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DRUGS, INCARCERATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE: THE IMPACT OF REINTEGRATING OFFENDERS INTO THE COMMUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

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 which focuses on the effects of ecological characteristics such as rates of poverty, residential mobility, and single parent families (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Sampson, 1988; Bursik and Grasmick 1993, and others). 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).

Just as crime concentrates in certain communities, so do the efforts of the criminal justice system. Nationally, men are eight times more likely to go to prison than are women (Bonczar and Beck, 1997). The lifetime probability of spending time in prison is 28.5 per 100 for African-American males and 16 per 100 for Hispanic males, about six and three times higher, respectively, than for white males (Bonczar and Beck, 1997). Because poor men of color live in concentration in neighborhoods that are racially and economically homogeneous, some of the places where these men live are particularly hard-hit by incarceration. Depending upon the size of the neighborhood and the method of counting, studies have found that up to 30% of the adult male residents in particular neighborhoods are locked up on any given day (Lynch and Sabol,

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1992; Mauer, 2000), up to 13% 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).

Recently, Rose and Clear (1998) theorized about the implications of this concentration of incarceration on community life. They built upon Bursik and Grasmick's (1993) reconceptualization of social disorganization theory which 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. Rose and Clear (1998) theorized that the aggregate impact of incarceration damages networks of private and parochial social control by disrupting the social networks at their foundation. Thus, in this theoretical model, when public control occurs at high levels, private and parochial controls function less effectively. The result is higher levels of community disorganization and more crime. An empirical test of their theory (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully, 2000) finds support for the proposition that high concentrations of incarceration increase, rather than decrease, crime.

This idea of incarceration as a form of "coercive mobility" (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully, 2000) has considerable theoretical salience for contemporary criminology because it updates one of social disorganization theory's main constructs (residential mobility) to account for the new significance of incarceration. It also enhances our understanding of "collective efficacy" (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls,1997; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999), the actualized action produced by social capital, since "coercive mobility" would destabilize the social networks necessary for local residents to positively affect community-level social control. Thus, "coercive mobility" might be seen as a mechanism that tends to damage social capital (Coleman, 1990)—the resource on which neighborhoods rely for the quality of collective life. In

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sum, the theory of "coercive mobility" argues that the aggregate impact of incarceration may have unintended consequences. This is because, at the neighborhood-level, this form of public control constrains the effectiveness of private and parochial control (Hunter 1985), thereby reducing the community's collective efficacy and, in the end, fostering the conditions that lead to more disorganization and more crime.

THE CURRENT STUDY: DATA AND METHODS

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 people 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.

To accomplish this goal, we conducted a study of two Tallahassee, Florida, neighborhoods that had been identified earlier (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully, 2000) as having high rates of incarceration relative to other locations in that city. We reviewed archival and contemporary documents about the development of these two neighborhoods and, employing a

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snowball approach, we interviewed over 30 local officials, community leaders and social service providers to understand the contemporary social, political, and economic context of these locations. 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 with 39 people either living or working in the neighborhoods, 13 of whom were ex-offenders. All interviews were transcribed and subjected to content analysis to explore major themes in the data (Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

We did not ask respondents directly about the impact of incarceration on social networks or public safety. Instead, 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. The focus groups, led by a professional group facilitator, were conducted at various sites in the neighborhoods, and were hosted by a representative of the local neighborhood association. The facilitator was assisted by members of a local justice advocacy organization, one of whom had previously been incarcerated. Ex-offenders were interviewed separately from neighborhood residents to maximize everyone's comfort in talking about sensitive issues of removal and reentry.

RESULTS: FOUR DOMAINS OF COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Respondents describe a complicated picture of the effects of removal and reentry on their neighborhood. Some of the consequences they describe are "positive," in the sense that the neighborhood and its residents want their communities to be safer and sometimes they are better

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off when some residents are incarcerated. Not surprisingly, residents feel that justice is done when wrongdoers are apprehended, prosecuted, and sanctioned, as they create problems for the quality of life of those who are law-abiding. Our respondents did not hesitate to say that removing committed offenders makes the streets safer and their lives better.

At the same time, our respondents expressed opinions indicating the negative effects of removal and reentry, too. In our focus groups and interviews, respondents devoted more time to describing the negative impacts on their communities than they gave to the positive, and their passions seemed to be more readily engaged by these issues than by the traditional matters of public safety. Ex-offenders raised the same kinds of themes as their neighbors, but also emphasized the heavy pressure they feel, from almost every source: the criminal justice system, everyday society, their neighbors, and their families.

Our analysis suggests four domains that capture the impact of the processes of removal and reentry on the individuals, families and the community-at-large: the problem of stigma, financial effects, issues regarding identity, and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Stigma

Being involved in the criminal justice system carries a negative social status. Ex-offenders reported being incapable of overcoming the label of "offender" when they returned to the community. 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

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withdraw from community life in shame, both when the offender goes to prison and upon his return. In neighborhoods that contain disproportionate numbers of incarcerated residents, stigma is often transferred to the community as well, resulting in a loss of the area's reputation as a good place to live and do business. Within the community the experience of incarceration is widespread yet stigmatizing among local residents; incarceration is not discussed openly, even when neighbors know a nearby resident has been in prison.

Finances

One of the most significant points our respondents repeatedly make is that incarceration has adverse effects on the financial capacity of individuals and the neighborhood. For general residents it is true that incarceration sometimes provides temporary relief from a relative needing monetary assistance 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 and paying for the cost of phone calls, for example. Not only do ex-offenders suffer financially from their inability to find employment upon their return to the community, but they also have housing, clothing and transportation needs that they cannot meet. Thus, families are once again called upon for financial support. 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.

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Identity

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. Ex-offenders have such a difficult time making a successful reentry into the community, they often fail to become positive role models. Part of this difficulty comes from the trouble ex-offenders have convincing others of their changed identity. The loss of positive role models for children is seen as an 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, removal and reentry effects community-level identity by causing residents to feel hopeless and apatetic about the prospects for change.

Relationships

The fourth area of concern is the way in which incarceration alters 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 experience 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. Sometimes families of ex-offenders relocate to a different neighborhood to increase the chances

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of the ex-offender's successful reintegration. This may mean moving in with extended family members, or leaving support networks behind in the old community. Public social interactions also are effected; increased police surveillance is a disincentive for law-abiding citizens to congregate openly because it often invites unwanted police attention.

To these themes, ex-offenders added a concern about the pressures of reentry, citing the difficulties in obtaining jobs and housing, and reestablishing relationships with family and friends. Criminal justice vigilance is described as a source of strain, which becomes particularly problematic at a 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 illustrates something about the community-level dynamics of removal and reentry. The two are connected processes, but they may be different in their community-level effects. All 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. Removal portends a set of gains and losses that affects 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 how they welcome returning offenders back into their group, and neighbors describe the ways they seek to tolerate a new arrival upon his return, 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.

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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 one is the natural consequence of the other. Instead, reentry was more commonly discussed as producing individual- and family-level implications that did not seem to extend to the broader community.

DISCUSSION

The four domains of impact 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. The human capital of offenders is impacted directly through the two-pronged process of incarceration (removal and reentry) in both positive and negative ways. For instance, ex-offenders talk about using imprisonment as a time to change their lives by getting an education, getting off drugs and developing skills they would need for a successful transition into the community. On the other hand, prison reduces their human capital by failing to provide adequate counseling, schooling and training (sometimes even training them in obsolete and outdated skills). When released, most offenders find it very difficult to find employment; those who do have unstable jobs earning meager wages. This study also revealed ways in which incarceration reduces 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.

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The processes of removal and reentry also alter and sometimes damage the networks of association, which are the foundation of 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. "Good" children who may have been overlooked while their disruptive siblings lived at home may receive more attention when the sibling is removed from the family. Alternatively, networks are damaged when families feel bad about their loss, often experiencing illness and depression, when relationships with extended kin become taxed, and spousal relationships are disrupted. Networks suffer further when neighbors isolate from each other because families withdraw from community life, or when neighbors become suspicious and/or fearful of those returning from prison. And finally, networks fail to form when the community becomes isolated from the larger society. Thus, while these issues surrounding removal and rentry 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.

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 to prison, 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 lose residents to the prison system at rates higher than elsewhere. Residents also feel that government officials do not respond with the same degree of

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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, they 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; 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. A sense of oppression, fed by a distrust of the system, makes some distrust any formal social control initiatives that might be underway.

The criminal justice system does little to soften this feeling. Intent on preserving public safety, police focus their attention on newly released offenders, to the point where these men commonly feel under a form of civic harassment. Police cars, cruising the neighborhood, seem in constant tension with young people. Although many of our respondents want to reduce crime and see this as occurring through more arrests and more enforcement, they also are asking for a scaling down of the police presence because they see the harm this does, too. Thus, another way removal and reentry effects 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 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

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believe the police are harassing them unnecessarily and that the police could do more to eradicate crime if that was their intent.

Incarceration, Social Capital, and Drugs

This sentiment was 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. Many of our respondents call for more criminal justice activity and more stringent criminal justice responses. Participants often indicate that tougher responses to crime would make the streets safer. This kind of concern is expressed more in relation to drug dealers than to other drug offenders. The former are seen in particularly harsh terms. Residents see the dealers as very destructive, damaging lives and taking over the streets. They see strong criminal justice measures as justified in relation to 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 bring 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 of individuals and the crimes they commit, saying "it depends on the crime" and classifying many as either not serious or rationalizing them in the face of widespread

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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 incarcerated 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 some people are removed. We note, however, that current policy initiatives that increase reliance upon incarceration have the effect of exacerbating the problems we have 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, they focus on the kinds of services and programs that might improve the quality of life in the

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community. We recognize that the recommendations are not a panacea for the problems in the neighborhood 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 might 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. 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."

Finally, 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 raised. 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

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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.

    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.

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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:

    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.

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.

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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 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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

CONCLUSION

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. 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.

Many of the problems we discuss in this report are experienced by people associated with incarceration but who live in areas with a lower concentration of residents going to prison, than that in Frenchtown or 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

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problems. By contrast, neighborhoods with high incarceration rates 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.

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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 return to the community. We recognize that there are public safety issues facing the criminal justice system that call for supervision, surveillance, and enforcement, and 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 useful to the neighborhoods of Frenchtown and South City, we think they are potentially useful to other high incarceration locations, generally.

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.

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We do not know how the experiences of the families, residents, and ex-offenders in the studied neighborhoods compare to the experiences of those living elsewhere in Tallahassee, as we have not gathered data from those other locations. Despite the limited sample, however, 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 much remains to be known about this complex issue and a numerous related research questions deserve further inquiry.

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