to crime. But when we centered the conversation on removal, incarceration, and reintegrating ex-offenders into the community, residents never mentioned drugs as an issue. We believe this is because they think of drug dealers primarily as outsiders and drug use as not problematic for the community. In fact, there was a tendency for residents to be understanding about individuals and the crimes they commit, saying "it depends on the crime"

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and classifying many as either not serious or rationalizing them as understandable in the face of widespread unemployment and systemic discrimination. At the same time, however, they expressed concern about their own potential victimization when ex-offenders returned to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that some offenders need to be imprisoned and this report does not recommend that incarceration be abandoned. Not only would that be unreasonable and impractical but to make such a recommendation would fail to recognize the positive aspects of incarceration. Clearly the community benefits when particular people are removed. We note, however, that the current policy initiatives that increase reliance upon incarceration have the effect of exacerbating the problems our study has identified. The prudence of these policies must be considered in light of the way they affect neighborhood life in high-impact areas.

Our recommendations are designed to offset the effects of concentrated incarceration as induced by current policies. An alternative approach would be to call for a more selective use of incarceration and a wider array of sanctioning strategies that would do less damage to family relationships and the social networks in the communities. Although none of our participants called for an end to the use of imprisonment, many felt the need for a more restrictive use of prison sentences. We take no position on this question, though we recognize the importance of the debate. Instead, implementation of our recommendations would offset the negative, unintended consequences of incarceration as it is now used, making it a more effective tool for social control. The recommendations are not focused on the conditions of imprisonment. Rather,

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they focus on the kinds of services and programs that might improve the quality of life in the community. We recognize that the recommendations are not a panacea for the problems in the neighborhoods we studied, nor can they offset, in the short term, years of concentrated incarceration. Taken as a whole, however, we believe these recommendations would increase community safety by shoring up both residents and ex-offenders in the community. In doing so, human and social capital can be increased and the networks of association needed for informal social control can be revitalized.

Below we outline 16 recommendations that emerged from our research in the two communities of Frenchtown and South City. We recognize that one of the limitations of the case study and focus group approach is that our findings may not be generalizable to other communities. We believe, however, that the issues raised by our participants are relevant to other high incarceration neighborhoods, even if the exact form of the service or program might have to be adapted to particular local areas.

Some of our suggestions come from our analysis of what participants reported and some come directly from participant's comments and proposals. While participants have strong views about the need for more supportive justice system responses, their specificity about the support services they believe are needed is hampered by their limited experiences with successful programs. Moreover, perhaps because their neighborhoods suffer from a dearth of new programs, participants also tend to speak about basic, traditional needs, such as jobs and financial aid. We did not ask them to imagine comprehensive new approaches to the problems they described, and they did not provide this type of vision. Therefore, we rely not only on their

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observations, but also upon literature and experience in other areas for our suggestions about ways to ameliorate the problems described.

A general theory of new program initiatives in high incarceration communities would have informal social controls as a target for change, because these are the community supports that are disrupted by high rates of incarceration. In order to strengthen the capacity of informal social control, we recommend programs or strategies that ease financial burdens, ameliorate the costs of stigma, build pro-social identity, and strengthen family and community relations. In the realm of public safety theory, this would mean that we are in search of programs that promote "collective efficacy." That is, while we agree with our participants that there are significant gaps in individual services for people who live and work in these high incarceration communities, there is a greater concern about the outright absence of programs that target collective experience to promote stronger community life.

Our respondents did not articulate directly the need for community-targeted change, but they had a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between community-level concerns and problems of crime and justice. This became clear from our Resident Focus Groups. The focus group facilitator (MODERATOR) used a "rapid-answer" technique at one point in the focus group, going around the room seeking quick responses to a prod about the neighborhood. Here is what happened in one location:

> MODERATOR: All right, next fill-in-the-blank. Even though South City is a
> nice place to live, it has some problems. One of the biggest challenges here is –
> NO. 6: The garbage on the streets.
> MODERATOR: The garbage on the streets. What else?
> NO. 1: The drugs.
> MODERATOR: The drugs. What else?
> NO. 3: No jobs. ...
> MODERATOR: No jobs, lack of jobs. What else?

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NO. 7: Crime in general.

MODERATOR: Crime in general. Okay. What else?

NO. 3: Nobody wants to cooperate.

MODERATOR: People that don't want to cooperate. What else? Anything else?

NO. 7: Community development, lack thereof.

MODERATOR: Lack of community development. Okay. All right. All right, here's the next one. There's a lot of crime in South City because –

NO. 2: Abandonment of properties. –

MODERATOR: There was a lot of crime in South City because, abandoned properties and what else?

NO. 10: Drugs.

MODERATOR: Because of drugs. What else?

NO. 1: No recreation.

MODERATOR: No recreation. What else? There was a lot of crime –

NO. 7: Political misrepresentation.

MODERATOR: Political misrepresentation. Very good. What else?

NO. 7: Lack of political involvement.

MODERATOR: Lack of political involvement...Crime has decreased. in South City because --

NO. 3: Lack of knowledge.

MODERATOR: No, why has it decreased? Why has it gotten better?

NO. 2: Probably because the neighbors got involved in what was happening out here.

MODERATOR: Neighbors are getting involved.

NO. 1: People are networking.

MODERATOR: What kind of networking, specifically?

NO. 1: Well, this is just a recreation for instance. I used to work at the Orange Avenue Boys and Girls Club and we networked with a lot of community involvement, I'm trying to think, resourcing of the agencies, of the organizations.

MODERATOR: So agencies are getting together...Why crime is decreasing here?

NO. 10: We have been getting very good cooperation from our police officers and the drugs have really gotten better.

MODERATOR: Okay. Because -- crime has improved because, drugs have improved because the police are now helping and the City is now --

NO. 10: South City was not organized. It was like we weren't on the map at one time. Now, because of our community leaders, they know that we are here.

Thus, where there is a tendency to see "solutions" as service programs for citizens, there also exists a perceptive understanding of the importance of organizational approaches that change the nature of the community. This incipient understanding of the relationship between community-level effectiveness and public safety, as expressed by our respondents, also informs

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—our own analysis. While we agree that a variety of programs within the traditional social services repertoire would be helpful, we emphasize a strategic approach that seeks to build community, not just provide additional services.

Likewise, although the criminal justice system suffers from a credibility deficit in these neighborhoods, our participants see a role for the criminal justice system in dealing with the problems they raise. One reason is that they see public safety as a significant problem where they live, and the common expectation is that criminal justice is supposed to provide public safety. Thus, our recommendations pertaining to the criminal justice system are inclusive and call for a role for criminal justice, not merely a series of new social programs.

The question is, how can we carve out a stronger role for criminal justice and related agencies that has as its target the invigoration of informal social control and collective efficacy? In our analysis, the actions of criminal justice are a part of the problem; how can they be revamped to become a part of the solution? We address these question by presenting a comprehensive strategy for high incarceration neighborhoods, one that targets these particular locations rather than one that necessarily applies across whole jurisdictions.

Recommendation 1

Target families of incarcerated offenders for an array of services.

Appropriate services will alleviate many of the problems and the level of disorganization incurred immediately by many families when a member is incarcerated. These services might include:

    a.   Short-term financial assistance for food, clothing and housing.

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b. Short-term, crisis-oriented, mental health assistance to deal with anger, depression, and self-esteem issues, particularly for children.

c. Parenting classes.

d. Dental and physical health assistance.

e. Supervisory and recreational services for children.

f. Adult mentors for children.

Recommendation 2

Facilitate contact between families and incarcerated family members.

Assistance would promote the family bonds that are essential for successful reintegration into community life, and it also would help individuals maintain their ties with their children while incarcerated. Maintenance of family bonds, especially with children, often is an incentive for an inmate's "good behavior" while incarcerated. Assistance might include:

a. Low-cost telephone service between inmates and their families.

b. Assistance with transportation to prisons.

Recommendation 3

Provide services to children of prisoners to help stabilize their living situation.

Many children lose one or more of their parents to incarceration, and many are raised by a caretaker relative – grandmother, aunt, or sister, for example, or are placed in foster care. These children, and their caretakers could benefit from the following services:

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a. Counseling for common problems, such as depression, anger, shame, and low self-esteem.

b. Counseling for caretakers about how to talk with the children about the situation.

c. Intervention regarding acting-out problems.

d. Assistance in maintaining meaningful contact with the incarcerated parent, including family-oriented programs in prison.

Recommendation 4

Implement comprehensive pre-release transition plans that address family needs.

These plans would maximize the health of the family, optimize successful reentry, and reduce recidivism by anticipating the problems incurred when an ex-offender is released. Transition plans might:

a. Determine whether inmates should return to their families upon release.

b. Determine whether released individuals should return to their communities or move to new neighborhoods.

c. Determine whether families and released ex-offenders should move to new neighborhoods together.

d. Identify employment and housing possibilities for families and returning offenders who choose to move to new neighborhoods.

e. Link inmates to the exact services they need upon release, and begin the service delivery process prior to release.

f.   Address typical inmate fears, such as concern about partner faithfulness, community attitudes, etc.

g.   Provide family-focused interventions to cope with the strain of reintroducing the ex-offender into the family.

Recommendation 5

Provide transitional housing for ex-offenders.

This would alleviate the immediate need ex-offenders have for a place to stay and prevent people from heading to the streets or the shelters. It also would relieve the burden families sometimes experience when they house ex-offenders. Such housing, with a house monitor to assist ex-offenders in reintegrating, could function as a service center, facilitating the process of obtaining identification papers, clothing, employment, etc.

Recommendation 6

Modify rules that disallow individuals with a felony record to acquire a lease.

The inability of many ex-offenders to acquire a lease often forces them into transient living conditions and, in effect, undermines their acceptance of responsibility. It also can rupture marital and parental relationships, when, for example, a man's wife is allowed a lease but must "sneak" him in to visit. Such an arrangement is also detrimental to the ex-offender's self-esteem and presents a poor model of fatherhood to children.

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Recommendation 7

Assist ex-offenders in obtaining and retaining employment.

Such assistance would alleviate the financial strain ex-offenders experience and the financial burden often absorbed by families, and it would also reduce the stigma associated with incarceration and unemployment. Assistance might include:

a. Programs to help ex-offenders become self-employed.

b. Employer education programs to promote the hiring of ex-offenders.

c. Encouraging employers to hire ex-offenders through a program of government "bonding" to reduce the risk assumed by potential employers.

d. Encouraging employers to provide full-time employment (40 hours per week) and benefits.

Recommendation 8

Make training, education, and legal assistance available to ex-offenders.

Training and education are the foundation of quality employment. Ex-offenders who have trouble getting good jobs should be able to obtain job training. In addition, ex-offenders need basic information about legal issues and need assistance in solving legal problems. Ex-offenders also need help in restoring their civil rights and closing out any pending criminal cases and legal obligations. Affordable legal help is not typically available but internships for students from the local law schools could be instituted to assist with legal needs of ex-offenders and their families.

Recommendation 9

Reduce the initial financial pressures faced by ex-offenders immediately upon release.

This can be accomplished by reducing the unnecessary burdens imposed by the criminal justice system, such as supervision fees, and providing short-term financial assistance to pay for such needs as security deposits and the first month's rent, initiating utilities, and obtaining toiletries and other basic necessities. Such financial assistance would reduce the incentive to participate in illegal activities for quick money.

Recommendation 10

Increase availability of low-cost drug treatment programs for ex-offenders & their families.

Currently available programming is insufficient to meet needs or, because it is not locally based, is not easily accessible to residents of these neighborhoods.

Recommendation 11

Form self-help support groups for ex-offenders.

These groups would help model successful reintegration into the community where ex-offenders can talk to each other about the pressures and temptations they face, the frustrations of trying to make it, the discouragements of everyday life. They can also help head off relapse and recidivism by reducing anger and bolstering self-esteem.

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Recommendation 12

Match ex-offenders to community mentors.

Mentors would serve as advisors, contacts and support for returning offenders. They can help ex-offenders with very basic life skills, such as how to open a checking account and other mundane requirements. Mentors can also be part of the transition planning process and serve as advocates for the ex-offenders' needs and interests in reentry. The mentor system can apply to families, as well, with families "adopting" other families for support.

Recommendation 13

Involve ex-offenders in neighborhood projects.

Ex-offenders can play a role in a wide range of positive neighborhood activities, from organized sports programs to neighborhood reclamation projects. This would put ex-offenders in productive contact with fellow residents in neighborhood activities that lead to the overall improvement of the community. It also would reduce stigma and isolation associated with incarceration. These projects might include:

a. Work programs that improve public space in the community.

b. Renovations of housing and other building stock.

c. Recreational sports programs.

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Recommendation 14

Develop awareness programs to reduce the stigma of incarceration for ex-offenders.

De-stigmatizing individuals and communities should help reduce the pressures experienced by ex-offenders who are attempting to make a new start in the community. A broader understanding of the needs and obstacles facing ex-offenders will also enhance the quality of community life by countering some of the unintended consequences of incarceration. Programs might target:

a. Police, to help alleviate difficult community tensions.

b. Probation officers, to assist in the reintegration process.

c. Employers, who may disdain or are fearful of hiring ex-offenders.

d. Educators, who can talk about the problem of reentry with greater sensitivity.

e. The community-at-large, to encourage tolerance for returning felons.

Recommendation 15

Provide services at a neighborhood-based center.

A neighborhood-based center would:

a. Promote access to services for families and returning offenders.

b. Enable services to be tailored to the specific needs of the community.

c. Promote integration and informal networks by locating multiple services in one place.

d. Involve neighborhood groups, such as neighborhood associations, in the design and delivery of services.

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e.   Transfer resources from society-at-large to the community by adding a local

service entity to the neighborhood and by being a site through which financial

resources can be funneled into the neighborhood.

Recommendation 16

Provide services through coalitions and partnerships of public and private sources.

Human service organizations, both public and private non-profit, can organize coalitions

to develop and concentrate their work in high incarceration communities. Private, for-profit

organizations can contribute to the costs of public services, financially and programmatically.

This would leverage the resources of both public and private interests and direct them toward

community-based strategies, which might include:

a.   Police partnerships with resident groups to engage in problem-solving strategies

and to provide families with support when they need it.

b.   Social service provider-neighborhood partnerships to coordinate and intensify

local service delivery.

c.   Public-private partnerships to create new jobs for residents.

d.   Expert-citizen group partnerships that help resident groups develop grant

proposals and new projects.

DISCUSSION

The perspectives of residents and ex-offenders can be seen as a call for change in the way

justice services are provided in high impact communities. Our debriefing session with residents,

community leaders and service providers, where we reviewed our preliminary recommendations,

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confirmed that we were on the right track. While participants in that debriefing helped us sharpen our recommendations, none advised against any of the recommendations listed here. Rather, they encouraged us to broaden our scope. We can envision a comprehensive programmatic response to the problems that arise from high rates of incarceration concentrated in certain communities. While many of these services and programs can be provided by private or non-criminal justice agencies, we think the criminal justice system is ideally situated to provide umbrella services for these families. It has direct knowledge of families that are affected by someone's arrest and conviction, and the kinds of services families need are not dramatically different from the kinds of services required by victims of crime, a service area in which the criminal justice system has been improving for the last decade or so. Of course, the criminal justice system lacks a certain credibility for providing such services to the accused, the convicted, and their associates, but this is a problem that can be overcome.

Currently, Tallahassee has some of the programs and services we have described above. There are a variety of programs and services located in Frenchtown but very few that we are aware of in South City. Most are limited in scope or not within easy reach of the target population. Many of the available programs are run by a single individual, frequently out of a private home or a single office and service only a handful of people at a time. They are seriously underfunded and often lack the knowledge or the resources for applying for grant money. As a result, not only can they help a limited number of people, but they cannot provide outreach to offer their services. Instead, they often must wait for those in need to find them. Furthermore, the programs frequently are unaware of each other's existence and this isolation from each other prevents them from providing comprehensive assistance. An important outcome of our

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debriefing was the decision of several service providers to form a coalition of agencies to work on issues around removing and reintegrating ex-offenders into the community.

Many of the problems we discuss in this report are also experienced by people associated with incarceration but who live in areas with a lower concentration of residents going to prison than is found in Frenchtown and South City. As a result, their problems are isolated, less characterized by their neighborhood and they generally have more resources with which to face and fight their problems. By contrast, neighborhoods with high incarceration face several additional obstacles, making it more difficult for residents to cope with the problems associated with incarceration. For instance, most high-incarceration neighborhoods are poor, multi-problem areas. Their residents have low levels of education and suffer high rates of unemployment. Children are raised in single-parent households, public housing is commonplace, and rental property dominates. There is a lack of many formal businesses, so that employment requires mobility outside of the neighborhood. Of household heads who work, many take more than one job at minimum wage, some work "off the books," and day labor is common. Schools are often inadequate, with behavior problems, truancy, and poor academic achievement. These are the common problems afflicting the neighborhoods of "the underclass" (Wilson 1987) and they come in mutually-reinforcing, interwoven systems of forces rather than as isolated deficiencies.

Socially disorganized areas (such as those with high incarceration rates) also tend to suffer from limited parochial social controls (Rose, 2000). Neighbors do not know one another well, nor do they interact with one another in consistent ways. There are few social clubs or organized community activities. All of the benefits that accrue from strong neighborhoods are noticeably absent from these places. The main external force operating in these places is the

criminal justice system. It is in these places that police typically set up neighborhood offices when they practice community-oriented policing. Studies of these locations (CASES, 2000) show that millions can be spent in justice services, with dozens of citizens under formal justice surveillance, even in very small segments of larger neighborhood areas. In the absence of informal social controls, formal versions of externally-managed control systems dominate, at high levels of resource commitment.

A strategy to counteract these problems must have three characteristics. It must be comprehensive, addressing the multiple levels of problems rather than one or two at a time. It must seek to add stability through strengthening social networks, rather than targeting specific individuals. And it must transform people and circumstances from their extant problem situations toward new, pro-social equilibria. These strategies would be "building" strategies that add value to the community, rather than subtracting value. Our recommendations take this approach.

It is important to emphasize that not all offenders will "want to change;" that is, some offenders will earnestly resume their old lives upon reentry. Likewise, not all families will be well-suited to receive ex-felons supportively upon their reentry. We recognize that there are public safety issues facing the criminal justice system that call for supervision, surveillance, and enforcement, and we do not wish to undermine that fact. Our recommendations are meant for the case in which an offender wants to succeed but faces significant obstacles in doing so, and the offender's family wants to be a support system, but lacks the capacity for doing so as fully as might be possible with services. This applies to many, if not most, of the situations involving reentry to high incarceration neighborhoods. While we see these recommendations as particularly

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useful to the neighborhoods of Frenchtown and South City, we think they are potentially useful to other high incarceration locations, generally.

It is important, however, that we emphasize the small size of our sample. We have studied residents' perceptions of the impact of the incarceration process—removal and reentry—in two neighborhoods in a single city. We believe the experiences uncovered in this study are likely to reflect those of similar neighborhoods with high concentrations of people being removed and returning, but we have no data to confirm that belief. Likewise, we have no data from low incarceration neighborhoods to which we may compare the data from our respondents. Some of our respondents certainly believe their experiences have given them a unique vantage point on incarceration, and we think it plausible that this is true. But we do not know how the experiences of the families, residents, and ex-offenders in these neighborhoods compare to the experiences of those living elsewhere in Tallahassee, since we have not gathered any data from those other locations.

Despite the limited sample, this study has added to our knowledge base about the way removal and reentry processes affect community life and the recommendations point to a potentially more effective way of dealing with incarceration in high-volume neighborhoods. Yet this issue remains poorly studied and a number of questions deserve further inquiry.

First we recommend this study be replicated and extended. The findings from Tallahassee suggest that there are important dynamics of high concentrations of incarceration, but Tallahassee is only a single location, and as a result, our conclusions remain tentative. Further studies are needed of the neighborhood-level significance of coercive mobility. Ideally, such studies would

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apply to dense urban areas as well as high-volume rural areas, and they would continue to investigate the role of incarceration in social networks and collective efficacy.

We need to investigate whether offenders do better when they are released from prison to their old neighborhoods or re-enter new ones. Some anecdotal data suggest that ex-offenders who are released to new locations do better, because they are able to avoid the temptations of old acquaintances and patterns. Yet there are good empirical and anecdotal reasons to believe that support systems from the neighborhood play a critical role in successful adjustment after incarceration. These are obviously two very different strategies of reentry. A study that compares offender experiences employing these two strategies, presumably a cohort-type design, will help to identify the circumstances under which one strategy might be preferred over the other.

We also need to investigate whether offenders who have meaningful contact with their neighbors do better than those who do not. Our respondents, residents and ex-offenders alike, suggest that there is an important role for neighbor residents in supporting an ex-offender's reentry. On the other hand, neighborhood notification laws have made neighbor relationships potentially more problematic. Our respondents report a tendency among ex-offenders to be isolated from "normal" neighbor relations in ways that might impede successful adjustment. Little is known about the various ways non-family neighbors relate to ex-offenders at the community level. In theory, a positive relationship with a neighbor might be an important aid to adjustment, and the opposite might lead to adjustment problems. Studies that document the interaction between offenders in reentry and their non-family neighbors and the impact of those interactions will help us to understand the ideal policies regarding neighbor notification and reentry support.

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Our understanding of the processes under which the inter-generational cycle of incarceration occurs can be improved. It is well-established that having a parent or older sibling in prison is a significant risk indicator of incarceration. Little is known about why this is so, and even less is known about the circumstances that enable children living under these risk situations to avoid incarceration. A better understanding of the reasons why parental/sibling incarceration creates such a risk, and how some families successfully navigate that risk, will provide information about the necessary focus of services to families of men or women in prison.

We need to improve our understanding of the relationship between ex-offenders' ties to parochial social controls (e.g., religious and civic institutions) and reentry adjustment. One of the most common comments of the residents, family members, and ex-offenders, is the importance of faith and faith organizations in successful adjustment. Despite the widespread agreement about the importance of such parochial social controls, very few studies have been conducted on the nature and level of impact of these associations on adjustment. A better understanding of the role of these organizations in ex-offender adjustment would inform the development of public-private partnerships for high-incarceration locations.

An investigation of the impact of substantive differences between "types" of neighborhood support structures (e.g., job markets, family structures, housing patterns) and reentry adjustment would help prioritize and target services. While offenders return to certain neighborhoods in concentrated numbers, the demographic nature of these communities varies. While it is known that the locations of release may affect, statistically, the odds of reentry failure, little is known about the way particular neighborhood characteristics affect reentry patterns, and how. A better understanding of the way certain characteristics affect reentry processes would enable us to more

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reliably identify the local areas requiring more comprehensive support, based on these attributes. In addition, we need to evaluate the impact of targeted services to families of people who are removed for incarceration.

It is a truism that better transition planning is needed, but no reliable studies exist of the impact of high-quality transition planning on reentry success. Consequently, we need to implement and then evaluate the impact of best-practice transition planning methods. Furthermore, there is no empirical basis to say which aspects of transition planning are most important to increase successful reentry. Studies are needed which tell us more about how well transition planning works and which aspects are most important, and why.

Because one of the most immediate responses to our questions about the impact of incarceration centered on its deleterious financial effects, it would be helpful to investigate the impact of financial requirements, such as supervision fees, on the probability of returning to prison. It is plausible that the net effect of offenders' financial requirements is to increase the chances of failure. If so, it may follow that such financial policies require more taxpayer resources to pay for the consequences of reentry failure (new crimes, return to prison) than is needed to defray the costs of correctional and other services. On the other hand, financial requirements might impose a discipline upon ex-offenders that reinforces the kind of responsible conduct required for successful reentry, and thereby not only provide additional revenues but actually increase chances of success. Currently, we do not know the impact of the financial aspects of reentry. Financial costs imposed on offenders are a public policy, and thus their cost effectiveness deserves to be assessed. Studying the role of financial requirements in reentry adjustment would illuminate the value of these policies.

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Finally, we need to evaluate the impact of community-level services for at-risk families on crime and recidivism. Inherent in our respondents' suggestions is the need for family supports in high-incarceration neighborhoods. Our data, which suggest that high incarceration rates may destabilize neighborhoods and lead to more crime, call attention to the seriousness of the problem of concentrated levels of coercive mobility. It remains to be seen whether replications of this work will confirm this relationship. The key policy question, if replications suggest the pattern is a reliable one, is whether neighborhood-targeted services can alleviate the problem. Studies of the impact of neighborhood services on crime and the involvement of residents in the criminal justice system will point the way to solutions to the conundrum of growing levels of incarceration.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

EXPERT INTERVIEW TOPICS

Expert Interview Topics

Can you please give me a brief description of the neighborhood (i.e., demographics, history, outstanding features, important events that have occurred, relation to other neighboring communities).

What is the state of the neighborhood today (economically, socially, politically, physically). Does this represent a significant change from the past, or has it been this way historically?

How has the high rate of incarceration affected this community?

What types of services and/or programs are available to this community to assist residents with issues pertaining to crime, incarceration and reintegration (e.g., crime watch programs, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services, transportation to visit family members in prison, job training)? Are these services utilized?

Is the current level of these services/programs sufficient and appropriate to the needs of the community? Are there any new services or initiatives planned for this community?

How has the return of ex-offenders to the community affected the community (i.e., use of social resources, crime, domestic and street violence)?

To what extent are drugs (use and trafficking) an issue in terms of incarceration rates, as well as ex-offenders' transition back to the neighborhood?

Who would you suggest I speak with to discuss these topics further?

Any pertinent written material?

Any services/resource for this population?

Suggestions for recruiting strategies? Particular people?

APPENDIX TWO

SCREENING INSTRUMENT

Recruiting Interviews

INTRODUCTION

I am from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. We are doing a study about how neighborhoods have been affected by people going to and from prison. The best way for us to collect this information is to talk with neighborhood residents. I was referred to you by _____.

In a few weeks we want to have two meetings, one with people who have been to prison and another with those who have not, but who have some ideas about this topic. We hope the information we collect will help Tallahassee to develop policies and programs for neighborhoods dealing with this issue.

Right now we are asking some general questions to help us recruit participants. Would you be willing to answer a few questions? It will take about 5 minutes, and all the information will be confidential. (*Ask if 18 years old or older; if not end interview*).

A. NEIGHBORHOOD

A1.Do you currently live in either Frenchtown or South City? By this I mean....
Show maps and check appropriate response.

    i. Frenchtown   _____

    ii. South City, Block 1   _____

    iii. South City, Block 2 or 3   _____
If i., .ii. or iii, ask #A2.

    iv. Other (Specify) _____
        Today, we are interested in talking to people who live in these neighborhoods, so I only have a couple more questions for you. *Skip to Section D, Demographics.*

A2. Overall, how long have you lived in (Frenchtown/ South City)? _____

A3. Do you have family who live in this neighborhood?   _____

    Yes   _____

    No   _____

A4. Do you have friends who live in this neighborhood?

Yes _____
No _____

A5. As an adult, have you ever been incarcerated?

Yes _____
No _____ *Skip to Section C, Incarceration—Others.*

B. INCARCERATION—SELF

B1. Were you living in this neighborhood when you were sent to prison?

Yes _____   *Skip to #B3*
No _____   *Ask #B2.*

B2. Why did you come here (this neighborhood) after your release?

B3. Were you convicted of a drug-related crime?
Yes _____
No _____

B4. When were you released?

_____

Skip to Section D. Demographics

C. INCARCERATION—OTHERS

C1. How many people do you know who have been to prison? _____

If none, skip to Section D., Demographics.

C2. What is your relationship to that person (first 3 people)?

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

C3. Has that person (or any of those people) been released yet?

Yes _____
No _____

2   screen

D. DEMOGRAPHICS
D1. Sex:

Male _____

Female _____

D2. How old are you? _____

D3. Race/ethnicity:

African-American _____

White _____

Asian _____

Hispanic _____

Other _____

E. FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION
E1. We may want to contact you in the next few weeks when we know how many people we need for a meeting. You can decide at that time if you'd like to participate. Is it okay if we contact you?

Yes, OK to contact _____ *Ask #E2.*

No, don't contact _____ *Skip to #E.4*

E2. What is the best way and time to contact you?

Name:_____

Contact Info: _____

_____

E3. If you were to participate in a meeting, when might be best for you?

Week days (Day and/or time) _____

Week nights (Day and/or time)_____

Weekends (Day and/or time) _____

E4. Do you know anyone who lives in Frenchtown or South City who you think we should talk to?

Yes _____ *Ask E5.*

No _____ *Skip to closing*

E5. Can we tell this person you referred us?

Yes _____ *(Go to Section F Referral Info.)*

No _____ *(Skip to Section G., Closing)*

3   screen

F. REFERRAL INFORMATION

Interviewer: _____

Referral source (Interviewee): _____

Date Interviewed: _____

Referrals:

1. Name_____

   Address/Phone _____

   Date/Action_____

—Date/Action_____

   Interviewed? Yes _____ Date _____ Code _____

2. Name_____

   Address/Phone _____

   Date/Action_____

   Date/Action_____

   Interviewed? Yes _____ Date _____ Code _____

3. Name_____

   Address/Phone _____

   Date/Action_____

   Date/Action_____

   Interviewed? Yes _____ Date_____ Code # ____ ____ ____

G. CLOSING

I want to thank you for taking time to talk with me. Remember, this information is confidential, except where you said it was okay for me to use your name to contact people. Do you have any questions?

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screen

APPENDIX THREE

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP INSTRUMENTS

RESIDENTS

EX-OFFENDERS

Sample Focus Group Instrument
Resident Group

The purpose of the resident focus groups is to explore participants' perceptions and experiences with the impact of incarceration on their own lives and that of the community. The goals of the sessions are to explore residents' personal experiences with offenders being removed from and returned to the community and to explore the impact of coercive mobility on neighborhood life in general.

Sample Questions

When people go to prison from this neighborhood, how does it affect their families? (Explore spouse, parent and children separately.)

In general are families better or worse off when someone is incarcerated?

Does incarcerating someone have an impact on anyone else in the community beyond the family (friends, relatives, neighbors)?

How does someone coming back from prison affect families in the neighborhood? (Explore spouse, parent and children separately.)

In general are families better or worse off after someone is released from prison?

What do people have to do to adjust when someone returns from prison?

Are drugs a factor in a person's transition back to the community from prison?

Do you think incarceration is an important issue in this neighborhood?

In general, do you think incarcerating offenders a good thing for this neighborhood?

In what ways does the neighborhood benefit from incarcerating offenders?

In what ways does the neighborhood encounter problems from incarcerating offenders?

How does the level of incarceration affect the families who live in this neighborhood?

How does the level of incarceration affect the economic well being of the neighborhood?

How does the level of incarceration affect the attitudes of residents to political and other authority figures?

How does the level of incarceration affect the willingness/ability of residents to participate in local politics?

How has incarceration affected the problem of drugs in this neighborhood?

Focus Group Instrument
Ex-Offender Group

The purpose of the ex-offender focus groups is to explore participants' perceptions and experiences with the impact of incarceration on their own lives and that of the community. The goals of the sessions are to explore ex-offenders' personal experiences with being removed from and returned to the community, to explore the impact of incarceration on neighborhood life in general.

Sample Questions

How did going to prison affect you and your relationship to your family? (Explore spouse, parent and children separately.)

What changes did your family experience when you went to prison? (Explore financial, residential and political issues.)

In general, was your family better or worse off because you were incarcerated?

Do you think your going to prison had an impact on anyone else in the community (friends, relatives, neighbors).

How did coming back from prison affect you and your relationship to your family? (Explore spouse, parent and children separately.)

What changes did your family experience when you came back from prison? (Explore financial, residential and political issues.)

In general, was your family better or worse off after you were released from prison?

What did your family members do to adjust to your return from prison?

Do you think your returning from prison had an impact on anyone else in the community (friends, relatives, neighbors).

What problems have you experienced adjusting to life back in the neighborhood?

Have drugs been a factor in your transition?

Do you think incarceration is an important issue in this neighborhood?

In general, do you think incarcerating offenders is a good thing for this neighborhood?

In what ways does the neighborhood benefit from incarcerating offenders?

In what ways does the neighborhood encounter problems from incarcerating offenders?

How does the level of incarceration affect the families who live in this neighborhood?

How does the level of incarceration affect the economic well being of the neighborhood?

How does the level of incarceration affect the attitudes of residents to political and other authority figures?

How does the level of incarceration affect the willingness/ability of residents to participate in local politics?

How has incarceration affected the problem of drugs in this neighborhood?

APPENDIX FOUR

DEBRIEFING MEETING PANELISTS

Debriefing Meeting Panelists

September 21, 2000

Ms. Barbara Bozeman
Great Recoveries, Inc.

Ms. Anita Davis
NAACP ACT-SO

Mr. Albert Green
South City Neighborhood Association

Ms. Dorothy Inman-Crews
Capital Area Community Action Agency, Inc.

Ms. Vera McIntyre
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