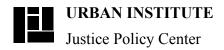# Prisoner Reentry and Community Policing: Strategies for Enhancing Public Safety

Reentry Roundtable Meeting

The Urban Institute

Washington, DC

May 12-13, 2004

COPS
COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

research for safer communities

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Washington, DC 20037

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Acknowledgments

History of the Reentry Roundtable

Four years ago, the Urban Institute launched a major research and policy development initiative on the issue of prisoner reentry, with a broad substantive agenda that encompasses criminal justice policy as well as the impact of incarceration and reentry on children, families, former prisoners, communities, and civil society. (A prospectus of Urban Institute's reentry activities can be found at http://www.urban.org.) One of the key components of this initiative has been the creation of the Reentry Roundtable—a group of prominent academics, practitioners, community leaders, policymakers, advocates, and former prisoners that convenes about twice a year to push the envelope of research and practice. Additionally, about a hundred individuals (including practitioners, researchers, foundation officers, and community members) are invited to observe meetings of the Roundtable, and have been impressed with the breadth and stature of people who have joined the Roundtable to become part of a larger national network. The mission of the Roundtable is to develop new thinking about the issue of prisoner reentry, broadly defined.

The first meeting of the Roundtable was held in the fall of 2000, with the purpose of exploring the many dimensions of the reentry issue. The Urban Institute commissioned discussion papers by leading academics examining the state of knowledge on this topic from a variety of perspectives—health, substance abuse, family, gender, race, employment, community capacity, and state criminal justice policies. Those papers (and two others on mental health and victims' perspectives) were published in a special issue of *Crime and Delinquency* (Volume 47, Issue 3, 2001). They also provided the basis for the Urban Institute monograph entitled "From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry."

Following that meeting, the Urban Institute designed a multistate longitudinal study on prisoner reentry, entitled "Returning Home." At the second meeting of the Roundtable in March 2001, the meeting focused attention on that design, with special attention to understanding the impact of reentry on family and community. The Urban Institute has completed the pilot study of Returning Home in Maryland and are implementing the full study in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas.

The third session of the Roundtable, held in March 2002, focused on the role of the institutions of civil society in creating barriers and bridges to the successful reintegration of record numbers of former prisoners. The papers from that meeting have been published on the Urban Institute's website (http://www.urban.org). The fourth meeting, held in December 2002, examined the nexus between prisoner reentry and health. Those papers were published in a special issue of the *Journal of Correctional Health Care* (Volume 10, Issue 3, Fall 2003). The fifth meeting examined the employment dimension of prisoner reentry. A monograph report based on the findings of that Roundtable is available though the Urban Institute website. The sixth meeting of the Reentry Roundtable, entitled "The Youth Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry: Youth Development and the Impacts of Incarceration and Reentry," was held in San Francisco at the end of May 2003. The papers from this session were published in a special issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (Volume 2, Issue 1, 2004). The seventh meeting of the

Reentry Roundtable, entitled "Housing, Homelessness, and Prisoner Reentry," was held in October 2003. A monograph report based on the findings of that Roundtable will be available in Fall 2004.

The eighth Reentry Roundtable was held in May 2004. With funding support from the Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing, this meeting of the Roundtable addressed the nexus between reentry and community policing in the context of public safety. What follows is a synopsis of the two-day discussion among academics, practitioners, service providers, and community leaders convened by the Urban Institute. These individuals were brought together to share their perspectives on the role of law enforcement in tackling the issue of prisoner reentry. This document reconstructs the discussion in the chronological order in which it unfolded, including highlights of presentations by the authors of commissioned papers and the discussions that flowed from them. In order to promote the free flow of ideas, it was decided that individuals' names would not be attributed to comments given during the Roundtable discussion.

The Urban Institute is in the process of producing a monograph report of this meeting that will be available in Spring 2005. Full-text versions of the commissioned working papers are available at http://www.urban.org

May 2004 Reentry Roundtable ● Meeting Participants

Alfred Blumstein, Carnegie Mellon University

Patrick Bradley, Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety

Jim Bueermann (Co-chair), Redlands, California Police Department

Edward Davis III, Lowell, Massachusetts Police Department

Walter Dickey, University of Wisconsin School of Law

John Fitzgerald, Hampden County Massachusetts Jail and House of Correction

Ellen Halbert, Travis County Texas, Office of the District Attorney

Michael Jacobson, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Gary Johnson, Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Jean Johnson, Public Agenda

Robert Johnson, Anoka County Minnesota, County Attorney's Office

Paul Joyce, Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety

George Kelling, Rutgers University - Newark

David Kennedy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Susan Herman, National Center for Victims of Crime

Gary Hinzman, Sixth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services

Martin Horn, New York Department of Correction and Probation

Edmund McGarrell, Michigan State University

Alan Mobley, University of California-Irvine

Brenda Palms-Barber, North Lawndale (Chicago) Employment Network

Carl Peed, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice

Charles See, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry Association

Michael Smith, University of Wisconsin School of Law

Faye Taxman, Bureau of Governmental Research, University of Maryland

Jeremy Travis (Co-chair), The Urban Institute

Reverend Steven Tucker, New Commandment Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

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Section I.

Welcome and Meeting Overview

Co-chair: Jeremy Travis, The Urban Institute

The aim of this Roundtable was to generate discussion about the intersection between reentry and community policing and how public safety can be advanced. The meeting was premised on the idea that a better understanding of these issues will help stimulate the creativity of the research, practice, and policy communities to think differently about the nexus between these social challenges.

The Urban Institute commissioned four discussion papers to help set the conceptual framework for this Roundtable. Paper topics include the ways that police and the community can work together, ways that police and parole can work together, ways that parole and prisons can work together, and ways that police and former prisoners can work together. Most sessions began with short opening statements from authors summarizing their papers' key points, while other sessions began with presentations on public safety topics. After each presentation, the discussion was opened to Roundtable participants. The involvement of presenters, participants, and observers representing a wide range of fields and views enabled the group to examine relevant challenges from a number of perspectives. The two-day Roundtable provided critical opportunities for participants to identify and discuss new approaches—testable ideas that might significantly advance policy and practice with regard to public safety, policing, and the welfare of people returning to the communities from prison.

Reentry and community policing is a natural fit because of law enforcement's desire to assist the community, problem solve, and partner with other agencies.

Carl Peed, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice (COPS)

The involvement of the COPS Office in reentry is fairly recent. However, it is a natural fit because of law enforcement's desire to assist the community, problem solve, and partner with other agencies. Further, the COPS Office recognizes that small numbers of offenders commit a large proportion of crime, and knows that about 60 percent of ex-offenders recidivate. Attending to prisoner reentry provides a significant opportunity to impact public safety.

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Co-chair: Jim Bueermann, Redlands Police Department

Prisoner reentry is one of the most compelling issues facing American law enforcement, yet the police haven't been connected to the issue because prisoner reentry has not been considered part of policing's purview. Getting involved in this issue gives law enforcement new opportunities to connect to the community and to take community policing to a new level. This is a significant opportunity because of the potential impact on victims of crime, children of offenders, and neighborhoods and places. However, law enforcement is not familiar with this arena and we are not yet conversant about the issues. Over this two-day meeting, the goal is to develop answers to the following questions: What roles can and does law enforcement play in this issue? What tools are needed? What cultural changes need to occur within police departments to facilitate their participation in reentry efforts?

Getting involved in reentry gives law enforcement new opportunities to connect to the community and take community policing to a new level.

Section II.

Presentations and Discussion

Reentry Roundtable • Presentation

WHO IS LEAVING PRISON?

Nancy La Vigne, The Urban Institute

Abstract: This presentation provided a national overview of the issue of prisoner reentry, highlighting the characteristics and challenges of people who exit prison and return to their communities. National trends on incarceration and release policies are described, followed by more specific information on the demographics, criminal and substance abuse histories, and housing and employment challenges of this population. The impact of prisoner reentry on communities is explored through an examination of the geographic concentrations of released prisoners and the characteristics of the communities to which they return.

Characteristics of Reentry Population

- There has been a four-fold increase in the number of prisoners returning to communities since 1977, now reaching an estimated 630,000 per year.

- In some states, there has been an increasing proportion of prisoners being released without any form of post prison supervision. For example, in Massachusetts, 58 percent of prisoners are released without any supervision. By contrast, in California, only 3 percent of prisoners are released unconditionally. These practices have a significant impact on the number of prisoners who are returned to prison for technical violations of their conditions of supervision. Not surprisingly, states in which the majority of prisoners are released to supervision have higher proportions of prison admissions coming from parole violations.

An estimated 630,000 individuals are released from prison each year.

- Eighty-eight percent of returning prisoners are male (notably, the proportion of females has increased over time), 55 percent are white, 44 percent are African American, and 21 percent are Hispanic. The median age is 34 years old, and the median education level is 11th grade.

- Seventy-five percent have previous admissions to probation or some form of incarceration.

Substance Use Challenges

- Over two-thirds of all prisoners have histories of substance use, and about one-third have served time for drug sales or possession. (Sales and possession are hard to disentangle using available data; this is an important, yet difficult, research question to answer).

- Patterns of drug use vary significantly at the local level. For example, 40 percent of prisoners in Baltimore used heroin daily prior to incarceration, while in Chicago, 22 percent used cocaine daily. These local-level nuances need to be explored more explicitly.

- Although in-custody treatment has been demonstrated to be effective, access to treatment is generally quite limited.

Health Challenges

- The prison population has higher rates of chronic medical problems and infectious diseases than the general population, including asthma, hypertension, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and tuberculosis. Mental health disorders are also prevalent.

- Those released from prison often have limited access to health care and to their required medications once they return to the community. For example, in Maryland, one-third of prisoners on medication for health or mental health disorders were unsure if they would be able to obtain their medication after returning to the community.

Family Challenges

- Family relationships are among the most important, yet least studied, factors affecting reentry. Families are a source of both tangible and emotional support, and these relationships may help to prevent both relapse and recidivism. Just prior to release, prisoners have high expectations about what their families will provide.

The challenges of those returning to society from prison are multifaceted—such as substance abuse, health, family, employment, and return to crime.

- In Maryland and Illinois, if anything, family support has been found to be greater than what prisoners anticipated prior to release. However, family relationships are not always easy. Child support and regaining child custody are significant reunification challenges. In addition, many ex-prisoners have extensive familial histories of incarceration and substance abuse, which can negatively influence attempts to successfully reintegrate.

Employment Challenges

- About two-thirds of prisoners were employed just prior to admission. While employment often translates into lower recidivism rates, many are unemployed after release. In-prison job readiness and work release programs are helpful but have limited availability.

- There are also significant deficits in employability. In Maryland, for example, 45 percent of returning prisoners had been fired at least once. There is also the reluctance of employers to hire former prisoners.

- Available, accessible work is limited. There is a "spatial mismatch" between the communities in which former prisoners live and the communities in which available jobs are located. Transportation is a significant challenge.

Recidivism

- Over two-thirds of prisoners are rearrested within three years of their release, and about half return to prison for new crimes or technical violations. It is clear that some returning prisoners contribute to crime in the community, but further study is needed to determine the exact share of prisoners who reoffend and the level of crime for which they are responsible.

Geographic Concentration of Returning Prisoners—Place Matters

- Returning prisoners cluster within major metropolitan counties and in a few major cities. For example, in Illinois, 53 percent of all prisoners are released to Chicago. In Maryland, 59 percent of all prisoners are released to Baltimore. The communities receiving the highest proportion of prisoners are the least well-equipped to absorb them—these communities have higher proportions of families living below the federal poverty level, unemployed people, and female-headed households.

Returning prisoners cluster within major metropolitan counties and in a few major cities.

- Using mapping to identify the concentrations of returning prisoners within a given geographical area provides a sense of the magnitude of the challenges faced by specific communities. For example, in Illinois in 2001, 62 percent of all prisoners were returned to Cook County. No other county received more than 3 percent of released prisoners. Fifty-three percent returned to the city of Chicago, and 34 percent returned to only six neighborhoods in Chicago.

- It is important not only to look at the raw numbers of returning prisoners, but also the rate per 1,000 residents. Communities receiving both high numbers and high rates of returning prisoners need to be identified. For example, in Baltimore, about 52 prisoners return to a 20-block area over the course of one year. Pockets of the community are experiencing reentry very differently and acutely.

- In terms of the contribution of former prisoners to community crime rates, mapping can be used to see whether the communities of return mirror the communities with high crime rates. In Baltimore, these locations do not match up particularly well. This could be because offenders commit crimes in areas with more desirable targets than their home communities—for example, in the business districts.

Geographic mapping of reentry provides a sense of the magnitude of the challenges faced by specific communities.

Roundtable Discussion

Research and Data Issues

- The outcomes of these studies depend a lot on sampling. Depending on how the samples are constructed, the characteristics of the returning prisoner population can be skewed one way or another and can highlight different things. An upcoming study by Taxman shows that the employment challenge is experienced very differently by those under age 30 who have no legitimate work experience, as compared with those ages 30 and over who have more experience.

- Offenders should be asked "Where did you live?" and "Where did you commit your crime?" This will help to identify vulnerable targets and will help to explain the incongruence in the maps of where crimes occur and the communities of return.

- The behavior of the police has a huge impact on the data. Spikes in the data can arise from a law enforcement crackdown.

- Mapping can be more useful if broken down by offense type. Interpersonal problems tend to occur in communities where the people are; property crimes occur where the best targets are.

Who is Reentering Society?

- Reentry from jails needs more attention. When there are a high number of parole violators doing short sentences (e.g., 100 days), the amount of time served per admission to prison is comparable to the time served in jail. Most of the negative experiences and characteristics of those returning from prison are shared by those in jail. As far as how the experience of reentry is lived in communities, jail is at least as important as prison.

As far as the experience of reentry is lived in communities, jail is at least as important as prison.

- Using mapping to capture circumstances over longer periods of time would also be interesting. How do former prisoners look after three or five years out on the street? When they have been out for 10 years, their well-being is assumed, and the effect incarceration has had on them is ignored. Also, what is the cumulative impact on the numbers of prisoners returning over a longer period of time? Not just the number going into the community in one year, but over a five-year period?

- What is known about the cohort of former prisoners who reenter successfully?

Police need to take an active role in attracting more social resources.

- Unconditional release is an important issue to examine. Some offenders have served entire sentences on the installment plan (in and out of prison, finally using up all sentenced custody time). Identifying these offenders is important because their issues will be different from other former prisoners.

Challenges to Reentry and How to Overcome Them

- The complexity of former prisoners' lives mirrors the complexity of the lives of those in lower socioeconomic statuses. Sometimes the role of "former prisoner" status is overstated.

- In some communities (such as Chicago), those with a GED fare no better than those without diplomas in the job hunt. There should be more thought about the tracks that offenders are forced to take.

- Once a public safety presence is established in a community, police need to take an active role in attracting more social resources.

- Returning prisoners should be viewed in terms of both their liabilities and their assets. What is this population bringing back to the community in terms of assets? They are able to work with youth and can provide services to the elderly. Their involvement in the community should be framed as "carefully trained, well-supervised groups of formerly incarcerated people" to highlight their ability to work safely and effectively in the community.

Organizational Cultures

- The culture of parole agencies is very important to prisoner reentry. Parole agencies have not had the same emphasis on integrity and building public trust as law enforcement agencies. Many young people do not want to be on parole because it is perceived as being harder than doing time in prison.

- Prosecutors also have tight cultures with a very narrow view of what their responsibilities are. Some think that their job is to put people in prison, but others don't think this way. The challenge is how to change this prison-focused culture.

- Prisons do what they are intended to do. They incapacitate criminals and crime rates go down. Whether it is right or wrong, prisons are working if you assume their goal is incapacitation.

Returning prisoners should be viewed in terms of both their liabilities and their assets.

WHAT PUBLIC SAFETY RISK DO RETURNING PRISONERS POSE?

Jeremy Travis, The Urban Institute

Abstract: This presentation focused on a critical question that fuels the public's concern about the large number of returning prisoners, shapes the reentry policies of elected officials and criminal justice administrators, and remains largely unaddressed in the research literature: what are the public safety consequences of the four-fold increase in the number of individuals entering and leaving the nation's prisons each year? Drawing both from the findings of the study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics documenting the recidivism rate of a sample representing 272,111 prisoners released from the prisons of 15 states in 1994 and on additional analyses of these data, the limitations of the utility of recidivism rates as the metric for public safety is examined, and a new measure, the "rearrest ratio" is introduced.[1] The utility of this framework to both assess the public safety risks posed by returning prisoners and to provide guidance to the development of local safety strategies were discussed.

The arrest or return to prison of a former inmate is a limited metric for public safety.

Recidivism of Release Cohorts

- Two-thirds of people released from prison in 1994 were rearrested within three years, 47 percent were reconvicted, and 52 percent were returned to prison (some for new crimes, some for parole violations). For those returned to prison, their new offenses mirrored the distribution of their original offenses (property, drug, violent), but this is not to say that there is specialization—offenders switch between offense types.

- The likelihood of rearrest is highest during the period immediately following release. Thirty percent of arrests occurred within 6 months of release, 14 percent occurred 6–12 months after release, 15 percent occurred 12–24 months after release, and 8 percent of arrests occurred 24–36 months after release.

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[1] See Langan, P.A. and D.J. Levin. (2002) *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

Limitations of Recidivism as a Metric for Public Safety

- People are returned to prison for many reasons (new crimes, parole violations). The rate of return to prison itself does not help explain how serious the new offenses are, which is a topic for a meaningful discussion about public safety.

- The recidivism rate also does not show how often someone reoffends—one new crime equals failure, as does 20 new crimes. Further, the rate isn't specific enough to show how soon the rearrest occurs—an offender who is rearrested after 23 months is counted in the same way as an offender who is rearrested during the first month after release.

- Individual behavior is not the same thing as community safety.

- Instead of just looking at the flow of people leaving prison, it is more helpful to look at the context of arrest activity within a jurisdiction. In other words, what proportion of arrests do reentrants contribute to overall arrest rates? Looking at the arrests generated by the 1994 cohort, in 1994, their arrests accounted for 6.1 percent of all arrests; in 1995, they accounted for 4.9 percent; in 1996, they accounted for 4.1 percent; and in 1997, they accounted for 4.3 percent of all arrests.

New Metric—The Rearrest Ratio

- Using three years' worth of reentry cohorts, the proportion of arrests attributed to reentrants naturally increases. The reentry phenomenon becomes more salient in the issue of public safety. For example, in 1994, the three-year cohort contributed 13 percent of all arrests; in 1995, they contributed 13.6 percent; in 1996, they contributed 14.2 percent; and in 1997, they accounted for 15.8 percent of all arrests. By 2001, the three-year cohorts of released prisoners are projected to contribute 20.7 percent of all arrests. Disaggregating their contributions by crime type, in 2001, the multiple cohorts of former prisoners are projected to contribute about 28 percent of arrests for violent crime, 20 percent of arrests for property crime, and 18 percent of arrests for drug crime.

- The increasing proportion is not a function of changes in the level of risk (former prisoners' recidivism rates have been stable), but rather is a function of changes in society (more people are being released, and the number of arrests overall has been decreasing).

The celerity and severity of these offenses in the context of all crime. should be considered.

Approximately 20 percent of arrests made in 2001 were attributed to returning prisoners.

- These data suggest that the rearrest ratio can provide useful information on the impact of reentry on public safety. Crime prevention efforts should focus on the early months of release by aligning the intensity of resources with the time at which offenders are most likely to reoffend. In addition, community safety plans can help to identify the places, people, and situations that might elevate an offender's risk to public safety.

Roundtable Discussion

The Utility of the Rearrest Ratio

- The rearrest ratio has limitations, as it is affected by many factors that have nothing to do with reentry—particularly police practices.

- The rearrest ratio sheds an interesting light on the idea that "small numbers of offenders commit a large proportion of the crime." Former prisoners don't contribute much to overall arrest statistics.

- The rearrest ratio can also vary due to a detection effect. The people coming back are high profile and easily targeted by police.

- Using the frequency of rearrest would be a good way to focus resources and to make risk assessments more precise.

- Looking at an arrest ratio may not be a big enough change in paradigm. Public safety should be approached from the other direction: the absence of crime.

Public safety should be approached from the other direction: the absence of crime.

Victimization and Public Safety

- It might be helpful to overlay victimization reports instead of arrest reports, since there are some crimes (e.g., domestic violence) in which arrests are not made as often. The rearrest ratio does not capture the ways in which public safety is jeopardized through patterns that are not identified by arrest statistics.

- In public housing, a lot of effort was made to keep the bad guys out. But, in reality, the bad guys were already in. Women in public housing were much more likely to be victims of aggravated assault. Even in environments that are fairly controlled, people are still getting hurt.

- How many victims are left in the community? If you don't have victims, you have public safety. Politicians are also interested in victimization.

Targeting of Former Prisoners by Police

- Police know who ex-prisoners are. So do prosecutors. As such they are treated differently in that they do not get the same benefits of diversion that are offered to other types of criminals (e.g. white collar crime), and this skews the data.

- Given that arrest data are sensitive to police practices, the downside of sharing information about conditions of supervision with police is that can cause new spikes in the data as the police enforce technical violations.

- Primarily, police go where they are called. So, police practices are greatly influenced by community practices.

- Communities do call police and want them to respond. But, law enforcement can also be more proactive. There are opportunities to bring in new resources to preempt additional arrests.

Role of Technical Violations

- How many resources are being consumed by people who are not involved in new crimes but rather are violating the technical conditions of parole? What return is there on this investment?

- Alternative sentencing for technical violations and certain categories of crime should be explored. With the push to have post-prison supervision for everyone, responses to technical violations are critical.

- The prevailing attitude among police, prosecutors, and judges is that there are no successes and that prison is the only thing that works—this is because they don't see anything else. They tend to send people back to prison because they think it works.

- It may not be that more resources are needed. Maybe resources need to be moved to a different time period to match up with when the former prisoners are most in need.

There are opportunities to bring in new resources to preempt additional arrests.

Resources should be matched to the needs of prisoners.

REENTRY AND SAFETY FROM A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

George Kelling, Rutgers University - Newark

Lori Scott-Pickens, Police Institute, Rutgers University - Newark

William Curry, Juvenile Justice Commission, New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety

John Farrell, Violence Institute of New Jersey

Abstract: This panel presentation provided an overview of the Juvenile Justice Reentry Initiative—a partnership created through the Greater Newark Safer Cities Initiative (GNSCI). This interagency collaboration between the Police Institute at Rutgers University, the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, and the Essex County Youth Services Commission has placed GNSCI at the center of the efforts to respond to the reentry of young, high-risk offenders in Newark. Representatives from key stakeholders shared how their role in the initiative has contributed to the measurable reduction in recidivism of program participants.

The Roles of Stakeholders

- Rutgers University has played the role of a "neutral convener" for GNSCI and has taught methods of problem analysis, used students to do applied research, offered a neutral meeting space, and has served as a moderator for all meetings to figure out who is dominating the meetings and how to control them so that all voices are heard.

- The team identifies the people who appear most likely to kill or to be killed and summons them to a notification session (which used to meet at the courthouse and now meets at a church). Offenders and their families are invited.

Accountability of both program participants and program staff is a key component of the initiative.

- All team members (judges, prosecutors, service providers, parole/probation officers, the police department) make presentations to deliver two key messages: "What you are doing is not tolerable," and "We will get you help because we understand what is going on in your life." Food is served and there are opportunities to have informal discussions that try to break down barriers.

Accountability

- During each monthly session, youth are held accountable for their behavior, and staff is held accountable for providing the services they promised to provide. Sanctions are imposed or withdrawn according to the youth's behavior. These sessions are not one-on-one; rather, they involve peer-to-peer interactions and provide opportunities for youth to see what their peers are doings, how sanctions are imposed and lifted, etc. The sessions also provide an ability to network for job opportunities.

Informal discussions provide the opportunity for barriers to be broken down.

- Case conferences are held for the various members of the team. The probation officer is the manager of the caseload. Different segments of the criminal justice system have very different languages, so precise meanings and intentions must be discussed. Conferences are designed to make sure that the "carrot" part of the carrot-stick approach gets implemented. These conferences provide a multidisciplinary capacity to identify red flags (i.e., people from one discipline don't know the red flags of other disciplines).

Focusing on problems helps reentry seem less overwhelming.

- It is critical to keep the number of cases to a manageable number; therefore, the program started with a small number of clients, not hundreds. The program has been running for five years, although there has been turnover in every seat at the table. Overall, the program has seen about 200 offenders.

Roundtable Discussion

- One big problem with interagency groups is the embarrassment of how bad records are—they don't realize that other agency records are just as bad.

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- Focusing on problems helps reentry seem less overwhelming, because the issues to deal with are pretty discrete (e.g., gun violence, drug markets, drug use, and domestic violence). It is best to pick one issue and focus on it, rather than attempt to take on everything.

- Police officers are not taught to think about problems in the context of relationships. They are taught that everything is about individual behavior, legal problems, etc. Although it is known that focusing on the individual is not right, the practice continues. Relationships are often the root of the problem and should not be ignored (e.g., offenders get frustrated and act out). What practices and policies employed by law enforcement agencies actually *cause* harm?

- Behavior can be affected by changing the context in which individuals make decisions. Because context is not fixed, it is unnecessary to try to control their reaction to it or their behavior within it (e.g., drug markets). If the environment can be manipulated, looking hard at behaviors or reactions is unnecessary (e.g., addressing the demand for drugs changes everything).

BRICK WALLS FACING RETURNING OFFENDERS

Faye Taxman, Bureau of Governmental Research,

University of Maryland

Abstract: Offenders returning from prison and jail often experience psychological and social anxiety about their standing in the community. The returning offender arrives in the community with grand expectations about their prospects and their revived role as a citizen in the community. A citizenship identity is one where the offender is an active member of civil society—an identity that includes assuming a constructive role as a breadwinner, parent, sibling, and so on. Offenders are often positioned to discard their prior roles (e.g., as the outcast, the deviant, etc.). While the offender may desire to be a citizen, the society has institutionalized strategies and practices that continue to reaffirm the outcast persona. The offender is then placed in the position of trying to manage a citizen role while being "less than" and often lacks the competency in core social and psychological skills to navigate through the maze of issues involved in reaffirming the citizenship role. The pathway to an outcast is far easier for many offenders than trying to overcome the obstacles of being a citizen.

- Many offenders have the sense that police are out to get them, that police don't trust them, and don't believe anything they say. They think that police assume the worst in all situations. This reinforces their "outcast" persona and illustrates why it is so hard to shed it. They experience collateral consequences in many domains—voting, job restrictions, and restrictions on liberty via probation or parole. Even services meant to help ex-offenders (e.g. drug programs) are in the mode of catching the offender doing something wrong. These all reinforce the "outcast" mentality. What reinforces the "citizen" mentality?

- Police, parole officers, judges, prosecutors, and communities can affect offenders' role identity. There are psychosocial issues involved in their transitions. Relationships are important, as are engaging people in ownership of their issues.

- The people who get caught up in the criminal justice system should be viewed as assets that can increase the social capital of troubled communities. Role modeling, instilling a work ethic, and helping them to recognize the fruits of their labor are all important to this process.

- Responses to technical violations are very important. Offenders believe strongly that sanctions must be fair. The rules about violations should be clear—what they are and which violations will result in arrest. If offenders believe the rules are fair, they usually buy in, even if they don't like what happens as a result.

The pathway to an outcast is far easier for many offenders than trying to overcome the obstacles of being a citizen.

Roundtable Discussion

Rethinking Goals

- Prisons are judged based on the number of escapes, riots, etc. They are never judged based on recidivism rates. This may be the first step in making prisons accountable.

- What are the outcomes law enforcement agencies are trying to achieve? Recidivism is an intermediate issue—the goal is bigger than that. Police need to start thinking about building communities.

- Even in reactive police departments, police dislike making arrests, doing the paperwork, and going to court. This reaction would be stronger if arrests are equated with a failure to prevent crime.

Police Culture, Behavior, and Reputation

- Some police believe that "people write their own tickets." The style with which some people respond to police creates a reaction by police to maintain control of the situation. But the portrayal of police as immediately stereotyping or immediately looking down on people doesn't match experience. They try to main control, but not usually in a hostile fashion.

- The stereotypes and profiling are the lived experiences of African Americans. These experiences undermine trust in law enforcement.

The police need to send the message, "You can count on me; I am here to help you."

- Communities experience the type of policing that they demand and that they allow (note, this isn't about deserving). At the end of the day, it is the public's reality that matters. Everyone knows how to be nice—this isn't an innovation. Essentially, the question is: are police being helpful or not? Are they giving the message that the people in the community count or that they don't count? The police need to be sending the message, "You count and I'm here to help you."

- The key issue is how does an encounter with a person in the community end? Police could take many steps that would repair the harms of their confrontations.

Informal Social Control

- Informal methods of social control are powerful. The desire for the love and respect of others drives behavior. For police, one of their jobs should be to mobilize informal methods of social control around an offender. Jobs are obviously a powerful form of social control, and are also a key way in which an individual develops an identity. It is important to encourage people to tell the law-abiding story about themselves, and to help them figure out how to make this a plausible story. The goal is to go from external social control (prison), to informal social control (community), to internal control (identity).

- Getting control does not come through force. Police can't watch every place or protect every person. They need to mobilize forces and assets via information to establish social control for the times when the police aren't there. This is really owning public safety, beyond arrests and recidivism—this is the essence of the absence of crime.

- Assuming the police know offenders, when the police see offenders in near-criminal situations, they have a responsibility to bring other segments of the community to help. My father got a call from the police once that said, "Tell your son to slow down when driving." Police can exercise their discretion differently to do more of this.

- Police need to help the public tell stories that reinforce the power of the community. Don't let the community get wrapped up in negativity and disorder.

The police can mobilize forces and assets via information to establish social control for the times when police are not there.

New Roles

- People more readily act their way into a new way of thinking than think their way into a new way of acting. If opportunities to act in new ways are offered, the thinking will follow. This goes for both police and former prisoners.

- Police should have the opportunity to act differently. Don't just give them handcuffs and nightsticks. Give them new roles and responsibilities.

- Paradigm shifts require changing incentives and local culture. Police get accolades for arrests—they should get them for a reduction in crime. Employers need incentives to balance risks in order to have a paradigm shift. Macro-level policy change will be difficult when legal and police training is so individually based.

- Police resources should be used for things that only police can do. Anyone can paint over graffiti. First, with orders of protection, police need to share information. People coming out of prison should be kept out of harm's way. Orders of protection need to be shared so that jobs, housing, etc., don't interfere. Second, witness and victim intimidation is a significant reason why things don't go forward in the system. Police have unique information about this.

- Police departments can be used as community mediation settings. Communities need to be able to deal with low-level offenses outside of the criminal justice system. This will empower communities; it teaches good problem-solving skills and helps build prosocial identities. Some of this is an education process. Sensitivity retreats for police could be helpful. They need to learn that there is a human in the skin of the ex-offender.

- Police can also be used as mentors. At job fairs, they can help ex-offenders fill out job applications. They can help them think about their lives and share accomplishments that they can be proud of.

Paradigm shifts require changing incentives and local culture.

THE ROLES OF THE POLICE IN THE OFFENDER REENTRY PROCESS

Edmund F. McGarrell, School of Criminal Justice
Michigan State University

Carol Rapp Zimmerman

Natalie K. Hipple

Nicholas Corsaro

Heather Perez

Abstract: Prisoner reentry has emerged as an issue of concern for the police. From a problem-solving perspective, persistently high rates of offending by recently released inmates is one of the chronic crime problems calling for proactive, strategic problem solving. This paper includes a discussion of some of the ways that the police have become involved in reentry efforts in some communities through the Department of Justice (DOJ)'s offender reentry program and as part of DOJ's Project Safe Neighborhoods, an initiative intended to reduce gun crime. In additional, this paper considers the potential roles that the police might play in reentry programs. First, the paper discusses the premise that most reentry programs are based on a relative emphasis on either social support or surveillance/deterrence/incapacitation, or some combination of support and surveillance. Correspondingly, police involvement in reentry may emphasize social support through community building and/or deterrence through heightened surveillance. Interesting theoretical and policy issues arise as to the efficacy of social support and surveillance/deterrence and whether programs combining support and deterrence are more or less effective in fostering reentry. Further, questions arise as to the consistency between individual-level effects (successful reintegration versus recidivism) and community-level effects (community safety).

Police substations can become centers for service and can serve a community-building function.

- Police need to emphasize two things: social support and deterrence/surveillance. Police have some obvious roles: preventing retaliation; intervening with corrections authorities and with high risk offenders and places; and educating offenders in prisons or when they first come back to communities. If police play a part in the reintegration process they can help legitimize the reentry effort and protect their actions against claims of being "soft on crime." Police substations can become centers for service and can serve a community-building function.

- If police are to be involved more heavily in providing social support, how this process works and what the appropriate dosages are must be determined.

Roundtable Discussion

Information Sharing

- Police can help parole by providing information about what offenders are doing—"I saw him out drinking or I saw him hanging out on this street corner." Parole has to make a decision about acting on the information via violations or taking a risk and doing things differently.

- In NYC, the NYPD started getting information on who was on parole so they would be aware of their legal status when writing tickets. This information overwhelmed the police department. What are the appropriate uses of the information once it's obtained? Increased knowledge about offenders is likely to lead to more returns to prison.

- Information sharing is very complicated. When police get information from parole, they need to figure out how they can use it. When parole receives information from police, they have to have a way to match it up to a particular offender.

- Both police and parole have information that can be shared— activity on the street, offenders' associates, how they spend their time (e.g., individuals with outstanding warrants or absconders). The police and parole can conduct home searches together.

- Exchanging lists is too trivial to link the two functions of police and parole. The partnership should go beyond exchanging paper.

- Corrections does have information to share, but this information should be used in the service of reentry success, not to harass those who have been in prison.

Appropriate dosage and scope of police involvement in reentry support must be determined.

The partnership linking the police to parole should go beyond the trivial exchange of lists.

Agency Goals and Interagency Efforts

- The lack of cooperation between police and parole is a significant problem. Ultimately, this should be one of the most powerful partnerships.

- Offenders bank on the fact that parole/probation do not talk to police. Even though police provide around-the-clock supervision, they are not always very informed about whom they are supervising. There is a recognition that parole officers do not really supervise—their caseloads and workloads are too high. The best they can do is manage a supervision strategy—they can't actually implement a supervision strategy.

- Parole agencies and the police have conflicting goals. Police want to the ability to identify parolees and to use parolees as informants. All of this can interfere with a parole agency's intent to help provide services.

- The Parole department is charged with responsibility for certain high-risk people. Police have a role that is much broader. Police, however, boil information down to one thing—is it against the law?

- Parole agents have significant legal authority, but what are their goals? What if recidivism rates were 10 percent lower, but the community was riddled with crime? Is it okay to say, as a parole officer, "My job is to look after those on parole. If crime comes from elsewhere, it is not my problem." No one will be satisfied with this. Parole has to be a partner with police in creating public safety.

- How do partnerships affect the police? There is a negative effect on morale that comes with the lack of success. Police are tired of being seen in a negative light—partnering is a chance to enhance their relationship to the community. Getting involved with reentry can help highlight the great promise of community policing: preventing crime and protecting public safety.

Risk—Where is it? Whose is it?

- Parole is all about risk—how it is mediated and how it is shared. Traditionally, parole boards owned the risk. But, can others share it?

- Not all people need supervision. If this fact is accepted, the focus can be shifted to the high-risk offenders.

Getting involved in reentry can help realize the great promise of community policing: preventing crime and protecting public safety.

- The criminal justice system tends to focus on the individual and on the probability of harm. Risk is seen as a property of the person, but it is not. It is an interaction with circumstances that allow personal risk to manifest. Criminal justice's focus is on fixing people's character, but it needs to focus on the circumstances in which the people are found.

Treatment and Surveillance

- When thinking about the "choice" between treatment and surveillance, there may not be a choice. It is like parenting—do you have rules or do you love your kids? One should not be picked to the exclusion of the other. A plan is needed that does not require much enforcement. Ultimately, this is what parents do.

- Resources should be used on the offenders for whom it is going to make the most difference. It's not likely that everyone will be provided a job. But identifying two offenders who are gang leaders and getting them jobs can have a big impact on how the community operates.

- If a public safety presence is brought to a neighborhood, it may encourage other resources to locate there. What are the components that make for an effective supervision process? The components are cobbled together without knowing whether the boundaries make any sense.

- Compared to most community-based organizations, police and parole departments are very well funded. How can resources be reallocated to get funds to those with expertise in service provision? Parole can do things that increase public safety, such as helping offenders get free of their addictions or helping offenders get jobs.

- Police who work in certain districts are intimately involved with supervision; line officers are assigned to communities. Police provide 24-hour continuity that other agencies don't have. However, police don't provide services, they broker services. Police surveillance is a natural supplement to parole supervision.

If a public safety presence is brought to a neighborhood, it may encourage other resources to locate there.

PLACING REENTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF SENTENCING POLICY

Michael Smith, University of Wisconsin School of Law

Abstract: "Sentencing policy" is and has been concerned with preventing crime by mass imprisonment, or by ensuring proportional punishments and equal penal burdens for "like" offenders. There is very little about offender reintegration or about public safety in this policy frame. There's rhetoric about public safety, but the proposition that current sentencing policy advances public safety is under examined At root, sentencing courts aim for compliance—compliance with the sentence itself and compliance with the law—during the sentence and beyond. That makes "compliance" a matter of policy concern. On what do we rely for compliance?

Compliance may be sought by threatening dire consequences (revocation and imprisonment) for failures to comply—and indeed some compliance is prudential after all. Compliance may be sought by offering incentives (the flip side of individual deterrence). It might be sought by incapacitating offenders—directly constraining their movements and autonomy, or by obstructing their access to places and people put at risk by offenders' proximity and propensities for predation. Society may seek compliance through securing offenders' attachment to the norms themselves—by moral reasoning or by the social bonds through which expectations of behavior flow. Or policy might emphasize legitimacy. That is, the norms, and the requirements of sentence, flow from an authority whose requirements are legitimate in the eyes of the offenders subjected to them. And so forth. The point is that prudential strategies and incapacitative strategies are likely to be insufficient unless lined up with one or another normative strategy. And prudential strategies are likely to undermine legitimacy, distract offenders from the normative grounds for compliant behavior, or, as in my case, make them determined to resist the demand for compliance.

If compliance means compliance in the community, then a sentence that does a good job of reasoning from this objective to a set of penal measures whose execution would plausibly advance public safety, and if those measures do not impose penal burdens beyond what the offender deserves, and if they do not burden him or her so little that the sentence reduces the seriousness of the offense, why imprison the

Strategies that incapacitate the offender are likely to be insufficient unless lined up with other normative strategies.

offender at all? That is, if reintegration is the ultimate objective of the sentence and a sentencing court can specify the conditions into which the offender should be released in order to achieve it (and public safety), then why imprison the offender? Why not proceed immediately to the non-prison penal measures on which, in the end, we're going to rely? Imprison only if the imprisonment adds to the reintegrative efficacy of the sentence or because the legitimacy of the law requires imprisonment as a normative matter.

- Sentencing policy is framed by two objectives: crime control and proportionality. Crime control is about incapacitation and compliance. Proportionality has its roots in equality. Vast discretion can create injustice, but the solution can't be reduced to a tax table. Offenders are seen as two dimensional—their current offense and their prior history. However, the morally relevant facts are much more varied than these two dimensions.

- Sentencing policy could be thought about differently. Its objective could be reentry, to return offenders to circumstances that are better than they were. Some punishment considerations would need to be included to affirm social norms. The sentencing court process would need to conceive of conditions that would support reentry. To do this, it would be necessary to explain why probation wasn't the first option in all cases, because there would be a force to recognize that incarceration seriously disrupts reentry. People's risks and assets should be considered before they are sentenced. Right now, this is done backwards.

- Sentencing decisions have many influences: gut instincts (which can be the source of disparity); the "tax table" strategy (many judges resist this because there is no discretion); moral judgments (the important thing is to get the tone of condemnation right when communicating with the offender to create shame and remorse); and political decisions (judges are very aware of the political impact of their decisions and the potential to lose their seats). Sentencing policy can be chaotic in some places and rigid and grid-like in others. Neither condition is well suited to the ultimate goal of sentencing policy.

- Sentences should tell a compelling reentry story. And it is necessary to have the ability to change the story when the circumstances and facts change. There is no way to predict what will happen down the road, so having a sentence determined early in the case means law enforcement is currently unresponsive to the changing facts, circumstances, and risks to public safety posed upon return.

People's risks and assets should be considered before they are sentenced.

Sentences should tell a compelling reentry story.

- To make sentences responsive, judges would have to get lots of information about risks and assets from prosecutors and defense attorneys. Currently, prosecutors and defense attorneys give extreme speeches, but no facts that are relevant to dealing with reentry or risk to public safety. Important facts would include what the offender did, his or her state of mind, and the circumstances in which the offender is found. They need to provide guidance on how to shape the sentence in a way that is just and produces a socialized human being.

- Sentences should be able to be modified. The case should go back to the trial court to see if new facts change the judge's opinion. These could include changes in the public's view of just desserts, or changes to the offender's propensity to commit crimes or the circumstances that could support reentry.

Roundtable Discussion

The state has an interest in the well being of victims, offenders, and the community.

- If courts were asked to make decisions based on carefully found facts, they would have to be armed with the resources to assess risks and needs properly. This should not be simplified. This cannot be done without drastically altering the flow of information to the sentencing court.

- Punishment is not the most effective tool. It is the least effective. It is about vengeance and not about teaching. Therefore, it does not serve the reentry goal. The conditions imposed should be minimalist. They need to address only the conditions that affect safety. And violations have to be reasonable—not accepting help is not a reason to send someone to prison.

Punishment is not the most effective tool.

- Victims should be involved throughout the process. Victims know things that are relevant to current behavior and to risks posed in the future. However, victims are not good at impartial fact-finding, and making sure they don't make judgments about what should happen to offenders should be a priority.

- The state has an interest in the well being of victims, offenders, and the community. They shouldn't just be focused on how bad the offender is. The court's power should be used to address the well-being of all three.

PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY: A PROBLEM-ORIENTED APPROACH TO REENTRY

Walter Dickey and Cecelia M. Klingele

University of Wisconsin School of Law

Abstract: Talk of opportunity and risk in the context of reentry usually stimulates a focus on offenders—their histories, characteristics, needs, and methods for reintegration—all information directed at their treatment and control. Risk is the focus and is usually defined as a trait contained within the offender. Indeed, it may be a mistake to make the offender so much the focus of release planning, particularly if risk is narrowly understood as a mere quality of the offender, instead of a complex interaction between an offender's propensities and the environment in which those propensities may or may not give rise to criminal conduct. A robust definition of public safety would acknowledge the key role that an offender's circumstances play in the formation and control of the risks he represents. Rather than being an aggregate sum of measurable crime statistics, public safety is the absence of factors giving rise to apprehension and the risk of harm. This definition suggests that focusing only on an offender—and not also on the people, property, and locations about which we are concerned—is insufficient.

Simply catching and exacting punishment from those who have done wrong is not justice—justice is having crime not happen at all.

- Human instinct is to define problems in terms of the solutions at hand. It is very uncomfortable when the solutions are unknown. Former prisoners are known and are accessible. It is easy to think that they are the problem. Especially if it is felt that they can be "fixed." But there are questions about their "fixability."

- Simply catching and exacting punishment from those who have done wrong is not justice. Society wants justice, and justice is not having crime happen at all.

- Informal social control is very powerful. Everyone wants the approval and respect of their loved ones. This creates guardianship, for the purpose of habituating offenders into compliance.

- Crimes occur in places and have victims. Places that are vulnerable and people that are vulnerable need to be guarded.

- Police have always been tuned into locations. They know what makes certain locations vulnerable and how to protect vulnerabilities. The idea of repeat victimization, normally applied to people, can be used to think about places. Both formal and informal social control should be used to create public safety. Communities can be policed by arresting everyone, or businesses, citizens, police, and partnerships can be used to change the way the environment might support criminal activity. Focusing on the environment can produce better reentry outcomes.

- Parole, police, prosecutors, and judges need to share a clear sense of purpose. New information is needed. Currently, all of the information is about offenders and how to control them. It is necessary to go beyond this—to think about where offenses are committed, and to identify the places offenders are drawn to and what makes these places attractive.

- Case assignments should be based on location. If assignments are random, they are geographically scattered and prevent a focus on location. Location-based assignments create attachments to places in parole officers.

- To do this, police need moral authority. If citizens think that police are there only to take their sons and daughters away, it is never going to work. But if there are also opportunities, ideas, and guidance, in addition to traditional forms of protection, the community will buy into it.

Both formal and informal social control should be used to create public safety.

Roundtable Discussion

Focus on Place

- In practice, focusing on place will not be sufficient as it would short-circuit creative thought and would not give rise to a lasting solution.

- Focus on the reasons that things happen in certain places. Most of these are intangible and abstract. There are norms and habits that govern compliance and noncompliance. Offenders' attachments to a criminal lifestyle are the opposite of informal social control. It's all about the dynamics that lead to offending in those places.

- Including place expands the definition of who is the victim. The place becomes the victim and it makes it harder for the offender to feel remorse. Also, the focus on place could be interpreted to mean cleaning up a neighborhood by removing bad people (i.e., former prisoners) before fixing up the neighborhood.

- Place matters because that's where the resources are for protecting people and that's where the relationships are. Ultimately, it is relationships that will make co-location work. Co-location facilitates relationships, but relationships take time. Co-location is usually based on crime, but it should be considered based on services.

New Roles in Places

- Problem solving is about place—block-by-block, street-by-street. One way to use this information is to examine those reentering certain zip codes and link the police precincts with prisoners about to be released. A police and a community resource person would go into the prison 30 days prior to an offender's release

- Police officers need to be taught how to share information about crime with neighbors so that neighbors can act as guardians and call in violations. This will create a two-way valuing of experience and potential contributions.

- Police can partner with individual parole agents to help them link back up with the community; sometimes the bureaucracy of parole agencies gets in the way.

Changing Corrections' Responsibility

- Wardens have not been challenged on the notion of public safety. Most administrators just want to make sure that nothing happens on their watch. Really, this is all about leadership, accepting the issue, and taking responsibility for the problem. Wardens need to be told, "You own reentry."

- Wardens cannot be held responsible for arrests or recidivism rates. They don't have any control over what happens once the prisoner is released in terms of employment, housing, or treatment.

Place matters because that is where the resources are for protecting people—that is where the relationships are.

Prison administrators have not been challenged on the notion of public safety.

- Wardens are responsible for making sure a climate exists for producing positive outcomes later. Prisons should be more hopeful places—both staff and offenders need to think there is a future for offenders.

Victims

- Only half of all crimes are reported to police. Victims either think that the crime is not important or believe that police won't respond or won't respond appropriately.

- Every state has laws about notifying victims of release or parole hearings and conferring with victims prior to a plea bargain. These laws reinforce the notion that victims have little trust and confidence in the system. The system doesn't believe interactions with the victims are useful—they think it will be an emotional exchange and they don't realize the potential for information to be shared.

- Many offenders are victims and this should remain central. However, victims' compensation funds can't be used for victim services in prisons. Victims are victims, and they deserve help wherever they are. This hasn't been dealt with in the past, and assistance isn't provided even though there is proof of the link between victimization and criminality.

- Victims and offenders are forever connected. The victim has to be supported through reentry too. Victims should be included on advisory boards, and mission statements need to include supporting victims.

Victims and offenders are forever connected; the victim should also be supported throughout reentry.

TURNING "WEEDS" INTO "SEEDS"

Alan Mobley, University of California, Irvine

Abstract: The literature on community policing makes one thing plain: there is no clear definition of what community policing actually is. Even if community policing is murky in theory, it can still have profound consequences in action. For example, police agencies guided by community policing principles usually enlist the cooperation of community members in promoting public safety. An expanded law enforcement "(public) safety net" could have serious ramifications for former prisoners. To the extent that former prisoners are seen as likely recidivists and therefore threats to public safety, community policing may recruit their friends, neighbors, employers, and even family members into a loosely coordinated surveillance team. In such context, former prisoners could not be blamed for viewing all government functionaries as "police," and all citizens as potential witting or unwitting informants. This paper offers some contextual data regarding former prisoners and how they view the world, their place in it, and the multiplying presence of police in the communities in which former prisoners disproportionately reside.

- By and large, former prisoners live in the persistent embrace of police agencies. Corrections systems and the psychological conditioning known as "prisonization" see to that. These influences mean that ex-offenders stand as little chance of escaping from the corrections sphere as they do of escaping from themselves.

- Similarly, corrections workers also appear "caught" by the inconsistencies and illogic pervading the criminal justice system. Much good is accomplished by people working within corrections, but their good works are often performed in spite of the system that constrains them. If the system doesn't work for the people who are employed by it, how can we expect it to "work" for the people being oppressed by it?

Convicts are system bound, they are aware of their violations, and this has an effect on the way they relate to themselves, their friends, and their families.

- Convicts learn to exist within a world where nearly everything is turned upside-down. By a prisoner's logic, for example, good things do not happen to good people. Good things (such as a favorable parole date) happen for snitches, but not for prisoners who are simply doing their time, working to improve themselves, or simply staying out of trouble. This sort of confusion is only heightened by the transition to so-called "freedom." To be released from prison is very disorienting because of everything is different and few others can understand why.

- Persons recently releasesd from prison are still "penal subjects" accustomed to complying with rules. Upon release, they find themselves confronted with a whole new set of rules as parolees. As parolees attempt to live their lives they become aware of their parole violations, technical or otherwise. This knowing may have a tremendous effect on the way former prisoners relate to themselves, their friends, and their families.

- Almost everyone who gets out of prison intends to do well. But in the way they relate to the outside, prisoners have become acculturated to living in a dream world. In their minds, freedom is envisaged as the solution to most all of their problems. Similarly, prisoners often come to portray the outside world not just as vastly superior to prison, but also as much "better" than it actually is. Upon release, they soon experience the "truth" and realize that "freedom" is not what they thought it would be. The disappointment can be bitter and hard to take.

- To understand the former prisoner's take on parole violations, you have to consider their perception that violations are usually for petty, trivial things. It makes prisoners angry and frustrated to think about going back on a petty violation when others, particularly those involved in high-profile white-collar crimes, remain free.

- Having people come into prisons from the community is a powerful intervention for prisoners, because most are trained to believe that people don't care about them.

- Information sharing between law enforcement and parole is very important. Police need to know how someone behaved in prison, since it can be a good predictor for how they will behave on the street. Such information could help dispel the common belief that former prisoners need to "prove" themselves as law-abiding when again on the street. But former prisoners with clean conduct records feel like they've already proven themselves in prison. When asked to do the same again, they see the request as unreasonable, and trust breaks down.

Having people come into prison from the community is a powerful intervention for prisoners because they are trained to believe that people don't care about them.

- Mutual trust is crucial to successful reentry. All of society (and especially police agencies, such as parole units) needs to be willing to meet well-regarded former prisoners at least half-way on the road to reintegration.

Roundtable Discussion

- The community wants only a few things: for police to be safe, for police to be helpful to community members, and for police to respect the rights of citizens. Trust must be earned; it cannot be demanded.

- Police and corrections can't take the approach that all former prisoners are a bunch of dopes who just want to hurt people. Not only is this not true, it is extremely unproductive. Most former prisoners want to do well. This must be the basis of interactions with them to develop trust and the kind of openness needed to develop workable solutions.

- Both sides (offender and police) need to give the other the benefit of the doubt. They share many things—being subject to intense negative stereotypes being a big one. It is important to figure out ways to change the attitudes that each side has about the other.

- Everyone shares an interest in public safety. The choices made have costs. Focusing on failure and never asking about the ingredients of success, or making choices that focus on displacing crime, diminishes the concepts of individual responsibility and public safety. Society tends to invest in the failures (e.g., prisons) and not in the successes of society (e.g., early childhood development). It is important to invest in early prevention, like child abuse prevention, but keep in mind everything will not be fixed tomorrow.

- Success cannot just be about not doing something (e.g., not reoffending). There should be more focus on the things the offenders are doing that make them feel good about themselves. The more that is done to reduce the life chances of a person who has been in prison, the more you reduce public safety.

The more that is done to reduce the life chances of a person who has been in prison, the more you reduce public safety.

THE REVOLVING DOOR: EXPLORING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD PRISONER REENTRY

Jean Johnson, Public Agenda

Abstract: Current attitudes about crime and law enforcement are a backdrop to a more detailed discussion of attitudes about incarceration and prisoner reentry. This presentation drew on current polling from respected research organizations including Gallup, Harris, ABC News, and others. It also included observations from a Public Agenda/Urban Institute Reentry Roundtable pilot study that looked specifically at attitudes about prisoner reentry. Designed to stimulate discussion and provide hypotheses for further research, the pilot study used focus groups to probe public awareness of prisoner reentry issues. The research examined existing public perceptions of what happens to prisoners after release, and explored potential public support for reentry programs, along with possible concerns and barriers. While hardly any respondents in the pilot study had thought extensively about prisoner reentry issues, more were aware that prisoners often face daunting obstacles returning to the community and establishing a non-criminal lifestyle. In addition, most seemed to think that reentry is an important issue that deserves decision makers' attention. At the same time, nearly all the respondents voiced some level of concern about what kinds of prisoners might be included, how well reentry programs would be run, how effective they would be helping prisoners stay out of trouble, and precisely what kinds of services returning prisoners would be eligible for.

Perspectives on Crime and Punishment

- Crime and criminal justice issues are not as polarized as the media would lead you to think. About one-half of the respondents think that crime is a top priority; the only two issues that consistently rate higher are terrorism and the economy. Crime is a larger concern than campaign finance reform and gay marriage. Crime will always be a top priority because people use crime as a measure of how well society is doing.

Crime will always be a top priority because people use crime as a measure of how well society is doing.

- Background statistics: 8 in 10 support mandatory minimums for the third violent offense; 7 in 10 support the death penalty, although 62 percent pick life over death for juvenile crimes; 7 in 10 agree that the criminal justice system should rehabilitate offenders; and 69 percent think that more money should go into education and jobs than police and prisons. In short, the public believes in punishment, but also believes in rehabilitation and believes in social and economic explanations for crime.

Perspectives on Reentry and Public Safety

- Data on reentry are from three focus groups that were conducted in Philadelphia. These groups were representative of individuals from both suburban and urban areas as well as various income brackets. Although no one offered prison reentry as something they were immediately concerned about, once it was explained, people appeared to understand the issue and to think it was important.

- People in the focus groups were not all that impressed with prisons because they believe there is little in the way of education and rehabilitation. If anything, they believe prisons make prisoners feel alienated and negative and may teach them how to become better criminals.

- People in the focus group had an immediate sense that it must be very difficult to come out of prison and make a new life for oneself, and that it is not just a matter of will. They had the sense that sending someone back to the same conditions will create continued involvement in crime, and they estimated that most would fail at the task of reentry.

- Respondents assumed that postrelease conditions are more formalized and that services are better arranged than they actually are. People were horrified at the idea of releasing someone from prison or jail, dropping them off in the city in the middle of the night with no money and no immediate means for assistance. People have the sense that there should be more programs to help with this task. There was some willingness to divert funds from prison services to fund release services.

- People in the focus group thought that employment is key—former prisoners need money, and work is good for them as it provides a sense of redemption, purpose, schedule, and identity. There is deep support for this idea.

People are not all that impressed with prisons because they believe there is little in the way of education and rehabilitation.

- There were some reservations. The suburban focus group was less interested, less concerned, more afraid, and had less sympathy for former prisoners. While there was a clear distinction in people's minds between violent and other types of crimes (which are not as frightening to people), there was a widespread belief that drug crimes are not victimless, and a sense that drug crimes destroy neighborhoods.

- While respondents supported funding reentry programs, they were not willing to take funds from schools or health care to do it. They only supported the idea of moving funds between criminal justice components.

- There is resistance to the idea that people coming out of prison might get something that the general public does not have (e.g., college education). It is important to be sensitive to this, but it is not a reason to back away from the initial goal.

- People were internally divided on some key issues: belief that humans can change after a making a mistake versus the fear that someone might not change, awareness that coming out of prison is very difficult versus a low tolerance for mistakes once in the community, and desire for someone to make clear-cut decisions to complex problems versus a low level of respect for the criminal justice professionals who make the decisions.

Next Steps—The Time Is Now

- In general, people feel safer than they have in the past, and it is a good time to take advantage of it. However, the idea needs to be sold—explain the new solutions to them. While the public is not polarized on this issue, there are some individuals who will try to prevent change in this area—do not let them define the solutions. Formulate and promote a new self-defined response.

- Leaders need to take the time to talk to the people within the system to sell the idea so that they will be enthusiastic implementers of the ideas. People inside the system should not be made to feel they are being blamed for the problem.

The reentry idea needs to be sold—explain the new solutions to the public as well as those within the system.

Roundtable Discussion

- Supreme Court decisions are not a big factor in public opinion. People barely understand what the Supreme Court is and what they do.

- People in lower income brackets felt more fearful and felt they are not as well served by police; things happen to them and in their neighborhoods that aren't taken care of properly.

- It isn't so much that people are attracted to the status quo, but they do want to be reassured that dangerous people will be kept away from them. When they hear "mandatory minimums," "life sentences," and "tough on crime," this is what they think they are getting.

- Mainstream media—newspapers, television news, etc.—will reach a certain segment of the public, but it is important to define the issue for those who are not tied into this type of information. Do not let the opposition paint reentry policies as being "soft on crime." Find a channel for information that is entertainment-based, such as through Hollywood, to show the reality of this drama.

- Legislatures need to be prepared. There is a conflict between the need to do something about crime and the "nothing works" mentality.

Section III.

Next Steps for Research and Policy

Police and the Community

- Police have developed partnerships with service providers that can serve as a useful model for how to partner with the community. For example, they partner with mental health providers to respond to calls involving mentally ill people, which can reduce the use of deadly force, injury, and the time required for a follow-up by police. In this spirit, police should also involve a "carefully trained, well-supervised, formerly incarcerated person" when responding to calls for service. Not every police call needs a police action, so it would be helpful to use the services of someone who knows the people and the neighborhood to respond to issues.

- Use police, as joint stakeholders in reentry, to legitimize advocacy efforts. Put police on boards of directors of community organizations.

- Police should go to the institutions and build a relationship with offenders prior to their release. This will help break down stereotypes on both sides. Police should also work with the extended families of known offenders.

- Police need to encourage the community to be vocal about what they want (e.g., not more arrests but safer reentry); if the community can articulate this, it will protect the police as well.

Use police, as joint stakeholders in reentry, to legitimize advocacy efforts.

- Mayors and national groups of cities, counties, governors, etc., need to pull "levers" (legal exposures) in the political system. When the mayors care about the issue, the police chiefs will also care. Mayors are an untapped resource in this issue. Communities need to demand that elected officials at the local level pay attention to reentry. Community organizations need to talk to other community organizations about why they should care about this issue.

Police Organizations

- Police need to demand coordination of the vast resources that already exist; join both individual and place-based strategies and reorganize. These have to come together in order to be able to implement a nuanced response at the point of arrest.

- The police have "24-7" responsibility. They need to increase their capacity to utilize informal social controls. Home visits, for example, help to understand family structures and social networks that can be used to support the offender.

- The most effective relationships are those at the bottom level of the organization. Organization heads must open the doors to the development of these relationships.

- The police need to educate people in terms of the ways to reduce victimization. Explaining the new strategy as a way to reduce victimizations will get their attention. The message must be direct.

- A human element needs to be reinstituted into this complex process. Through restorative justice, the community will better understand the offender, and the offender will better understand the victimization of the community. Restorative justice panels can be used to handle technical violations. This would broaden the number of voices and increase informal social control. The people who support the offender in these efforts should be included.

- There is a common view that people are supposed to do things for themselves; this is why "jobs" are always recommended. This sentiment should be used to do away with all the infantilizing built into the conditions of supervision. The only people who can do this effectively are the people within the criminal justice system. There needs to be more honesty about what is not working.

Police need to demand coordination of the vast resources that are available.

There needs to be more honesty about what is not working

- Respect and fairness must drive all decisions. This is what makes it possible for agency heads to survive the tough moments. Treating people with respect and fairness will encourage them to step up for you when it is needed.

Police and Corrections

- The core mission of corrections should sit on a foundation of sobriety and employment. Facilities need to be drug-free; staff and management need to be trained how to make this happen.

- A social marketing campaign should be developed to transfer knowledge to the public about what the goals are. The myths must be dispelled—educate the public about the offenders who are coming back and reinforce that the job in corrections is to cure, not to catch.

- There is a need to change evaluation criteria, to find a balance between care and control/custody. People are over classified all the time because there is an aversion to risk. It should be communicated to corrections that the job of law enforcement is not just to lock people up, but also to lock them up and make sure they are sober. Returning prisoners need to be taught how to manage in a real, living environment. This will be a monumental change to make based on how things are today.

Technical Violations

- Law enforcement tends to think that offenders do not care about what happens to them, that they do not comply because they do not care about the consequences. This is not true. They are not provided with a context where the consequences make any sense.

- Substance abuse is such a large issue that even small changes in the proportion of offenders who are sober would result in big public safety outcomes.

- There is tension between the ideas of supporting sobriety and the fact that people's lives are complicated through supervision. Drug testing helps to maintain sobriety, so what should be done? The difference is whether the testing is used to revoke someone's liberty or simply as incentives for them to work on their issues.

It should be communicated to corrections that the job of law enforcement is not just to lock people up.

Supporting Families

- The community needs to be encouraged to take ownership of their children and their neighbors who broke norms and to welcome them back in a way that promotes success. To do this, though, law enforcement has to acknowledge that sometimes the communities do not want the prisoners back. Focus on the restorative potential of reentry to make this work.

- Corrections should let prisoners have some role in governing the institution. Corrections should do everything they can to encourage family ties—conjugal visits, furloughs, etc.

- The family should be the first stop in the face of parole noncompliance. Is there anything they can do to help to get the offender back on track?

- Community policing will ideally have great knowledge about families and could use that information to help corrections make decisions about visits, furloughs, and facilitating lower levels of custody. If families are willing to take responsibility for their offenders, why not let them? This could only serve everyone's interests. One program, La Bodega de la Familia, provides a mechanism for testing the strength of informal social control. While the evaluations showed reductions in drug use, family stress levels escalated sharply. Society needs to figure out how to support families and returning prisoners better.

Society needs to figure out how to support families of returning prisoners better.

Agency Roles

- The natural convener of this effort is the commissioner of corrections, who can pull in corrections, police, prosecutors, and community corrections workers. Police officer union's issues need to be dealt with, with the support of police officers.

- Reentry strategies should be span beyond traditional boundaries— such as problem analysis and service integration and coordination. Money should be put in the hands of people who need to buy the service and then trust them to do it properly. There needs to be better incentives for people to succeed. Getting media attention is a boundaryless issue.

- One reason that community policing took hold was that police chiefs were very outspoken about the fact that what they were doing wasn't working. Corrections and parole need to do this too and to recognize that there is safety in numbers.

- Organizational transparency and accountability is a mechanism for change.

Reentry strategies should span beyond traditional boundaries.

Concluding Remarks

Co-chair: Jim Bueermann, Redlands Police Department

American policing has an opportunity here, but I'm not sure we are ready to seize it. Not everyone will be convinced prisoner reentry falls within the purview of the police. Those touched by the challenges of reentry need to understand what's in it for them and their communities and why a new way of thinking about prisoners returning to American communities makes sense. There are criminal justice system "levers" that can, and should, be pulled as they relate to advancing community policing, and ultimately community safety, in this regard. Training programs for police officers – especially executives and mid-managers - should include courses relating to the role the police can play in enhancing successful prisoner reentry. This is an opportunity to consider the messages that are sent to, and received by, police officers about prisoner reentry, who is at the reentry table, and who should be leading the effort. In the final analysis, policing in America is about enhancing the safety of our communities. This is the same goal of effective prisoner reentry efforts. Now is the time for the police to take a leadership role on this issue and utilize the considerable knowledge base surrounding community policing to enhance the effective and safe reintegration of returning prisoners to our communities.

We need former prisoners to help us build our communities.

Co-chair: Jeremy Travis, The Urban Institute

There is a need for a community-level strategy to facilitate prisoners' returning home that includes police and parole in fashioning the response. The community needs to be both supportive of former prisoners and cognizant of the various risks and how to manage them. Toward this end, lessons can be learned from the Maryland Reentry Partnership in which a team meets with prisoners nearing release to convey the following message: "Welcome home. We want you to succeed, and here's what we have to offer. We are going to help you for the next two years." Police and parole agents need to encourage success, but also need to be clear that they have a job to do. At the core, we need former prisoners to help us to build our communities.