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The Politics and Practicalities of Reentry: A Case Study of the Reentry Environment in a Suburban Community

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE POLITICS AND PRACTICALITIES OF REENTRY: A CASE STUDY
OF THE REENTRY ENVIRONMENT IN A SUBURBAN COMMUNITY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

CARLENE SIPMA-DYSICO

CHICAGO, IL

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First and foremost, I am indebted to the parolees in Westview who agreed to talk about difficult things to a woman they had never met. Thank you for trusting me enough to share your experiences and feelings. I promised you that I would give you a platform for your voice – I sincerely hope that you are heard. I am grateful and humbled by your tenacity, hope, and joy in the small things. It is my deepest wish that you have found the second chance that all of you deserve. I will not forget you.

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became a farmer and taught me that actions always speak louder than words and with love and grit you can do anything.

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ABSTRACT

Although inquiry into reentry has grown significantly in the past decade, studies concerning formerly incarcerated persons entrance back into society tend to look at the outcomes and consequences of reentry, not the process. This “what works and what doesn’t work” research approach (Seiter and Kadela 2003) leaves some very important aspects of reentry unexamined. While determining the efficacy of programs designed to reduce recidivism is important for public safety, social policy creation, and budgetary considerations, the role of the community in reentry remains largely unexplored.

This dissertation examines how reentry is done at the community level; by practitioners of reentry, those who are in the process of reentry, and those who influence the political and structural environment in which reentry is attempted. Taken together, these varied stakeholders influence the climate towards formerly incarcerated persons within a community. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with a variety of reentry stakeholders and parolees, this case study examines the reentry environment for formerly incarcerated persons returning to a suburb of a large Midwestern city.

This study looks beyond the human agency of the formerly incarcerated and their ability (or lack of ability) to desist from criminal behavior by exploring the role of community in reentry? In other words, how does the structure of a community impact the reentry environment and reentry process for a formerly incarcerated person?

Despite widespread verbal acknowledgment regarding the need for collaboration between various agencies that have contact with formerly incarcerated persons, the reentry environment in this community was marked by limited cooperation, competition over resources, personal tensions, and political strain. Services such as job search assistance, housing, and transportation aid were most needed but consisted mainly of “training” or referrals, not direct help. Narratives on the topic of reentry attained from a wide variety of stakeholders remain firmly entrenched within a framework of personal responsibility and the development of a “disciplined self,” with little consideration given to structural-level forces impacting reintegration. In particular, stakeholders discounted any influence the stratified and segregated community had on criminal behavior and reintegration efforts. Given the empirical evidence that race, ethnicity, and class are significant factors regarding the probability of engagement within the system criminal justice system, culturally-appropriate interventions must be an integral part of any reentry efforts. Finally, this study contends that reentry is not a solution to the problem of mass incarceration in the United States, but rather social and political triage.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As long as there are prisons in America, there will be reentry in America.

—Daniel Stagman

This chapter reviews the empirical and theoretical literature on contemporary mass incarceration and the re-entry of ex-offenders into American society. It has three sections. The first section on mass incarceration describes the prison population and prison exits. The second describes reentry barriers and programs. And the final section on community argues that social science research has neglected the role of communities in reentry and presents a theoretical framework for this community case study of prisoner reentry.

The Rise of Mass Incarceration

The United States currently has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. A push towards increasingly punitive measures at both the state and federal level began in the mid- 1970's and despite falling crime rates from the mid-1990s to the present (Chicago Tribune 2011) this momentum has steadily increased. The “get tough” approach to crime is touted by some in the academic and policy fields (Kessler & Levitt 1999) and by politicians (Bennett 1996) as a way not only to reduce crime and punish offenders - but to strengthen the moral character of America.

From a “common sense” standpoint, their argument resonates with many in the American public and the officials whom they elect. Conservative ideologues, fanning the flames of racism and fears of victimization, have coined the label of “superpredator” to refer to criminals (particularly poor, young men of color) to justify harsh measures in the interests of public safety. Political calls for “justice” and the resulting policy changes have served to expand the ranks of the jailed and imprisoned through three-strike (or two-strike) laws, mandatory minimum sentencing, steeper minimum sentences, truth-in-sentencing policies, and harsh drug sentences under the auspices of the “War on Drugs.” Furthermore, by 2002 sixteen states had abolished discretionary parole and another five abolished parole for violent and felony offenses (Bushway, Stoll & Weiman 2007; Hughes, Wilson & Beck 2001). By 2007, 7.2 million Americans (constituting 3.2 % of the total population) or one in every 31 adults in the U.S. was either in jail, prison, or on probation or parole (U.S. DOJ 2007).

Numerous studies compare various racial groups regarding arrest, conviction and incarceration rates (Leiber & Blowers 2003; Sorenson, Hope & Stemen 2003; Blumstein 1982), sentencing differences and disparities (Mauer 2006, Tonry 1995), and recidivism/desistance strategies (Pager 2007). The findings of these studies demonstrate that blacks and Hispanics receive more severe punishments than whites particularly when they are the majority of the population in an area (Ulmer & Johnson 2004). Michelle Alexander (2010) writes that, currently there are more African-American men under some form of correctional supervision than were enslaved in the United States in 1850. “Being poor or

black is now more strongly predictive of having a criminal record than in the past (Pattillo, Weiman & Western 2006).”

Given the continued war on drugs, current high incarceration rates, and disproportionate minority arrests and convictions, thirty percent of young African-American men in today’s society can expect to spend some of their life in prison (Garland 2001) to constitute more than 40% of the total incarcerated population (Mauer 2006). Although blacks comprise less than 13% of the U.S. population, by the end of 2001, almost as many blacks (2,166,000) as whites (2, 203,000) served time in prison. Therefore, both blacks and whites made up 39% of the prison population, while Hispanics accounted for 18% (Bonczar 2003).

Anderson (2008) argues that even in childhood, poor black males are criminalized by the police and security presence that is routine in large, low-income school districts. The “handcuff first, ask questions later” approach is well documented in numerous school to prison pipeline studies (Lawrence 2007, Reyes 2006, Wald & Losen 2003, Skiba, Michael & Nardo 2000, Dorn 1996, McCarthy & Hoge 1987). Those men most likely to spend at least a portion of their life confined are young, black, undereducated, and poor (Anderson 2008; Rios 2007; Western 2006). Young black men who drop out of high school have an almost five times greater chance than their white counterparts of going to prison. One-third of young black men who had dropped out of high school were incarcerated in 2000 (Western 2006).

The stigmatizing effects of disproportionate minority arrests, convictions and incarceration (particularly for Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians with low

educational attainment) can be significant for all members of that minority group members as they are viewed as *potential* criminals and high-risk employees.(Pager 2003; Bushway, Stoll and Weiman 2007). In *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black and Male*, Elijah Anderson (2008) eloquently makes the case for considering how race, gender and social class intersect for poor, black, young men. "Strongly identified with violent criminality by skin color alone, the anonymous young black male in public is often viewed first and foremost with fear and suspicion, his counter-claims to propriety, decency, and law-abidingness notwithstanding. Others typically don't want to know him, and in public seek distance from him and those who resemble him (3)." We must consider the racialized cumulative effects of repeated contacts with law enforcement (Engen, Steen & Bridges 2002) in reinforcing the perception that one is a criminal or a future criminal. Rios (2007) argues that the "hypercriminalization" of youth of color has spread beyond the criminal justice system into non-criminal justice institutions, such as schools, community centers, and families.

Release, Reentry, and Recidivism

The U.S. incarcerated population, including jails and prisons, is about 2.4 million (West & Sabol 2008). Given that the vast majority (95%) of the incarcerated will eventually be released from custody, the numbers of former inmates currently being released and those who will be released in the near future is staggering (Travis 2005; Petersilia 2003). By the end of 2007, more than 725,000 persons were released from state and federal prisons, a five-fold increase from 1977 (Ismaili 2009) and another 12 million were released from local jails (Harrison and Beck 2005). Nationally, the recidivism for

2004 was at 43.4% (and varies from state-to-state. The state in which this research takes place has one of the highest recidivism rates in the country. Despite a recent decline in recidivism the 2012 recidivism rate was still over 50%.

An increasing flow of persons in and out of incarcerative institutions creates a ripple effect through all of the social institutions within society. Numerous studies have looked at the costs and consequences of the incarceration boom: economic costs and effects of incarceration (PEW 2008; Snyder & Sickmund 1999; Cohen 1998), labor market effects (Bushway, Stoll & Weiman 2001; Useem & Piehl, 2008), political consequences (Middlemass 2007; Uggen, Manza & Behrans 2007; Mauer, 2002, impact upon communities (Clear, 2009; Huling 2002; Clear, Rose & Ryder 2001; Wacquant 2001) and consequences for the family members and children of the imprisoned (Sokoloff 2007; Patillo, Weiman & Western, 2006; Braman 2002; Hagan & Dinovitzer 1999).

The populations of former inmates reentering society today have changed in ways that make successful reentry even more difficult. Formerly incarcerated persons are often repeat offenders who have failed at previous attempts to stay out of prison or jail, had fewer opportunities to be a part of pre-release rehabilitation/reentry programs while incarcerated, and have served longer sentences (Lynch and Sabol (2001) – therefore decreasing probability of maintaining strong family ties and networks. Strong social bonds with family members have been found to have positive influences on desistance from criminal activity and recidivism (Sampson & Groves 1989).

The needs of those reentering society following incarceration are extensive. Studies done on former inmates have found serious problems that impact their ability to reconnect with society and stay out of prison. In her book, *When Prisoners Come Home*, Joan Petersilia (2003) presents the following profiles of prisoner's lives prior to incarceration: three-fourths have a drug and/or alcohol addiction, only 60% have attained a high school diploma/GED, one out of six has a mental illness and at the time of their most recent arrest, one third were considered to be "unemployable" due to limited job skills. Less than one-third of prisoners receive substance abuse or mental health treatment while in prison. Rehabilitative prison programs that were severely reduced due to political sentiments that stress punitive incarceration have been further whittled away in the current era of budget cutbacks. Those who work with formerly incarcerated persons report that finding adequate housing and employment services (skill training, job search training/assistance) are amongst the most immediate and critical needs of the newly released (Hattery & Smith 2010, Visher, LaVigne & Farrell 2003). States such as Illinois, Florida and Texas have placed their entire inmate data bases available online – making it easier for prospective employers and landlords to peruse and exclude former inmates from consideration (Wacquant 2001).

Significant changes regarding the release of prisoners have taken place as state legislators responded to the public's call to "get tough." Determinate sentencing policies have replaced discretionary release as the new norm. Although the flow of persons released from jails and prisons has not diminished, the ways in which they are released has changed. Truth-in-sentencing laws have resulted in more prisoners who "max out"

their sentences and, when they have served their time, they are released without any supervision (Lynch & Sabol 2001). For those receiving conditional releases, the vast majority (about 80%) are placed on parole (Petersilia 2003). By the end of 2006, there were 798,202 adult parolees in the United States, an increase of 2.3% from the previous year (U.S. DOJ 2007).

The political attitudinal shift from rehabilitation to retribution has impacted the way parole is operationalized in many states. Western (2000) argues that while parole used to be about helping prisoners reintegrate, its current focus is supervision. This pseudo-police ideology of “gotcha,” when combined with unmanageably large caseloads for parole officers has led to increased depersonalization and greater reliance strict enforcement. In 2000, thirty-five percent of admissions to prison were because of parole violations. While some of these returns are because of new convictions, a substantial percentage or returns are due to parole violations, many of them technical violations where no new crime had been committed. In 1999, in California, 60 percent of that year’s admissions to prison were parole violators – and 4 out of 5 of them were for technical violations (Butterfield 2000). With a higher overall prison population and high release rates and ever increasing rates of supervision – it is a given that increasing numbers of released prisoners will find themselves back in prison.

Barriers to Reentry

Maintaining quality contact with family members can be severely limited due to incarceration too far from one’s home for family’s to visit regularly and the financial burden of visiting or paying for long-distance collect phone calls from prison may be cost

prohibitive. Some prisoners are sent to other states to serve their time and federal prisoners are frequently incarcerated in other states. Hattery and Smith (2010) found that prisoners had few contacts during their imprisonment other than their mothers and for male prisoners, a female partner. Male prisoners who maintain strong contact with families and men who take responsibility for their roles as husbands and fathers have lower recidivism rates (Hairston 2002, cited in Petersilia 2003). Returning ex-prisoners with family ties tend to rely heavily upon those families immediately after release for housing, food, financial aid, transportation, leads on jobs and emotional support to abstain from drugs (Hattery & Smith). Relations with family members may be strained because of conflict over issues prior to incarceration and the social and financial burden that the returning family member may bring. During their loved ones incarceration, they too may have been stigmatized and experienced isolation (Travis 2005).

O'Connell (2006) argues that we must not assume that the prisoner had significant social bonds prior to incarceration and, if so, they may not have been positive social bonds. Therefore, if the social bonds were with someone engaged in criminality or other non-conformist behaviors, they may have been instrumental in influencing the person to commit offenses. Useem and Piehl (2008) argue that mass incarceration not only is a huge waste of public resources, but that it attaches a stigma to low-level offenders (most of them convicted for non-violent crimes). Meanwhile, during their incarceration, prisoners form new connections with fellow prisoners for survival, increasing the threat of cementing their attachment to engagement in crime. They can begin to feel more

connected with prison culture, as their frames of reference become ones linked with criminal culture and life “on the outside” is not one’s daily norm.

Social skills become altered, as social interactions during incarceration require suspicion of others and a strong need for self-preservation (Hagan 1993, Travis 2005). Physical isolation (depending on where the ex-prisoner is able to find housing), exacerbates the social isolation of being a member of a stigmatized group – being a criminal is now their master status (Hattery & Smith 2010). Nagin’s (1998) argument regarding social stigma falls along the same lines. Stigma only works as a deterrent criminal behavior if it is “an exception,” not a norm. Some communities have such a large population of its members going through the revolving door of prison or jail – that having a criminal record is unremarkable. Indeed, for some it is a way to gain some sort of recognition (Solomon, Wahl, Van Ness & Travis 2004, Clear, Rose & Ryder 2001, Nagin 1998).

There are many institutional level obstacles put in place to protect society from ex-prisoners. Outright exclusion from public housing, restrictions on access to welfare and housing programs, limiting the right to vote, and possible termination of parental rights create additional barriers to attachment to society. Exclusions from health care, child care and educational sector jobs also limit the employment opportunities ex-prisoners can compete for (Hattery & Smith 2010, Sheldon 2010, Petersilia 2003, Travis 2005). Restrictions on public aid shut out felons from public housing, welfare assistance, eligibility for student financial aid (loans and grants) and military benefits (Uggen 2000). At least 12% of the formerly incarcerated are homeless (Petersilia 2003) and restrictions

on housing further separate the released from their families. In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act contained “welfare reform” provisions which replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) block grants. Under these new regulations, a provision (which was debated for only two minutes on the floor of the Senate) banned persons convicted of drug related violations are barred from receiving any federal funded assistance and food stamps (Rubinstein & Mukamal 2002). Disregarding the health, social and welfare implications of punishing an entire family, the negative effect on family cohesiveness and marital stability, lack of access to public housing may decrease opportunities for the former prisoner to find employment because of resultant limitations on maintaining community contacts.

Despite findings that prison-based educational programs have been found to increase order within the penal system and reduce recidivism Congress enacted the 1988 Higher Education Act Reauthorization giving state and federal courts the power to deny any and all federal benefits to persons convicted of drug trafficking (distribution) or drug possession (including non-felony convictions). Those with three convictions of drug possession or two convictions for drug distribution have a lifetime ban from any federal financial aid for pursuing higher education (Wheelock & Uggen 2008). In 1994, the Federal Pell Grant program for prisoners was eliminated and as a result, most college programs in prison were completely shut down. At the time, less than 1% of all Pell Grants went to the incarcerated (Petersilia 2003). Besides limiting reintegration and social contact, these restrictions serve to deepen the effects of negative social stigma.

According to Wacquant (2001) these restrictions serve as institutional level barriers to reintegration, creating “civic death” for former prisoners and keep them on the periphery of society.

Formerly incarcerated persons face great difficulty in obtaining stable, good paying jobs and having a criminal record - even if it is not a felony conviction - can have a significant negative impact on future employment opportunities. A year out from their release, 60 percent of former prisoners remain unemployed (Petersilia 2003). The life course stage in which the conviction takes place in is an important variable in determining the severity of that impact (Western, Kling & Weiman 2001; Bushway, Stoll & Weiman 2007). Sampson & Laub (1993) argue that the most crucial time in the life course concerning criminality is the transition from late-adolescence into early adulthood, as this is the time in which education and training are being completed, and some experience with the job market will be taking place.

Numerous studies have found reluctance on the part of employers to hire former prisoners (Holzer, Rachael & Stoll 2004, Pager 2003). A study surveying employers in five major cities found that employers said they would not knowingly hire an ex-offender no matter what crime they were convicted of (Petersilia 2003). Lengthy (and even minimal) gaps in an employment record can be hard to explain, skills are lost because of lack of use, social skills and confidence is undermined during imprisonment. In addition, prisoners fall behind others in their occupational category who continued to work during their imprisonment. Their skills become outdated by technological advancements while they are imprisoned, skill requirements have increased in the past decade and the strength

of unions has decreased (Bushway, Stoll & Weiman 2007). Lengthy (or even minimal) gaps in an employment record can be hard to explain, skills are lost because of lack of use, social skills and confidence is undermined during imprisonment. In addition, prisoners fall behind others in their occupational category who continued to work during their imprisonment. Their skills become outdated by technological advancements while they are imprisoned, skill requirements have increased in the past decade and the strength of unions (which help to protect those workers most vulnerable) has decreased (Bushway, Stoll & Weiman 2007). During incarceration, prisoners lose their jobs, their status and autonomy, and those on the outside form new attachments that they are not a part of (Petersilia 2003). Hattery & Smith (2010) contend that the most important pathway to assist in finding a job is through “word of mouth.” For former prisoners (and even for those never imprisoned), knowing someone who knows about a job and can put in a good word for you is oftentimes the key to finding a job.

The barriers facing formerly incarcerated persons seeking gainful employment go well beyond high unemployment rates and limited job skills. The labor-market transformation from a manufacturing economy to a service economy has had a significant impact on returning prisoners seeking work, as the manufacturing sector was one area that historically hired former prisoners (Solomon, Waul, Van Ness & Travis 2004). Finally, state certification requirements, the difficulties faced in getting needed documentation (driver’s license, prior work history, incarceration records, etc.), easier access to criminal records from potential employers and the public all increase the degree of struggles ex-prisoners face in obtaining stable and meaningful work (Clear & Cole

2000). These restrictions are referred to by Jeremy Travis (2005) as “instruments of social exclusion.” He contends that these restrictions result in a permanent devaluation of an ex-offender’s social status and are experienced without regard for the type of crime that the person was incarcerated for.

Despite widespread beliefs that racism has largely disappeared and gone the way of Jim Crow, race affects the employment prospects of returning prisoners. In *Marked: Race, Crime and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (2007), Pager found that a white male applicant with a criminal record was as likely as a black male applicant without a criminal record to be called back for an interview. She asserts that “being black in America today is just about the same as having a felony conviction in terms of one’s chances of finding a job” (91). If that is the uphill battle facing black males *without* a criminal record – what are the employment chances for a black man with one?

Reentry Programs as the “Solution” to Mass Incarceration

Reentry programs are often touted as a fix for reducing high recidivism rates and helping formerly incarcerated persons fit in with society again. Petersilia (2003:3) defines reentry as “all activities and programming conducted to prepare ex-convicts to return safely to the community and to live as law-abiding citizens.” Travis (2005) argues that most reentry efforts and policies have been put in place to reduce recidivism rather than reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons. “Going straight” is not an easy road. Two-thirds of those on parole are arrested within three years of release; most within the first six months post-release (Petersilia 2003). Travis (2005) calls for reentry efforts to address what can be done to put the ex-prisoner in the best shape to reconnect and reintegrate

with society on the outside (which, if reintegration is successful, would have the benefit of reducing recidivism as well).

It is particularly troubling that, at the same time more persons are being imprisoned, for longer periods of time, numerous states have slashed their corrections budgets (as well as public primary, secondary and higher education budgets) for rehabilitative, education, work-training and reentry programs for the incarcerated (Warren2008). Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund, in reference to juvenile detention policies argues:

What kind of backward investment policy allows states to spend three times more per prisoner than they do per public-school pupil? What does it say about us that the only thing our nation will guarantee every child is a costly jail or detention cell, while refusing them a place in Head Start or after-school child care, summer jobs, and other needed supports (Liss 2005)?

Her critique of the "short-term thinking" evident in these policies can serve notice on the policies of many states regarding adult prisoners. With an average cost of \$30,000 per prisoner per year (in many locales it is much more) it costs 35 times more to incarcerate than to release on probation (Robinson 2009; Walker 2005).

Reentry has become a popular issue for politicians, policy makers, and social service providers who tout it as the solution for dealing with shrinking budgets and growing incarceration numbers and high recidivism rates. As a policy issue, reentry straddles the competing interests of increasing public safety and providing rehabilitative services for formerly incarcerated individuals. Much of the responsibility for reentry and

rehabilitation services for formerly incarcerated persons has been transferred from the auspices of the state and federal government agencies to private non-profit and for-profit organizations in the form of grant monies. Much of the growth in this industry has been led by faith-based non-profit organizations. These organizations are qualified to complete for federal monies, but cannot use the funds for “inherently religious activities” (Mears 2007). Fueled by citizens calling for safer communities, the political necessity of “doing something,” and buoyed by funds from The Second Chance Act, the current popularity of the topic has been called “reentry mania” by Nixon et al (2008, p.31).

In response to large numbers of former prisoners being released every year (many released unconditionally with no mandated supervision) the Federal Government began the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative in 2003 to provide up to \$100 million dollars in grant monies that provide employment services to inmates (Gabbidon & Greene 2009; Lattimore 2007). In 2008, Congress passed the Second Chance Act to assist in the delivery of services for reintegration through grants. Funds are available for direct services to current and former prisoners in the forms of: job training and placement services, mentoring programs, academic and vocational education, technology career training, transitional housing assistance, family treatment programs for incarcerated parents of minor children, substance abuse treatment for offenders, family substance abuse treatment, and other “innovative services.” Reforms included in this legislation include providing education services for employers regarding the hiring of former prisoners, assistance to prisoners in obtaining legal documents needed for reintegration and employment, and the discontinuation of policies that limited prisoner access to

library materials. Grants are also available for case management services, increased monies for court supervision, development of reentry courts and funding for reentry research (Library of Congress 2008).

Early findings from the Evaluation of the Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (PRI) found that most PRI sites evaluated were “employment-centric” and sought to attain short-term employment goals. For example, in several PRI funded programs the definition of a “successful placement” (of employment) can range from less than a week to 30 days (Solomon, Waul, Van Ness & Travis 2004). Continued evaluation studies are needed for programs already established and the bar for success needs to be set higher than keeping a job for a few days – or even 30 days. Ideally, reentry should begin before the prisoner is released and prisons, jails and detention centers must change their underlying philosophy to effect this change.

Many programs offered by reentry providers have typically been designed only to alter the skill set of the former prisoners, such as life skills and work “readiness.” Small changes in terminology hide the significant alterations that have recently been made to release services: work release has become employment readiness, formal education is now life skills development, treatment services are now self-help groups, and occupational training consists of transitional jobs and day laborer positions (Peck and Theodore 2009). Critics of reentry programs argue that they are not the way to deal with the vagaries of mass incarceration (Clear 2009), particularly if they are not comprehensive and continue to be under funded (Bushway, Stoll & Weiman 2007). The view that reentry programs are an answer to mass incarceration is insufficient and

decreasing the negative outcomes and capriciousness of our current rush to incarcerate will have to be addressed by changes to laws and sentencing practices, as advocated by Clear (2009).

Individual-Community Interactions in Reentry: Structural Context

The reentry of formerly incarcerated persons is not a social problem that exists in isolation from the other challenges facing communities (Weiman, Stoll, and Bushway 2007). For many communities, it is most often an additional stressor on cities and neighborhoods already disproportionately burdened with populations in need and limited available jobs. Communities do not share equally in providing services and opportunities for those returning from a period of incarceration, urban locations, particularly communities of color carry the lion's share of the load (Pryor 2010; Peck and Theodore 2008; Western and Pettit 2002). For example, in Illinois, six out of the state's one-hundred and two counties received 75% of the reentry population with 53% returning Chicago. Furthermore, certain neighborhoods (particularly low-income neighborhoods) within Chicago received large numbers of formerly incarcerated persons, many times concentrated within specific blocks or sections. In other Chicago neighborhoods, the flow from prisons is much smaller and dispersed throughout the entire neighborhood (LaVigne et al. 2003). Meanwhile, the suburban and rural communities that have significant reentry rates experience the same challenges of urban reentry - albeit with fewer resources and decreased publicity ((Delgado 2012, Wodahl 2006).

Reentry into a community is a long process, encompassing much more than the event of an individual being released from incarceration. How reentry is defined, what it

includes, and what is excluded are part of a political process – not just a criminological one. The political locale in which reentry is taking place is an important –albeit neglected – aspect of reentry. Prior reentry research that considers communities have typically focused upon the impact of large numbers of former incarcerated persons on neighborhoods (Sampson and Loeffler 2010; Clear 2007; Clear, Rose, and Ryder 2001)

Coerced mobility theory critiques the increasing propensity of mass incarceration in the United States and its effects on inner-city neighborhoods. The removal and incarceration of large numbers of males (especially African-Americans) may temporarily protect the community from their crimes – but there are negative effects as well (lack of financial providers for families, incarcerated parents disrupts family life, forced mobility of families due to income loss and educational disruption of children, lack of marriage partners increases single, female headed households) (Holzer et al. 2004. Instead of increasing the efficacy of the neighborhood due to increased safety, they contend that a “feedback effect” occurs as social networks and economic resources necessary to meet the needs of individuals and families are disrupted, conflict between neighborhood residents and the state (especially police) is exacerbated, neighborhoods become more racially and ethnically homogenized, and non-offenders and youth are exposed to and socialized into a “normalized prison subculture.”

Incarceration of large numbers of people from a neighborhood decreases the stigma of criminality – as it becomes almost normal. Furthermore, communities can reach a “tipping point” whereby they become so disorganized; they cannot effectively function as a community capable of exercising social control over its members (Elsner 2006;

Travis 2001). Distrust of the government and legal system can become widespread as community institutions are weakened because such a high percentage of community members are absent.

The criminalization of place can be seen at the neighborhood level with fences, freeway ramps and brick walls surrounding certain “bad neighborhoods” which receive increased police presence. Additionally, urban schools in low income neighborhoods have increasingly begun to resemble prisons or detention centers and their goal has shifted from education to one of confinement in a “keep them off the streets” capacity (Useem & Piehl 2008; Wacquant 2001; Foucault 1975). Ghettos have begun to look a lot like prisons (construction of walls, chain-link fencing of areas, large-scale adaptation of prison clothing styles, increased surveillance and social control measures) (Useem & Piehle 2008; Wacquant 2001).

While the vast majority of scholarship on reentry has relegated the role of the community to the background, more recently the importance of the community has been acknowledged. Hipp, Petersilia and Turner 2010 found that the entire context of a neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhoods (not just socioeconomic context) is important when looking at the roles performed by local social service providers regarding the transitioning of parolees. They found that having social service providers within a two mile radius was positively correlated with reducing serious recidivism, particularly for African-Americans. They surmise that this is because traditionally, African-Americans have had “weaker informal resources in their social networks.” (p.790) Sampson (2011)

argues that whether you are looking at the incidence of crime or the reintegration of offenders, the structure and culture of the community becomes increasingly important.

Blessing, Golden and Ruiz-Quintanilla (2008) argue that the services and social connectivity opportunities a community offers are operationalized through the formal and informal institutions in that particular community. From a community justice perspective, the social context and social support level of the area that a formerly incarcerated person returns to is an important variable in how well they are able to desist from further criminal behavior and how thoroughly they are able to reenter and reintegrate into the community (Bierens and Carvalho 2010; Hipp, Petersilia, and Turner 2010; Zang, Roberts, and Callanan 2006). Taxman et al (2004) explains that through a community justice lens, the community, law enforcement and corrections, and the reentering person combine their efforts to increase the odds of reintegration.

The community's importance as both reentry actor and stakeholder is tied to the influences of family, friends, clergy, victims, employers, service providers, and other community members (informal social control agents). It is argued that informal social control agents influence behavioral changes to a larger degree than do formal social control agents, such as corrections, court, and law enforcement representatives (Gottfredson and Hirshi 1990; Young et al 2002). Informal control agents bring increased accountability, personal connection, and the sense that they are interested in what happens is very different from someone who is involved with a formerly incarcerated person because it is their job (Young et al 2002).

Theoretical Framework

For much of its history, criminology has been focused upon individual factors or “criminogenic” characteristics of individual--the “who” and “why” of crime. Similarly, the criminal justice system, reentry programs, and the American public have focused “changing the prisoner” or developing discipline and self-control. This “disciplined self” consists of socially acceptable behaviors that are expected (or imposed) by the system from time of arrest through the incarceration period.

Only recently, with the rise of critical criminology theory, has the research focus on individual behavior began to change. In the past two decades the linkages between the ever-expanding criminal justice systems been examined from a structural/institutional level in increasing depth. As succinctly put by Western, Patillo and Weinman (2006:3) “in the sociology of punishment, the prison is the product of underlying social structures and political developments.” Therefore, we need to look beyond the “why” and get to the “how.”

According to Cullen & Agnew (2006), theories that integrate concepts at the structural level intrinsically and necessarily alter the original theories and create an entirely new one. Life-course theories have roots and linkages in social learning theory, strain theory and control theory. One basic premise that most versions of life-course theory have is the possibility for changes in an individual’s behavior (to turn onto a different ‘pathway’) as the life-course progresses.

Maruna (2001) argues that ex-convicts need to develop a “self-narrative” (typically accomplished through a life-story) in order for them to make sense of the lives

that they have. Therefore, former offenders need to “develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves” in order to desist from engaging in criminal activity. Put simply, to understand why they did what they did and why they are different now. A change in someone’s self-concept surely can have an impact on how (and if) they interact with another person or group. The severing of former social bonds may work in the ex-prisoner’s favor by allowing them an opportunity to re-make their sense of self. Therefore, for some, being incarcerated may work as a “turning-point” that serves to turn them away from criminogenic behavior upon release, just as marriage or having a child might do (O’Connell 2006, Solomon, Waul, Van Ness & Travis 2004, Sampson & Laub 1993).

Sampson & Laub (1993) see self-control as an important factor relating to crime – but they argue that new, social bonds can develop over time and work to tether an individual to conventional society in such a way that it gives them reasons to desist from criminal behavior. Change, therefore, is possible. For adults, key institutions that influence these social bonds are family, work, military service, incarceration, etc. Therefore, weak social bonds in adulthood could influence the criminal behavior to continue –however, more importantly, new social bonds could pull someone farther away from crime through the tethering effects of employment, marriage, and parenthood. Most interestingly, Sampson & Laub (1993) assert that fortuitous events (good luck), “person-environment interaction,” and human agency are integral to whether or not someone will desist from continued criminal behavior and resist the temptation of falling back into prior behaviors (see also Cullen et al. 2006, Sampson & Laub 2003).

“Person-environment interaction” studies have largely utilized social disorganization theory (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Shaw and McKay 1942) and strain theory (Merton 1938), particularly the effects of racial segregation (Krivo and Peterson 2000; Sampson and Wilson 1995). Additionally, the impact of the environment upon individuals is sometimes discussed in the literature through the language of “social capital.” Lin (2001) defines social capital as “resources that are embedded in social networks and accessed and used by actors for actions.” Lin’s use of the term, embedded, signifies recognition that these resources, to varying degrees, can be hidden, covert or social actors are unaware of their impact.

Contemporary social ecology theory also describes the interrelations between individuals and the communities in which they live (Delgado 2010; Kubrin and Stewart 2006; Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Rather than looking at individual experiences, the focus is on the interactions between the individual and the community (Lynch 2006) and is predicated on a variety of factors associated with the individual returning to the community and the social, economic and political conditions at that time in the community (Kenemore and Roldan 2006; Sung 2011).

One kind of relationship between individuals and their communities is the “defended neighborhood” (Suttles 1972; Buell 1980). Suttles considers a “defended neighborhood” to be one in which the residents attempt to seal the neighborhood off from others through the use of restrictive covenants, policing of the boundaries by gangs or citizen group patrols, or by a “forbidding reputation” (p. 21). Residents concerned about changing demographics, economic changes in nearby neighborhoods, and the reputation

of their suburb as gang-infested all impact the social, political and economic reception of formerly incarcerated persons.

Despite the role of residents, the key players influencing how the community responds to formerly incarcerated persons are the reentry and social service providers that interact with those reentering the community and the politicians who create the institutional approach of the city. While collective efficacy theories of criminology have typically focused on the ability of neighborhoods to create social control through shared expectations and collective action by residents to limit criminal behavior, Sampson also references the importance of institutional “social networks” and considers the “resource stock of neighborhood organizations and their linkages with other organizations both within and outside the community” as crucial for developing collective efficacy (Sampson 2011, p. 216). Further, examining the contextual effects of the receiving community on various groups (particularly racial differences) are crucial to understanding how reentry is done (Mears, Wang, Hay, and Bales 2008; Haynie and Payne 2006; Gottfredson and Taylor 1985).

While government is the main funding source of most social programs, the way that they compartmentalize the funding for social programs has dictated the organizational foundation for those programs. This organizational structure creates difficulties in being able to offer innovative and holistic initiatives to social problems (Delgado 2012). The financial viability of the state and city are integral components of the structuring of reentry policies and programs. Those policies and programs, largely funded by government, are at their root, political entities. This study, to be detailed in the

next chapter, examines how a community's institutional structure and political culture shapes reentry.

CHAPTER TWO

DESIGN, DATA, AND METHODS

Although inquiry into reentry has grown significantly in the past decade, studies concerning formerly incarcerated persons entrance back into society tend to look at the outcomes and consequences of reentry, not the process. Some of the recent scholarship concerning reentry has concentrated on the probability of recidivism and re-incarceration of former prisoners, employment and housing issues, services for the formerly incarcerated, collateral consequences, or efficacy studies of reentry programs (Bushway et al. 2007; Clear 2009; Holzer et al. 2004; Kubrin et al. 2007; Maruna 2001; Petersilia 2003; Solomon et al. 2004; Travis & Waul 2004). This “what works and what doesn’t work” research approach (Seiter and Kadela 2003) lends itself well to quantitative methodology, but leaves some very important aspects of reentry unexamined. While determining the efficacy of programs designed to reduce recidivism is important for public safety, social policy creation, and budgetary considerations, analyses of how reentry is done at the community level and the role of the community in reentry remains largely unexplored.

By looking beyond the human agency of the formerly incarcerated and their ability (or lack of ability) to desist from criminal behavior, this study asks, what is the role of community in reentry? In other words, how does the structure of a community impact the reentry environment and reentry process for a formerly incarcerated person?

This research was conducted as a community level case study and draws on 21 in-depth interviews with a variety of reentry stakeholders, 12 in-depth interviews with parolees, and an analysis of documents produced by and obtained from the various organizations within the study to examine the reentry environment for formerly incarcerated persons returning to one suburb of a large Midwestern city.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. How do not-for-profit, profit, and faith-based reentry service providers interact (collaboration vs. conflict) with one another? What is the level of coordination and cooperation between policy makers, governmental agents, and “implementers” of the reentry process in the application and execution reentry policies and programming? How do various reentry service providers incorporate the competing philosophies of reintegration vs. “disciplined self” in their programming to former prisoners?
2. How do formerly incarcerated persons make sense of the reentry environment in Westview? How do they come to be involved or non-engaged with reentry service providers? What are their experiences with the community, concerns, and ideas for improvement of the current realities of the reentry system?
3. To what extent do state and local budgetary constraints and the politics that encompass corrections policies influence reentry opportunities? How do the political and economic power dynamics of the disparate players impact how reentry is done at the community level? What are the political pressures

influencing the conflict between providing reintegration services with measures of social control?

This research departs from previous work in several ways. First and foremost, the choice of a suburb as the site of a study on reentry has not been done before. The vast majority of research on reentry is conducted in large urban metropolitan areas. Because urban areas have such large numbers of “returnees”, suburban and rural communities have largely been left out of the policy debate regarding reentry and the research that examines this process (Wodahl 2006). While the numbers of the formerly incarcerated in urban areas are large and ultra-concentrated within certain urban neighborhoods (Clear et al 2001; Peck & Theodore 2009; Morenoff et al 2001; Sampson & Groves 1989; Solomon et al. 2004; Street 2007; Visher & Farrell 2005) it is difficult to examine structural level processes of reentry in large urban cities (Mustaine et al. 2006).

By contrast, a large suburb has a bounded set of institutions and leaders which makes it more feasible to examine how policies and initiatives impacting former prisoners are constructed and the reasoning behind those processes. A large suburb may be more tightly knit with key decision makers, community activists, former prisoners, and reentry service providers having contact outside of their roles in reentry.

Second, I examine the roles that institutions in one community have on the creations of a reentry environment (supportive or hostile). The level of community social capital directed towards either building or removing obstacles to successful reentry provide further evidence of how the community at large impacts the transition of the formerly incarcerated (Bazemore and Erbe 2004; Putnam 2001). By interviewing a

variety of stakeholders from disparate organizations, such as reentry providers, social service organizations, officials from law enforcement, courts, and corrections, clergy, and politicians, as well as parolees, this study presents a broad spectrum of perspectives about and experiences with reentry.

I wanted to hear first-hand from community members and look at how the institutional and organizational framework of the city influenced interactions, policies and social action regarding reentry. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that “words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor” (p. 1). As such, the use of first-person narrative to uncover the on-the-ground perspectives regarding the processes of reentry by those who work with the formerly incarcerated and the experiences and insight from formerly incarcerated persons is integral to understanding how they understand the procedures.

Finally, previous studies conducted on formerly incarcerated persons have largely focused on the efficacy of particular programs or descriptions of reentry programs and organizations. These studies therefore recruit formerly incarcerated persons for inclusion from those organizations or governmental agencies. The parolees in my study were recruited by cold-calling their home phone and therefore are not positively selected regarding their participation or connection with reentry providers in the area. Consequently, I am able to investigate how formerly incarcerated persons come into contact with reentry programs and social service providers or remain unengaged with reentry providers.

I contend that any appraisal of programs and policies within the broad spectrum reentry should consider the opinions, experiences, and concerns of those who are most directly impacted. Research too often dismisses the perspectives of local reentry “implementers” (social service providers, law enforcement officers, and governmental agency personnel), and it usually does not even attempt to ask formerly incarcerated persons about their views.

This project is a community case study. The case study as a method of sociological inquiry has a long and valued history in the discipline. Case studies can take a variety of forms and the unit of analysis can range from one person to an entire organization, corporation, or locale. Community case studies such as *Middletown* (Lynd and Lynd 1956), *Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicano Community* (Horowitz 1983), *Occasions of Faith* (Taylor 1995) and Leigh Culver’s (2004) study of the relationship between the police and the Latino community in three Midwestern communities demonstrate the diversity and scope of this method. As with any type of methodological inquiry, a case study approach has its drawbacks. The typically small size of the population being studied and limited generalizability of certain regions to the larger society certainly restrict the scope of influence of the case study, However, a major strength of the case study method is the thick, rich descriptive data it provides (Geertz 1973; Yin 2003).

The city of Westview is a western suburb within the large metropolitan area surrounding a large Midwestern city. It is one of the largest cities within the state and has a population over 175,000. Westview is unique in that its city limits encompass four

counties and it has experienced significant growth in the past decade. Considered to be a very diverse city, the current population is 59.7% White, 10.7% Black, 6.7% Asian, and .5% Native American. 41.3% are persons of Hispanic origin and non-Hispanic Whites make up 39.9% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau). The city has a significant history of being a receiving site for recent immigrants, particularly Latinos, as well as some refugee populations. 24.8% of residents are foreign-born and 42.6% of persons over age five speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau).

Westview serves as a transportation hub for both train and bus service between the rural locations of several prisons and the metropolitan area. Furthermore, it is home to one of the largest (and well-known) homeless shelters in the state. This shelter has also operated a transitional living program for many years. Westview is deemed one of the top ten high-impact reentry sites by the state Department of Corrections because of the significant flow of formerly incarcerated persons to the region. There is also a significant gang presence in Westview. According to the Westview Police Chief, the largest and most active gangs in the city are: The Latin Kings, The Gangster Disciples, Insane Deuces, The Vice Lords, Maniac Latin Disciples, Ambrose, Satan Disciples and the 4 Corner Hustlers. There are other numerous gangs in the city with loose affiliations with established gangs and others with small membership numbers who are attempting to gain a foothold.

Even though Westview has grown considerably in the past decade, it still is small enough for residents to be aware of what is happening in the city, even if it is not in their neighborhood. The political milieu in the city could aptly be described as a “fishbowl” –

as the key players are interconnected at multiple levels and the downtown area that hosts the various offices of city and state elected officials are largely within walking distance from one another. What reentry practices are offered, what is feasible, fundable and acceptable, who is eligible for a state contract, and how successful reentry is determined, are politicized inquiries.

The Data: Community Stakeholder Sampling

Permission to conduct this research was obtained through the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board review process in late January of 2012. Reentry stakeholders were chosen for recruitment for the study because of their direct work providing services to formerly incarcerated or currently incarcerated persons, their work as law enforcement, court, or corrections officials, or their capacity as community officials with policy/decision making authority and power in the locale under study. I began the interviewing process with the one reentry organization I knew about in Westview and reached out to the Police Chief and court official and the parole office to find others. I asked each interviewee about other individuals and organizations that they knew about who had contact with formerly incarcerated individuals. Occasionally, an interviewee would suggest that I should contact a particular person or organization because they were doing reentry work, hiring formerly incarcerated persons, or could provide insight to the current political process in the city of Westview. Interviewees include the Assistant Chief of Staff of the Mayor of Westview, a City Alderman, City Police Chief, County Sherriff, County State's Attorney, Court Services Deputy Director, two Acting Parole Supervisors, reentry service providers, a social service/transitional

living organization, substance abuse provider, homeless shelter director, employers of formerly incarcerated persons, faith-based community members, and the Director of a prison reform watchdog organization.

Table 1. Overview of Reentry Stakeholders Interviewed in Westview

Name	Organizational affiliation	Type of organization
Donna	Director, Second Chance Outreach	Non-profit reentry
Wes	Director, Reentry Initiatives	Non-profit reentry
Angie	Westview Director, A New Hope	Non-profit reentry
Jen	Case Manager, Community Reentry and Recovery	Non-profit reentry
Mark	Manager, Corrections Incorporated	For-profit reentry
Darren	Director, Westside Mission Residential Ministry	Social service agency
Bob	Chaplain, Westside Corrections Ministry	Prison outreach
Shavonna	Case Manager, Community Partners for Empowerment	Social service agency
Jason	Director, Our Home	Homeless shelter
George	Director, Hope Springs	Residential treatment facility
Brian	Director, Prison Watch	Non-profit advocacy organization
Ray	Mayor's Asst. Chief of Staff	City of Westview
G. Moore	Police Chief	City of Westview
L. Rogers	Alderman	City of Westview
Mary	Acting Supervisor, Parole	Division of parole
Lou	Acting Supervisor, Parole	Division of parole
P. Sanchez	Sheriff	County government
C. Bennett	State's Attorney	County government
Ellen	Deputy Director, Court Services	County government
M. Sandoval	Representative, 4th District	State government

Three different interview schedules were used for the data collection of community stakeholders (see Appendix B – Interview Schedule for Reentry Service Providers; Appendix C – Interview Schedule for Government Officials and Community Stakeholders; and Appendix D – Interview Schedule for Employers of Formerly Incarcerated Persons) to account for the various roles and perspectives of the stakeholders interviewed. In interviews with community stakeholders, participants were asked their thoughts and opinions concerning the reentry of former prisoners in the Westview community. Interviews ranged in length from a half-hour to almost three hours. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed professionally, fully or selectively transcribed (relevant sections transcribed fully) by myself, and three were fully transcribed by a paid research assistant. Through multiple readings of the interview data, themes guided by the research questions emerged.

The Data: Parolee Sampling

Permission for access to parolee contact information was obtained from the state Department of Corrections and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Loyola University Chicago in late July, 2012. Formerly incarcerated persons were purposively selected from a list of parolees residing within the city boundaries of Westview which was obtained from the state Department of Parole office in Westview and was not intended to be representative. From the list of current persons on parole received from DOC, I utilized the Inmate Search tool from the DOC website to look up each person listed. Excluded from recruitment were females, persons over the age of 40, juveniles and parolees with interstate contracts (parolees from other states who had moved to Westview

and were being supervised by the Westview Parole Office). In addition, when I obtained the list of parolees from the Westview Parole Supervisor, five parolees were removed from the list by the supervisor for my safety. He instructed me that these five were not persons I should contact because I would be meeting participants on my own and it had been determined that given the severity of their prior offenses against women or current leadership position in active gang membership, DOC did not feel that I would be safe in contacting them or interviewing them.

Potential parolee interviewees were contacted through telephone calls to the number listed on the parole sheet to ask for their participation in the study. The recruitment of parolees for participation was challenging and the vast majority of parolees contacted did not consent to be interviewed. Determining eligibility of participation for parolees began by looking at the parole release date on the state Department of Corrections website Inmate Search page. Initially, it was attempted to have half of the parolees interviewed be on parole for one month or less, with the remaining half be on parole for 6 months or more. This proved problematic, as many of those recently released were in a shelter, transitional living home, or in-patient substance abuse facilities where they did not have access to a phone. It is not known if messages left for potential participants reached the intended party. Further, many parolees did not have their own phone and messages were left with family members to contact me. In addition, a significant number of parolees did not have working numbers or phone numbers with answering machines.

Many of the recently released parolees were on electronic home monitoring and have very limited movement hours (hours approved by their parole officer where they could leave their residence) and those hours were needed for their job search or did not include weekend hours. Lack of transportation was a major roadblock to recruitment. Only one of the three public library locations in Westview had private meetings rooms and this location was not in the neighborhood nearest to the residences of most parolees. Given the subject matter of this research, I deemed it unsatisfactory to conduct the interviews with parolees in a non-private space. Only a few parolees interested in participating had their own vehicle and most had to rely on family members or friends to loan them a vehicle or drive them to the interview site. Several recent parolees did not have a current driver's license and for those on electronic home monitoring, oftentimes the availability of family members and movement hours did not coincide enough to be able to conduct the interview. Several parolees were motivated enough to utilize the city busses to be able to participate. The closest bus stop to the interview site is over a mile away and several walked through rain and cold temperatures to be interviewed.

Sadly, numerous parolees I attempted to contact were unavailable because they were back in prison or currently in jail, as told to me by a family member. No-shows for scheduled interviews were frequent and attempts to reschedule were unsuccessful in all but one case. On one occasion, a parolee with a scheduled interview did not show up for the interview and I learned upon calling his home that he was not there because he had been arrested. In another instance, a parolee with a scheduled interview did not show up and when I called him, he informed me that on his way out the door of the transitional

living home run by a reentry organization, he was asked by one of the directors where he was going. He told them about the interview and was informed that he was not to go. Fearing that he would be kicked out and become homeless, he told me that he would not be able to do the interview. This instance was surprising and disturbing, as I had previously interviewed one of the directors of this reentry organization for this study and had interviewed a parolee at their location months earlier.

It is not surprising that recruitment was difficult, as a cold call from an unknown person may be considered suspicious for anyone, and certainly more so for a person with a criminal background who is on parole. Several parolees I spoke with were hesitant to speak with me for fear that they were being set up to send them back to prison. With each phone contact, I explained that the supervisor of the Westview parole office knew about my research and they could check with him to make sure that I was who I said I was. Furthermore, I repeatedly stressed that although the parole office knew about my research, they did not know who I was recruiting, interviewing, or any information from the interview. They were also informed that they would choose a fake name to be used during the interview and the study, and that participating would not help or hurt their parole status.

All but one of the interviews with parolees took place in a private meeting room in a public library in Westview. The remaining parolee interviewed had no access to transportation and that interview was conducted in the conference room at the office of the reentry organization providing the transitional living home where this parolee was living. Interview questions were as loosely structured as possible, allowing respondents

to provide details in their own words and to allow for them to engage in their own interpretations of the reentry process (Lofland et al. 2005; Weiss 1995). Parolees who were interviewed were asked to describe their experiences and feelings about getting out of prison, re-connecting with family members, obtaining housing, searching for a job, their relationship with their parole officer, knowledge about and services received from any reentry providers and/or social service providers in Westview (see Appendix E – Interview Schedule for Formerly Incarcerated Persons). Parolee interviewees were compensated with a twenty dollar gift card to a restaurant prior to the interview to thank them for their time and effort. Interviews with parolees ranged in length from 45 minutes to one and one-half hours. Pseudonyms were used throughout the interview process to preserve the anonymity of the interviewee. All of the interviews with parolees were fully transcribed. Through multiple readings of the interview data, themes guided by the research questions emerged.

To protect the anonymity of the parolees and stakeholders in this study, all of their names, as well as the names of the organizations where they work and the location of the city have all been changed.

Archival Data

An analysis of documents from reentry and social service organizations, publically available city documents, publically available Department of Corrections documents, and relevant articles from local newspapers were used for this study. I collected key documents from organizations I visited, including annual reports, public relations documents, and flyers available to formerly incarcerated persons. Websites for

reentry organizations, service providers, and state, local and city government sites were visited numerous times to search for updated information. A search of the archives of local newspapers for articles relating to local politics, policies relating to crime, and the current state of the state and local budget crisis was ongoing throughout the research process.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Parolees

Characteristic	Value
Age range	20–38
Lived in Westview Prior to Incarceration	8
Other Suburbs	3
From the City	1
Race/Ethnicity	
African-American	8
Latino	3
Caucasian	1
Education Level Achieved	
Some High School	4
H.S. Diploma	1
GED	3
Some college	4
Length of Incarceration Range	0 months to 10 years (Average 21.25 months) 10 had Prior Incarcerations
Length of Time Since Release: Range	3 weeks to 8 months
On Electronic Home Monitoring at Interview	4
Employed Pre-Incarceration	5
Currently Employed (one part-time and intermittent)	4

Limitations

With a total respondent size of 33, this study is not meant to be representative, nor is it generalizable to the myriad of issues surrounding the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons into communities. Recruitment of parolees was difficult and limited to males under the age of 40 and is not representative of all parolees in Westview. Further, because the study was conducted independently of reentry organizations, the recruitment of clients receiving services from reentry organizations was not guaranteed. Parolees who agreed to participate may be positively selected “self-changers” as parolees who were actively involved in continued criminal behavior may have been reluctant to participate.

In addition to the difficulties encountered recruiting parolees for inclusion in the study, recruiting employers of formerly incarcerated persons to agree to an interview was likewise problematic. I learned of businesses that employed former offenders from reentry organizations, social service providers, parole supervisors, and law enforcement personnel and made contact with those businesses. However, most were reluctant to be interviewed and despite attempting to gain access by approaching multiple-levels of management at these businesses, I was denied access. Further, some local employers were subsidiaries of larger companies and my calls were forwarded to the parent company and rarely returned. Frequently I was asked by managers, owners, and human resource directors how I had “heard that they hired criminals” and wanted to know what “my angle” was regarding hiring people with a criminal background. Although I assured them that I was a researcher and didn’t have an angle, they refused to be interviewed.

Therefore, out of the 23 businesses contacted, I secured interviews with only two employers of formerly incarcerated persons.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPONENTS OF THE REENTRY ENVIRONMENT OF WESTVIEW

This chapter sketches the composition of the population of formerly incarcerated persons, policies and programs in the state which impact this population, contextually situates Westview, identifies local government authorities relevant to reentry policy, and describes the organizations that work directly with formerly incarcerated persons in Westview.

The Formerly Incarcerated and the Condition of Reentry Programs

In 1978, parole release was abolished in the state and the Department of Corrections moved to a form of indeterminate sentencing. There are five classes of felonies (Class X and Classes 1-4) in which the range of sentence length varies depending upon the severity of the crime someone is convicted of. Between 1974 and 1989, the incarcerated population in the state rose by 276 percent and the recidivism rate increased steadily from 10 percent in 1974 to 25 percent in 1989 (Simon 1993). By 2011, 48,978 inmates were in state prisons and the return rate of releases was 47 percent, the lowest rate in six years. The total number of parolees supervised during 2011 was 24,693 (IDOC Annual Report FY2011).

The most recent figures from the state DOC report that the total population of prisons stands at 49,348 (IDOC Quarterly Report January 2013) at a cost of \$21,451 per inmate per annum. Over ninety-four percent of state inmates are male and predominately

persons of color. In 2011, 56.7% of prisoners were black, 29.5% white, 13.3% Hispanic, .3% Asian, and .1% Native American. Those ranging in age from 30 to 44 constituted 42.4% of inmates, with those aged 22 to 29 making up a further 26.5% of the incarcerated. Younger inmates ranging from ages 18 to 21 were 8.5% of the prison population and a disturbing 72 inmates were under the age of eighteen.

In 2011, there were over 30,500 exits (releases to Adult Transitional Centers, Mandatory Supervised Release, parole, discharge or death per year (IDOC Annual Report FY 2011). Further, the Division of Parole supervised 24,693 parolees with 380 parole agents. The recidivism rate, which is officially defined as “the percentage of adults re-incarcerated within three years of release,” for 2011 was 47%, the lowest in ten years (IDOC Annual Report FY2011, p. 23). Parole violation statistics show that the 10,155 parolees were returned to prison for technical violations (31.8% of intakes) while 1,930 parolees were convicted of new offenses that resulted in their return to prison (6.1% of intakes). The projection for an increase in prison exits in the near future is significant as the state’s fiscal crisis remains unresolved. Further, only 3.1% of inmates in this state are serving sentences of life without parole (IDOC Annual Report FY 2011).

Educational services and vocational training opportunities for inmates and the capacity of available slots vary between facilities. Some of the educational services in prison include GED and ESL classes, a literacy program, and college courses. Total participation in all educational categories in November 2012 was 7,161 (IDOC Quarterly Report January 2013). In 2011, 1,957 prisoners completed a GED program, 1,986 received a college vocational certificate and 173 earned an Associate Degree (IDOC

Annual Report FY 2011). Vocational opportunities are varies and some of the offerings are: auto body, barbering, construction, dog grooming, food service, graphic arts, laundry/dry cleaning services, small business management, technologies/computers, custodial services, warehousing, and welding. With a total of 49,348 inmates, the total number of prisoners participating in vocational training in November, 2012 was a mere 2,152. Because 1,732 of these participants were receiving both educational and vocational services, the total number of inmates receiving some educational or vocational training while incarcerated during this time period was 7,581 (IDOC Quarterly Report January 2013). Further, 7,732 inmates participated in drug treatment programs during 2011 while incarcerated (IDOC Annual Report FY 2011).

There are three initiatives impacting formerly incarcerated persons underway at the state level. Adult Redeploy focuses on providing grants to local jurisdictions to assist non-violent offenders through community-based interventions using evidence-based practices. However, if the target of 25% reduction of prison commitments is not met, there is a financial fine for that jurisdiction. The Risks, Assets, and Needs Assessment (RANA) is a new risk-assessment tool to be implemented first in parole, and soon to be implemented in probation to examine the needs, assets and risks of each offender. This is an attempt to individualize case management and risk-assessment for court-involved individuals and it is hoped that its use will reduce recidivism rates and increase public safety (IDOC Annual Report FY 2011). Further, in 2010, the Department of Corrections and the Department of Public Health began endorsing community-led Summit of Hope events, where invited parolees and probationers can attend a “community expo” where

social service organizations, faith-based community organizations, and governmental agencies provide information and services to assist in reentry and reintegration. Offerings vary but most often, participants can receive assistance with obtaining state identification cards, health and vision screenings, HIV testing, information and referrals for food, clothing, shelter, counseling, child support services, veteran's assistance, and employment services (IDOC Annual Report FY 2011). It is worth noting that a Summit of Hope has not taken place near the Westview area, despite the large numbers of formerly incarcerated persons in the city.

Westview Governmental Agencies and Authorities: An Overview

Formerly incarcerated persons have to negotiate the plethora of federal, state, county and city governmental agencies that have some supervision and/or reentry impact on them, including: Department of Corrections, Division of Parole, County State's Attorney's Office, Department of Human Service, Department of Children and Family Services, and many others. While the work of city and county law enforcement/court officials are not directly focused upon formerly incarcerated persons, nevertheless, the scope of their work leads them to have contact with some formerly incarcerated persons and parolees from DOC in city and county courtrooms and jails. Certainly, as key state actors and community stakeholders, their perspectives and observations about reentry provide insight about the current conditions and limitation on a structural and organizational level regarding the reentry process.

Westview is currently designated as one of the top ten high-impact areas of crime and reentry in the state and it had the third largest reentry rate in the state in 2007 (1.7

parolees per every 1,000 residents) (Community Safety and Reentry Working Group 2007). Three of the four counties that are partially contained within the city limits of Westview are in the top five prison commitment counties in the state and the same three counties are in the top eight counties for parolee reentry sites (IDOC Annual Report FY2011). The area of Westview that has the highest concentration of formerly incarcerated persons contains six times more parolees than that of its closest neighboring city (Community Safety and Reentry Working Group 2007).

Westview City Government

The Mayor of Westview was elected in 2007 and was reelected in 2009 and 2013. The city has 10 Ward Alderman and two At-Large Aldermen. In addition, there are six school districts and seven townships located within city limits. Despite a year-long effort to interview the Mayor he did not grant an interview. I was finally granted permission to interview the Mayor's Assistant Chief-of-Staff who spoke to me as "the voice of the Mayor." I also interviewed one city Ward Alderman who has been outspoken concerning reentry and social service organizations in the city of Westview.

Westview Police Department

The Westview Police Department is headed by Chief G. Moore, a man with 32 years of experience in the Westview Department. He was a Deputy Chief for many years and has been the Chief for almost 4 years. His department covers a rapidly growing city that encompasses over 175,000 residents and 45 square miles of territory with 289 officers. They have experienced layoffs in the past few years while calls for service have increased. Chief Moore stated that in 2010 (the most recent figures available) there were

101,000 emergency 911 calls, 178,000 non-emergency calls, 200,000 dispatch calls, and 16,000 dispatch fire and EMS calls. Although they have a long awaited new headquarters building, they continue to be strapped for funds for technology and manpower. The 2012 budget for the police department was \$62 million dollars, which is lower than nearby suburbs with much smaller populations. Therefore, the salaries for an officer in Westview are significantly lower than that of Westview's nearest suburban neighbors. Recruitment is further hampered by Westview's reputation as a tough city with gang problems.

Kings County Sheriff's Department

The city of Westview is located within 4 counties in the state, with Kings County making up the greater share of the city limits. Kings County covers 520 square miles and is headed by Sheriff P. Sahchez, a veteran law enforcement officer in his sixth year as the Sheriff. Although he is supposed to have 90 sworn officers due to the population of the county, his budget is currently funded for only 85 deputies. Furthermore, he stated that at times that number is decreased to 75 because of injuries, leave, military service, or family/maternity leave. This department manages the 640 bed county jail, 7 courthouses, serves evictions, foreclosure summons, serve legal papers, and serve warrants. At the time of our interview, he stated that they have 14,000 – 20,000 warrants at any given time and only three deputies to serve warrants.

Kings County State's Attorney and Court Services Department

The current State's Attorney, C. Bennett, has been in his position for two years and has worked in the department for over 20 years. He has ushered in more diversion programs in his tenure, creating programs for first time non-violent offenders

(misdemeanor drug and alcohol offenders), prostitution, and domestic violence. They are in the process of expanding to low level felony drug offenders. Ellen, the Deputy Director of Court Services has worked in court and juvenile services for 15 years. For 2011, the county had a 78-79% completion rate of its diversion programs which include evaluation, treatment, community service and a letter of apology to the victim. In 2011, the number of felony cases has decreased, but other offenses have risen. Overall, for 2011, the Probation Department supervised 1,971 adult felony cases. 511 misdemeanor cases, 30 traffic cases, and 220 DUI cases. Currently, each probation officer handles a caseload of between 150 to 175 for adult cases and 20 to 30 for juvenile cases.

Division of Parole: Westview Office

Currently, the Division of Parole in the state is in crisis, much of it due to the state budget deficit and the impact that budget cuts have had on the numbers of personnel, availability and quality of resources, and the morale of its employees. The city of Westview has not had a Supervisor of Parole for several years, relying instead upon an Acting Supervisor. The inability to hire a fully vetted supervisor has been stymied by impending cuts to parole and the lack of desire for someone to take the post under the current budgetary circumstances. At the time of our interview in May of 2012 the Acting Supervisor, Mary, informed me that she had stepped into this position before, during a transitional period. She agreed to become the Acting Supervisor this time because the office needed consistency from within and she was concerned for the morale of the parole officers if someone from outside the office had been appointed Acting Supervisor.

Several months later, I contacted the Westview parole office to collect the contact information on parolees being released into Westview and learned that Mary had been promoted to the Assistant Supervisor of a nearby DOC Adult Transition Center. The new Acting Supervisor, Lou asked me to come in so he could update me on what was going on within the office. I learned that he too, had reluctantly taken the post, but had done so out of concern for his fellow agents in the building.

The main stressors experienced by parole supervisors and their agents in Westview were the paucity of resources that parole was receiving from the state (lack of cars for parole agents, under-manned offices), trepidation over the governor planning to cut the number of parole agents by half, and the threat by the governor and legislature to cut their pensions. These developments were viewed by both parole supervisors, and according to them, their parole agents as evidence that they were not valued by DOC and the state government. This lack of respect and air of dismissal has been projected into their relationships with reentry organizations, as recounted by Mark, from Corrections Incorporated:

I think it's a little bit of politics...and a little bit of mindset. Across the state you'll hear things like..."programs like Corrections Incorporated are stealing from my pension. You know, there's no money left, because we're paying all these vendors to do work that doesn't need to be done. We've got parole agents that can do this." And, by "do this," I mean, do what parole agents do. It's kind of a philosophy difference.

Colon (2009) argues that the quality of relationship a parolee has with their assigned parole officer and the number and type of programs they are mandated to participate in impacts their quality of life after release and their "reentry success" level. Further, the parole office located in Westview is the largest in the state, with

approximately 2,000 parolees to supervise and an ever decreasing number of parole agents to do so. By May, 2013, the Westview office had only 13 parole agents and the caseload of each agent ranged from 120 to 140 parolees.

Westview: Typologies of Reentry Providers

Organizations that specialize in providing reentry services can differ drastically according to organizational structure, capacity, philosophy, and funding sources. While not a perfect fit, the “three tiers” model delineated by Thompkins (2010) is a useful model to outline the reentry service offerings in Westview. Tier one is made up of organizations that have been doing reentry work for years and have empirical and anecdotal evidence of positive results. They have established records that allow them to receive significant grants from Federal and State sources. I argue, however, that there is a dual-reentry market at the tier one level because some reentry providers are for-profit correctional corporations, while others maintain a not-for-profit status.

A New Hope has done reentry work in the metropolitan area through their main city-based office and several satellite offices for over forty years. During the time of this study, A New Hope conducted a one year pilot study in Westview. Community Reentry and Recovery is a non-profit that has a large contract with the state to provide case management services. On the for-profit side, Corrections Incorporated is large corporation that holds contracts with the state to provide assessments, day reporting, and a few other services for parolees.

Tier two reentry organizations are smaller organizations; some are “Mom and Pop” style organizations, while others are in the process of building their influence and

reach. What separates tier one and two are the amount of resources and social capital that they bring to reentry work (Thompkins 2010). In this study, Second Chance Outreach has been around the longest and receives the vast majority of its funding from Federal and State grants and has established itself politically at the state and city level as a recognizable reentry organization. Reentry Initiatives is a relative newcomer to Westview, having only been in operation since 2009, and their funding comes from the client payments for services, donations and grants.

According to Thompkins (2010), the third tier is made up of persons or small groups of personally committed people that work with formerly incarcerated persons. These groups may operate informally out of churches or homes and do so on a voluntary basis with no formal budget. In the “Westview” area, there are some churches in nearby suburbs that have a core of volunteers who visit prisons, jails or serve as mentors to formerly incarcerated persons. This tier is represented in Westview by other organizations that provide some reentry services (Westside Missions, Community Partnership for Empowerment, and Our Home) in conjunction with their work in the community, but reentry is not the primary focus of either their mission statements or daily work. For example, the Community Partnership for Empowerment location in Westview does not directly target the formerly incarcerated for their employment programming, but upon finding that many people who came to them for training and application assistance had been incarcerated, has altered their programming to better meet the needs of clients with a background.

State and local governmental agencies, for-profit correctional businesses, and community-based non-profit providers were included in this study. Some providers focused strictly on providing reentry services, while others included services to the formerly incarcerated as a part of their larger service mission to the community. For example, behavioral health and addiction service providers in the community served populations outside of the scope of the Department of Corrections.

Community Organizations

A New Hope, Inc.

A New Hope was established in 1972 by two former priests through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to assist the formerly incarcerated obtain vocational training to find jobs and enter unions after their release from prison or jail. It is one of the largest non-profit community-based reentry organizations in the country. It operates through multiple sites in two Midwestern states. While the primary focus of the organization is employment services, they provide assistance with housing, substance abuse, education and life skills development at some of their locations.

Beginning in October 2011, this organization began an experimental community-focused reentry program in Westview (based on a program already in place in the city). Westview was selected as the site of this research project when it was discovered that that recidivism rate for Westview was significantly higher than that of the surrounding collar counties of the metro area. The program was slated to begin in March of 2012, but did not receive funding to hire employees until August and a re-entry coach was not hired until October. Criteria for enrollment in this program include residing within city

Table 3. Stakeholder Organizations

Stakeholder	Organization
Reentry organizations	Place of Hope, Inc. Community Reentry and Recovery Corrections, Inc. Second Chance Outreach Reentry Initiatives
Social service organizations	Community Partnership for Empowerment Our Home Westside Mission Residential Ministry Westside Mission Corrections Ministry
State government	Westview State Representative
County government agencies	County Sheriff State's Attorney's Office Court Services Office
Westview city government	Office of the Mayor Ward Alderman
Additional stakeholder	Prison Watch Association

boundaries of Westview, having a felony conviction and having been released from prison from March 2011 to present (at time of interview in February 2012). The project was limited to 100 clients and as of February 2012, 72 clients were enrolled, many of them having been enrolled prior to their release from prison. The early enrollment is not done by the employees who work out of the Westview office, but by those in the outreach program by A New Hope that conducts pre-release programming, referred to as prison welcome home panels, within several prisons in the state. The Westview pilot project is funded through the research branch of the organization until August 2012 and is not expected to be renewed. The program is located in suite of two small offices in a historical building in the heart of the downtown area with good access to public

transportation. There are two full-time employees (reentry coach and sector manager) at the Westview site while the project manager's time is split between Westview (80%) and a more established project in the nearby urban city (20%). The range of services that A New Hope offers through this program are: Job Readiness Training Program (JRT), reentry case management services (coordination of resources, guidance and support to client), group and peer mentoring, and coordination between their case management and local parole officers.

Community Reentry and Recovery

This organization is an independent, not-for-profit agency case management contracted by the state to provide clinical case management services for persons under the care of the criminal justice, corrections, juvenile justice, child welfare, and other public systems. Community Reentry and Recovery operates throughout the state in correctional and court facilities and provides services at multiple sites statewide. The Westview case manager for CRR explained to me that they are a part of DOC and direct services provided to the Department of Corrections include reentry case management services, risk assessments, and substance abuse assessments. They also provide referrals to community-based substance abuse treatment, mental health services, housing support, education, job training, emergency shelter, emergency food, primary healthcare, and transportation. The stated goal of the organization is “to see that under-served populations gain access to the services they need for health and self-sufficiency, while also ensuring that public and private resources are used most efficiently. Under the leadership of the Department of Corrections, CRR works to ensure that community

reentry begins on the first day of incarceration, connecting individuals to programs and services both within and outside the institution to help restore them to productive citizenship.” (Corrections & Community Reentry Programs www.tasc.org).

In Westview, the lone CRR employee, a case manager, works out of the Parole Office. She covers a five county area containing large rural areas and her supervisor, secretary, team leader and another case manager are located in the closest organizational office over 70 miles away. The average caseload for a case manager in the Westview office is between 52-60 parolees. The goal is to see no more than 6 parolees per day, but the current caseload and the large geographical region covered by the Westview case manager makes this impossible. Parolees who receive CRR services must be released from a “treatment prison” in the state and meet the assessment criteria determined by the Parole Board and the Division of Parole to qualify them for services. Assessments are completed by CRR case managers who work in the prisons and, upon release, parolees are required to make phone contact with their local case manager within 72 hours followed by a face-to-face meeting within seven days. Case managers meet with parolees once every two weeks for three months. If they complete the three months without any police contact or dirty urine drops, they are dropped down Level II, and have contact with the case manager to once a month. In the Westview office, the CRR case manager stated that she often has a Parole Agent with her to visit with her clients, particularly those who are Class X felons, those with a history of antagonism with corrections officials, and those who live in very rural areas. This organization receives the majority of its funding from the state Department of Corrections. Additional funding is received from federal,

state, and county monies, grants and donations from private foundations, organizations and individuals (TASC Programs in the Collar Counties).

Corrections Incorporated

Formed as a for-profit corporation in 1978, Corrections Incorporated (CI) was contracted by various state governments to providing electronic monitoring offender supervision by 1985 and had expanded into providing “community-based day reporting services” for parolees, probationers, and pre-trial defendants by 1997. Currently, Corrections Incorporated holds about 900 contracts with federal, state, and local governmental agencies for their products (a variety of electronic monitoring/surveillance devices) and services (About BI Incorporated). In 2011, Corrections Incorporated was acquired as a wholly-owned subsidiary of The GEO Group for \$415 million (businesswire.com). This multinational corporation’s involvement in corrections, surveillance and community corrections is widespread. They operate correctional facilities as disparate as Guantanamo Bay, state-based private (for-profit) prisons, day reporting centers, and 24/7 call center monitoring of their devices and technical support.

They operate eight locations in the state and the office in Westview is located across the hall from the Westview Parole Office in a building on the far west side of the city near a freeway entrance. The other side of the building houses a for-profit college. Given their contract with the state, Corrections Incorporated provides services only to parolees who have been assessed by the Division of Parole to be high-risk offenders. They are to check in five days a week, rather than the typical seven days a week for 30 or 60 days, depending upon their release requirements set by parole. The Westview location

is the only CI location in the state that is not open on weekends due to budget cuts and lack of weekend bus service to this location. The program manager shares his time between the Westview location and a partner office in a city over 70 miles away. On-site services include group substance abuse assessment, MIT therapy lab (computer-based cognitive behavior therapy program to address criminal thinking and moral development), anger management groups, employment readiness groups, and random urinalysis testing for drug use. Substance abuse treatment is not given by Corrections Incorporated employees; these services are contracted out with Sober Living, a local substance abuse treatment organization.

Corrections Incorporated does not provide direct employment services. According to the program manager in Westview, the goal of their program is to get the parolee ready to begin the search for work, typically with the local unemployment office. The program is structured to last for four months and a parolee can earn early release from parole for completing the program. Many parolees do not graduate from the program, as enrollment with them is up to the client's parole officer. All of the other states which contract with CI do not have their own functioning parole department, as they typically are hired to replace the state's parole system through privatization of state services. In March, 2012 the Corrections Incorporated office in Westview was closed due to decreased enrollment because of state budget cuts for contracted services for parolees and the resulting lack of profit.

Second Chance Outreach

Incorporated in 1997 as a non-profit organization, Second Chance Outreach (SCO) was started by a married couple who saw the need for localized services for the formerly incarcerated in the suburbs. The husband, who was incarcerated 40 years ago, was a prison ministry volunteer and his wife was working as a volunteer with victims of crime when they decided to start their own organization bring awareness to the problems faced by the formerly incarcerated and to provide local services to those persons. The decision to incorporate stemmed from a \$20,000 insurance settlement following a car accident. The executive director has been on the Governor's Reentry Task Force, was involved in getting Reentry Summits started in prisons and claims that they were the first to begin the restorative justice movement to the state.

Second Chance Outreach is located in a recently acquired 2-story house near the downtown on the west side of the city. Their former location, neighboring the nearest parole office, was vacated because of a loss of funding. Their mission statement states that the goal of the organization is to help offenders reintegrate and become productive citizens and offer support to the families of the formerly incarcerated. Services offered at RO include drug and alcohol assessment/counseling, anger management counseling, support groups, transitional job program, transportation assistance, and limited transitional housing for formerly incarcerated persons. This organization is DASA (Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse) licensed and services are also provided in Spanish. While the majority of funding comes from the state through contracts and reimbursement for services, additional monies are received through The United Way,

grants (Second Chance Act, etc.), and donations of goods (food, clothing, and furniture) from local faith groups, non-profits and businesses (food banks, furniture stores, second-hand shops, and The Salvation Army).

Reentry Initiatives

Reentry Initiatives is a not-for-profit organization founded in 2009 by a former parole officer, who is also an ordained minister. Located in a former storefront on a main avenue in the downtown area of Westview, it is easily accessible by public transportation (city buses and suburban rail system) and is within walking distance of The Salvation Army, a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, City Hall, and a Public Library. This organization serves parolees, probationers, and their families, and people “who were incarcerated a long time ago, but still feel the effects of the stigma of incarceration every day (Wes –RI Founder/Director).”

Reentry Initiatives approach to reentry is advertised as comprehensive, from basic non-clinical needs (toiletries, storage of personal belongings, and access to a copy machine/computer) to intensive services for parolees, probationers, former prisoners, and their family members. Services offered include substance abuse assessment/counseling, anger management, individual/family counseling, DUI assessment, case management, education, employment readiness services and job referral assistance, and for a short period, operated two transitional homes for formerly incarcerated persons. They also have a Youth Prevention program that provides referrals and partnerships for tutoring, sports clubs, mentorship programs, and trainings. Substance abuse services are offered in both Spanish and English, and Spanish interpretation is available at their location. The

staff at Reentry Initiatives is diverse and one key staff member was hired five years ago shortly after her release from prison. Funding is obtained through fees for services, state contracts, grants and local donations. By February 2012, RI had moved to a new location, with help from Westview city block grant funds and with full support from the mayor's office. They had hired a Clinical Director and the total number of paid and volunteer staff had grown to eight. Services had expanded to include mental health counseling and full DUI services. Furthermore, internship programs with a local, four-year private college for social work students and an urban college with students in the Graduate Clinical Psychology Program had been established.

Community Partnership for Empowerment

The Community Partnership for Empowerment was founded in 1975 as a not-for-profit organization to provide services and opportunities to low-income and displaced persons in a four-county area of the Western suburbs of the metropolitan area. It is a community-based organization involved in housing, economic development, education, activities for youth, cultural opportunities, and health and welfare. The site is accessible by public transportation and is located along a busy road in the city on the far west side of Westview. There are a wide range of services offered at CPE and major programs include emergency housing, rental assistance, housing financial counseling, entrepreneurial mentoring, pre-apprentice construction program, employment assistance workshops, vocational training, youth employment, computer training, GED classes, and an alternative school for middle and high school students who otherwise would be expelled from a school in one of the districts in Westview. While often viewed in the community

as an African-American organization, their services are available for all and the mission statement of the organization focuses on securing equal opportunities for disadvantaged persons, including, but not limited to, people of color, women and persons with disabilities.

The primary service for formerly incarcerated persons (ages 18 and older) consists of case management to assist in reentry and gaining employment. Currently, one case manager and one assistant handle a caseload of 75 formerly incarcerated persons (80% male and 20% female). Over 90% of their reentry clients are persons of color and many have Spanish as their primary language. Typically, clients are referred by parole or probation officers, other community organizations, and family members. Services for formerly incarcerated persons include Empowering Job Seeker workshops, resume building, computer training, assistance in the expungement of criminal record, referrals to potential employers, and the dislocated worker program. One unique reentry feature of this organization is the Offender Community Service Program. This program is based on a restorative justice model whereby offenders perform unpaid work within the community, as a special condition of probation or supervised release, as a way to repay their debt or right the wrong that they have done. One example of this program is former offenders rehabilitating housing for low-income families. This program is open to parolees and probationers and Community Partnership for Empowerment works with parole and probation officers and the courts.

As all of the funding for this organization comes from grants at the federal, state, and local levels, the services offered at any given time are dependent upon the current

funding restrictions and capacity. Temporary housing assistance for formerly incarcerated persons has been available in the past, but is not currently available because they do not have a current grant for housing.

Our Home

Westview is home to one of the largest homeless shelters in the state, housing over 1,000 persons per year in its shelter or transitional housing programs. Our Home was founded in 1983 and services include an emergency shelter, a daytime drop-in center with meals, case management services, assistance in obtaining housing, identification card assistance, on-site medical clinic, employment training in conjunction with a local community college, a legal clinic, veteran's benefits assistance, homeless prevention services for those at-risk of eviction, a transitional living community (offering classes in money management, employment maintenance, and parenting skills), permanent supportive housing for those unable to live independently, substance abuse counseling, and mental health counseling. The organization and its facilities offer a "hub" for receiving services from contracted agencies that provide specialized services, such as job training, substance abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and veteran's services.

While they do not offer services specifically for formerly incarcerated persons, many of their clients have criminal backgrounds and they do provide a location that someone being released from DOC can come to. As Jason, the Executive Director explained, they have a stipulation that the release must have been a client of theirs just prior to incarceration:

Our policy is that DOC owes people a greater responsibility than to lock them up for a time and then dump them on a homeless shelter. We will only take people straight out of prison if they were, if they stayed with us right before they went to prison. The idea is that you were plucked out of homelessness, incarcerated, and okay, it's not the DOC's job, necessarily, to take you from homelessness to rebuild your life. Okay, we'll take them back. If you were housed before, and they plucked you out of housing, they don't get to just dump you back into homelessness. We refuse to take anybody who was not with us immediately before incarceration.

Westside Mission Residential Ministry

Westside Mission is a long-standing, not-for-profit, social service organization in Westview. Initially founded in 1928 to provide shelter and assistance to large numbers of transient men, it has expanded into assisting women and children with shelter, prison ministry, urban youth tutoring and day camp, refugee transition assistance, and operating a resale shop. Funding for Westside Mission Ministries comes from Early on, Westside Mission recognized the plethora of needs that formerly incarcerated persons had upon their return to society. Darren, the Director of the Residential Living Ministry Program, stated that their program is a "Bible-based, Christ-centered, comprehensive 6-month residential ministry for troubled men whose lives are out of control from drugs, alcohol or destructive behavior." Not surprisingly, many of the homeless they serve have an incarceration background and many people who become homeless eventually run afoul of the law.

The residential program is for men only and has 98 beds. The residential program is focused upon spiritual development, Bible-based counseling, and work rehabilitation to assist the residents to change their way of thinking and behaving. Chapel is held daily and group programming to address specific needs (such as addiction) are held regularly. Residents each have a job within the organization,(warehouse, maintenance shop, custodians, cooks, transportation of goods to the resale shop, and various positions in the resale shop, Clothing assistance for residents is provided through the resale shop and medical care is provided through a partnership with a community health center at no cost to the residents. Educational opportunities are provide through on-line classes through a learning center. An important aspect to this program is the mentoring relationship that each resident has with a member of a local church. This relationship is meant to last beyond the 6-month residential program, so that the resident has a community to go to for assistance once their time at Westside Mission is completed.

Twelve of the 98 beds in the Residential Living Program are for residents who have graduated from the program and work for Westside Mission as Resident Assistants or the Resident Coordinator. They work with new resident intake interviews, appointment scheduling, record-keeping, and other administrative tasks. The position of resident coordinators serves as a transition period from resident to fully independent living (Life Change Newsletter, Spring 2012). An independent living home, with 8 beds, is located in a nearby suburb for those needing an additional transitional period.

Westside Mission Corrections Ministry

Corrections Ministry is the prison outreach branch of Westside Mission Ministries. At its helm is a bearded and tattooed Chaplain who was incarcerated multiple times in his youth. Other than his secretary, he is the only staff person for this ministry, relying heavily upon an average of 150 volunteers, garnered through relationships with area churches.

“Chaplain Bob” and his volunteers operate weekly programs in three of the four County Jails and two County Youth Correctional Centers that are a part of the city limits of Westview. They also provide weekly programs at the Department of Corrections Women’s Adult Transition Center in Westview. Weekly services include chapel, Bible Study, Transforming Incarcerated Dad’s Classes, Motherhood Classes, literature and Bible distribution, and individual counseling/mentoring. Averages of 1,000 to 1,500 inmates are seen on a monthly basis at both county and state correctional facilities through this program. The prison outreach ministry branch of Westside Mission serves as a link to the Residential Living Program by establishing a relationship with the incarcerated person, providing information about available services at Westside Mission and other organizations in the area, and discussing realistic plans for life on the outside. In 2011, 70 men who had been involved with New Life Corrections Ministry while incarcerated entered the residential living program after their release.

Additional Stakeholder: Prison Watch Association

This organization is currently the only non-partisan prison watchdog organization in the state. The mission of the Prison Watch Association is to monitor the conditions of

prisons and juvenile incarceration facilities, publish research documents concerning prisons in the state and promote prison reform to enhance public safety and the reintegration of offenders. Paid staff members who perform administrative tasks and perform public speaking and media responsibilities are rare and the bulk of their members are activists and advocates of prison reform who serve as volunteers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REENTRY ENVIRONMENT OF WESTVIEW:

ATOMIZED AND COMPETITIVE

What is successful reentry? My bar would be kind of low probably. I would think that someone who follows up bad decision with good ones. That's kind of what I try to impress upon my people...is that nobody's perfect. You screw up, you call me. We'll get you back on track. You need help? Call me. We'll get you back on track. That is a successful reentry, to own up to what you did or take responsibility...or be held accountable for what you did. To say "I used drugs last night" is successful. To blow me off and lie is not successful. If I can get a guy to start feeling accountable or responsible for whatever he did...I think that is my definition of success.

—Mary, Parole Supervisor in Westview

This chapter describes relationships among the three sets of institutions that constitute the reentry environment in Westview: the state Department of Corrections, the reentry agencies and government authorities. The chapter has four major sections. The first section is an overview of definitions of reentry and the requisite change in the mindset of ex-offenders. The second section focuses on each of the three sets of institutions. The third section analyzes the current, inadequate collaboration among those institutions, and the fourth section concludes with prospects for future collaboration among those institutions and the public.

What Constitutes Reentry?

Travis (2005) calls reentry a process, rather than a specific goal and Hughes and Wilson (2010) expand that statement to argue that reentry encompasses all

the issues related to individuals transitioning from prison to community. Further, Petersilia (2003) contends that reentry work is made up of all the programs and activities provided to prepare a formerly incarcerated person to come back safely to the community where they live as law-abiding citizens. Yet, for many formerly incarcerated persons, the definition of reentry offered by Blumstein and Beck (2005) is most apt: a temporary position between freedom and recommitment, particularly for persons of color and those from low-income communities. This contention is born out when looking at the data from the supervised release period when most formerly incarcerated persons are returned to the system for technical violations or for “catching a new case.”

From a social justice and public health standpoint, I contend that successful reentry cannot be determined merely by columns of pluses and minuses on a log sheet that determines failures to be those who go back to an incarcerated state or violate a condition of their parole mandates and successes as those who don't. A formerly incarcerated person being “off the radar” of law enforcement and/or corrections officials, because they are not in trouble, does not equal successful reentry. Thompkins (2010) argues that true reintegration does not begin until a person is free from all correctional apparatuses and supervision because the requirements of their release may negatively impact an effective reentry. For formerly incarcerated persons to achieve the occupation of a state beyond reentry requires significant input on their part and the commitment of the community to achieve the reintegration and reconciliation of the individual to the community.

The ideal model for providing reentry has been viewed by many as a comprehensive or holistic model (Clear et al. 2003; Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2006; Visher, Debus, and Yahner 2008; and Western 2008), whereby a formerly incarcerated person is provided with “care management” services beginning during incarceration and continue through reentry and aftercare to assist the “whole person” not merely their needs concerning their “crime aspects.” In theory, providing comprehensive services for the formerly incarcerated would include the following: transitional housing or housing search assistance, employment and interview training, employment search assistance (including phone calls to prospective employers and referral services), substance abuse counseling and support meetings, mental health counseling (not limited to anger management classes), conflict resolution counseling, social skills classes, transportation assistance (bus passes, access to bicycles), medication assistance and management, assistance in obtaining medical care and referrals (including dental and eye care), assistance in obtaining necessary identifications cards, assistance negotiating governmental services for entitlement programs (such as food stamps), assistance with expunging a criminal record, obtaining clothing and toiletries, and aftercare support services.

Moreover, a holistic approach would reach beyond the formerly incarcerated and include assistance to the family and children of the client – particularly with counseling or mediation services. This range of services is congruent with a public health model which encompasses the needs of the “whole person” and their social environment and the impact upon the larger social community. According to Ahn-Redding (2007) full

integration of formerly incarcerated persons into a community benefits both the reentering individual and the community at large.

Reentry Mindset Frames

One thing that almost all of the stakeholders I spoke with agreed upon was the importance of changing the “mindset” of formerly incarcerated individuals. The perspective that a fundamental change needs to be affected regarding the way that criminals think - and therefore act, has a strong hold on those who work, directly or indirectly, with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons. The disciplined-self perspective is well established in criminological theory, public policy, and many therapeutic professions. This perspective is founded on the premise that criminogenic behaviors change only when the individual offender recognizes the need to change and that, regardless of programs, assistance and treatment, ultimately, change is the responsibility of the individual.

The “mindset” of former prisoners was mentioned by all of the community stakeholders interviewed – as well as a majority of the parolees interviewed, and was often expressed in conjunction with terms such as: accountability, self-control, motivation, fortitude, and work ethic. While it was common for reentry stakeholders to mention the need for mindset changes by formerly incarcerated persons, there were four subsets of the mindset perspective given, largely organized around the type of job that the stakeholders occupied. Law enforcement officials were most likely to explain the mindset perspective through personal responsibility and “strength of character” frames. These

stakeholders viewed the role of government in reentry as limited and effective only after the alteration in mindset, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

Police Chief: I think that one of the first steps that we have to really look at is individual accountability and whether or not that individual is ready, willing and able for reentry, meaning all those things we talked about before, getting rid of your demons, whatever it may be, education, training, getting employment, settling in and doing all of those things. I think the thing that we always jump to is government will fix it, and I think that we oftentimes forget that it's individual accountability. Beyond that, I think there are some things the government probably could do better. If we can get beyond some of those fears, if we can get the individual accountability, can the government provide some services that way.

County Sheriff: We can offer all sorts of programs, but unless they want to change their lives...I can offer it, but it is up to the individual. What we are doing is considered "adult corrections." Well, what are we correcting, you know, correcting behavioral patterns- people's attitudes about what is acceptable in life, then we are doing our job. Otherwise, if we are just putting them in here and housing them - we are creating a factory for criminals.

State's Attorney: I think the primary responsibility is on the person. If they came out of a circle of people who were accepting of criminal behavior, they are gonna return to that circle, so the primary responsibility is with that person, to distance themselves physically, socially, mentally, from those individuals that contributed to their behavior and... that can be difficult cause sometimes that's the only community they know or that's their family.

Meanwhile, the mindset perspective of most reentry providers was centered on improper socialization. They viewed change as a learning process that occurs through negative experiences (incarceration) and programming or therapeutic assistance, thereby establishing their services as necessary and fruitful for eliciting the alteration in mindset. The following excerpts from service providers, a parole supervisor, and a prison reform advocate differ by degrees, largely in accordance with the standpoint of the organizational ties of that individual:

Donna (Second Chance Outreach): We're putting out fires – trying to teach people to put their own fires out. Not necessarily doing it for them, but teaching them how to do it...you know, people going into prison. How would I be if I had to do that? And I'm saying if they're guilty or innocent, I'm not going that route. But as a human being, it dehumanizes them. I'm not saying its right or wrong, okay? The fact is, it dehumanizes you. Then you have people telling you when to get up, when to go to bed, what not to eat, what to wear, what not to wear, what side to walk on, when to make a phone call. You know...they lose their train of thought! They don't know how to think anymore! So when they come out here...they're scared to death that they're going to screw up and they're going to go back. So what we do is, we say you're not in this alone. We're going to walk with you. And they're like, "No one's ever done this." Especially the guys who've been in and out. They can't think straight, or the frustration takes them back. So this is a place where they can come, and they can talk about anything, and everything, and anybody. We do a lot of, um, helping them figure out how to live, how to be productive. That's what we do!

Jen (CRR): You do get the guys who don't care. "I don't care, this is my lifestyle. This is all I've seen, this is all I've learned. I get 3 meals a day. I don't care." Okay. Then you get the mindset of the younger criminal who says "I'm young, it's fine. I did my time and it's not going to happen to me again. I'm just going to do what I need to do till I get off parole and don't worry about it I'll go back to my old ways." Okay, good luck with that. You know, there is nothing you can do if they choose to live that way. Now, I will say my older clientele and particularly the older clients who have been incarcerated more than once, they get it. And then they have that regret, "Why did it take me so long to get it?" Well its ok, the point is that you got it. So, let's not focus on this because, obviously it took all this to get you here.

Darren (W. Mission): You have to get eternity squared away first and foremost. You have to get up in the morning and say ... "Look at this filth, look at this wretch, yet God loved me, sent his son to die for me, and I'm going to heaven when I die." Anything that happens down here is so temporary, so that's the first thing. Now to negotiate the practicalities of life as an ex-con...people around here when they leave here, they can get affordable housing, but if it's around the corner above a saloon or something like that ... so what we teach is all such common sense stuff. You need to be courageous enough to say, "I need to start in a new place, with new people, doing new things."

Brian (Prison Watch): Most people in prison who have committed crimes, very few of them are like "I want to go back to prison." Most of them maybe don't know how to do it, maybe it's conflicted for all kinds of reasons.

Most of them want to change their lives and some people really want to change their lives and if you give them the tools. Again, you're never going to have 100% success rate. I mean, it's hard to turn anything as complicated as life on a dime.

Wes (RI): A lot of these guys have, because of their disease, because of their criminality, they have burnt those bridges down and family often doesn't want anything to do with them until they've proven themselves. Sometimes, even after... that's not good enough. The family suffered too much shame and embarrassment and heartache and hardship that we have to step in and provide that type of support knowing, for them, that they have someone in the community that is willing to take a chance and continue to believe in them and give them an opportunity to prove themselves and in a tangible way. The rejection these individuals experience is so powerful. It has such an effect on them that it makes them hopeless, and when you are dealing with people who are hopeless, it makes them very, very dangerous.

Mary (Parole): The change has to come at a deeper level than the offender. It's a systemic with the family, when they're released. Like I said, even if they are released with training, education and some other skills, they are dumped right back into their old network of gangbanging, drugs and families that don't work... We do have a large number that burn bridges, and don't have family to come back to and we have some missions and some halfway houses or they get a rented room and they find some sort of job that they can pay for a room. Those are the offenders that are either going to re-offend pretty quickly or they're going to struggle through it.

The supervisor of a for-profit reentry service provider straddles frames two and three, whereby he views the mindset of formerly incarcerated persons as a product of their family system, but feels that it is maintained because of their denial of responsibility. I believe the following exchange with Mark illuminates the strain reentry providers experience when they believe in the ideals of reentry, but experience the practical processes of how reentry is currently done:

Mark: It's getting people to change the way they think, so that they will change their behavior. That is the heart of what we do. That's a challenge because they are hard-wired from birth, you know. The way a lot of them have grown up, they haven't even thought about how they think. That, to me, is number one.

CSD: When you talk about the mindset of your clients...can you give me an example of what their mindset is?

Mark: Very reactive. Most everything is very reactive and very victimy. It's amazing. Every assessment I've done...95 to 99%...they always minimize their crime. You know...I was framed...it's because of this that I did that. So, it's a lot of blaming and victimization. I would say that's probably the biggest thing that I see.

CSD: Are there cases where they've been victimized in their past...I mean, do they get services for that?

Mark: Well, do they get it here? I think that just varies. During the assessment we do ask questions about violence in their life, but it's mostly current relationships. So, I would say...whatever the cause is, the behavior is the same. So if they were victimized, if they grew up poor, whatever their surroundings were...there is a lot of blaming and victimization. It comes from a lot of different areas. You know, like having parents who are substance abusers, who are probably blamers and feel like victims...I think it's just their surroundings that contribute to that way of thinking. We see a lot of enabling...and then the opposite end, where they just don't have any good role modeling. But there is not a lot of support.

The third mindset frame was elucidated by two Westview politicians. This frame is dominated by themes related to character flaws of offenders, in which they are described as lazy and inappropriately viewing themselves as victims. Furthermore, the two respondents located in this frame explain that more punitive measures would be effective in reducing the dependency of formerly incarcerated persons:

State Representative: There needs to be more refining of what rights there are on the inside - too. Because I think it is being looked at more as a luxury than as a punishment. So, I think that if you are going to make a dent in how are we gonna help people on the outside with parole and probation and get them back to being productive citizens, you also have to look at what are we providing on the inside that keeps driving people into the system. Are we doing too much on the inside that people just don't want to leave? Does every inmate need XY and Z when it used to be bread and water? They get exercise, three square meals...they get to make money on the inside. Is there a pattern where they say, "Man, I can survive a lot better on the inside that I can survive on the outside, so I'm not even going to try?"

Alderman: The goal really needs to be not so much that ... I think that sometimes we don't give people enough credit that they can actually do things on their own and they need a kick in the butt to get up and this is life now and you need to get a job and... you need to figure it out. Unfortunately, in society, we offer people so many easy ways out. If I don't want to go to work, I just go and get unemployment and I can make more money on unemployment than I do picking up a broom and sweeping the floor so, I'll just go do that. I'll go get my Link Card and cash that in for ... go into stores that will cash them in and take that and buy drugs and stuff like that. I think that we need to struggle. People need to struggle and people need to find what hunger is or maybe what it takes to lift yourself up and get to work. You, you got to have ownership with it. The programs... I think that would be successful is... when they got to ... the person has to support themselves and they got to get back into what real life is, not, "Let's just go sit and analyze this thing to death about, yes, your mother was so terrible. Your dad was so terrible and isn't it ... let's all...no, that have all happened but... you got to make a decision. Are you going to get up in the morning and take care of yourself or are you going to sit and feel sorry for yourself all day?"

CSD: So, you feel like there's a sense of dependency there.

Alderman: Oh, absolutely and you give that path to them. Actually, you got to understand that that's a lot of the mission of the social services that are receiving government money is to keep people in their programs because the more people they get, the more money they get. It's not really saying well, "If I just tell this person get and do it, well then, what if they don't need my program?" There's obviously certain ... there's certain support programs, but it has to be more based on self-reliance and self-dependency. Now obviously, there's mental issues and stuff like that. That's not what we're talking about. It's a mental state. There is a difference of somebody that knows how to play the system and then the system allowing that to happen... there has to be that assistance but at the level that we're doing now, we're not really producing self-reliant people. We're producing more people that are dependent on the state. That kind of seems to be the theme of the country right now.

Consequently, ex-offenders must contend with the attitudes and limited expectations that many of the reentry providers, governmental agents, and community "decision-makers" have of them. Yet, ironically, very few parolees I interviewed were even partially aware of the reentry services available to them in Westview. Most often,

the parolee was aware only of the organization(s) he had been directed to by his parole agent to obtain his mandatory assessment and programming. For the few parolees that received any reentry programming while incarcerated, many times, the reentry organizations that they were informed about were based in the nearby urban area.

The reentry programs offered in Westview are struggling financially and all acknowledged that their resources and staffing levels were too limited to be able to do outreach on a personal level. The sheer number of prisons in the state and the fact that most of them are located in remote areas of the state hindered the ability of small reentry organizations to get information to prison staff about their organization and personally reach out or visit facilities to meet with prisoners during reentry events held at prisons:

Wes: We do everything we can to make them aware of it, and we believe that, for the most part, yes. Now, we do realize that there's not a whole lot of awareness of those who are incarcerated. We have been told by some, that they tried to get information about our organization while incarcerated, but the institutions didn't know anything of us. We are always looking for a way to bring awareness of our existence and I think that, well...I don't think, that is occurring more and more every day.

CSD: Do you have times where you go to the prison facilities and ...

Wes: Reentry summits? We have not as of yet. I have personally gone, but not as a representative of RI. We are going to do that, and we are in a better position to do that now and we do have some one as a representative that will attend those reentry summits on our behalf.

Furthermore, a few of the service providers I spoke with felt that it was the responsibility of the re-entering person to be proactive and find the services they needed. The following statement by the Chaplain of the Westside Mission is a good example of this perspective:

Some are aware of what is offered, but I feel like those that aren't are those that expect everyone to make them aware. They are caught up in our entitlement

society and they are entitled to have everyone inform them of everything and they are entitled to ...and it is a bunch of baloney. They have to take some responsibility and ownership for themselves- cause if they don't, there is nothing I'm going to be able to do that will help them out.

Additionally, treatment, work training, educational, and reentry programs once provided by DOC that served as natural “feeders” into local reentry organizations, while never funded at appropriate levels have been cut back even further given the state’s budget crisis.

Institutional Cross-Purposes: Reentry Is What DOC Says It Is

In the area surrounding Westview there is no organization or governmental agency that offers a full range of needed services. Each organization emphasizes certain “specializations” that they have become known for within the reentry community. Primarily, that emphasis has either been substance abuse and behavioral health (anger management) or employment. While those providing services viewed their programs and services as beneficial to reentry clients, an outsider examining the reentry services in Westview in their totality sees a much different picture.

It appears that the reentry services that are provided are not based on the most pressing needs of clients, but upon what services are directly funded by DOC, reimbursed for, or deemed important by DOC. Therefore, the vast majority of programs and services provided are those required by the parole mandates of DOC, primarily assessments, substance abuse, anger management, and counseling services.

Mary, a parole supervisor, saw the financial costs of required reentry services as out-of-reach for many parolees and criticized the lack of the most necessary services as well as the quality level of services:

Right now, both of them (Second Chance Outreach and Reentry Initiatives) provide drug counseling and anger management counseling. Those are our two, two of our biggest [services offered], but not mental health. Mental health is a big one with a long waiting list. The issue with substance abuse and anger management is, if they don't have a contract with us, they offender is paying for it. Our offenders don't necessarily have money to pay for an assessment. Now they will use a sliding scale service. I would say that I've had, over the last 12 years; I've had wonderful discussions with the people who are on that program [Second Chance Outreach]. I think that they have lofty goals and zero implementation of how do you get there.

Mary went on to say that some of what DOC considers reentry services are merely referral services; therefore "it's not really reentry at all, it's a shell game." For example, DOC works closely with Community Reentry and Recovery because they are contracted to provide services inside prisons and with those who come out of the two treatment prisons for substance abuse services. At the time of our interview, the Governor was calling for the closing of some prisons, the Adult Transition Centers (ATC's), and cutting the number of parole agents in half.

Mary was frustrated with what she viewed as fiscal wastefulness for reentry services that produced little to no benefits. In the case of Community Reentry and Recovery (CRR), they are designated to provide case management services for their clients, but they do not provide direct services to clients; rather, they provide a referral to an agency that can provide the services. In essence, they are referred to CRR as a part of their parole mandate and are to receive referrals from CRR to find the treatment or services they are mandated to obtain to complete their parole. As Mary saw it, DOC contracts with organizations that were not providing direct reentry services amounted to, "paying for a referral to get a referral:"

Mary: If it [DOC] was my baby, we'd be opening more work release centers, getting people engaged earlier, and then freeing up...our contract money

should go back to direct services. If we're going to pay for services, we need to pay for the service itself and not for an agency that's going to monitor the service, because our placement resource group, they're already getting a paycheck. It's not based on where they spend the money. They're not getting a kickback from, if they send a guy treatment, you know, I get my paycheck, it's my job to get people treatment. I think that when you remove the profit aspect from corrections or from treatment, you're going to get more treatment... again it's all about the contracts. I think that's my whole problem with the system is that we're not treating the offender, we're getting contracts to agencies, that the services exist, we just need to get the offender connected and paid for. If we'd pull out all the middle systems, we could probably treat everybody. Just the contracts of A New Hope, I believe they had gotten some sort of federal grant for \$200,000. That's \$200,000 of services provided, but really... it was referrals to services that they assisted. Sometimes they did, and sometimes they didn't assist. To me, in my mind, the ATC's are our best ... that is our gem in the rough or whatever, that we have the offender supervised yet free in the community to get a job. Most of these people that leave, leave engaged in the community. They have a job in the community, they've made friends in the community, they have established services already. They've either gotten a medical card or insurance through their job. They've established a counseling network or a 12-step network, and they step out with a check because they turn over all their money to the program. They pay 20 percent as their room and board, so whatever their funds, 20 percent off the top. They pay some of their own medical... so these are self-contained little supervised halfway houses almost... *that is* re-entry, but only a seriously small portion of our population gets the opportunity to do it.

CSD: At the state level, have you been asked your opinion, were you asked to put in input as to what's working or not working here?

Mary: No. It has been my experience that the work is done by the bottom the procedures are put in place from the top. Like the Corrections Incorporated program, when it was really not, in my opinion, when it was not working, it was only because I was vocal saying, "This program doesn't work. We should be doing things to make it better." It wasn't the other way around, saying, "How's this program working?" It was [from DOC], "This is the program. You're sending people to it". My contention is that we were not getting our money's worth... we were not spending our money in the right ways. We'd have a guy that we'd be paying the per day rate for drug counseling that, had I sent him to an outside service that provides drug counseling and paid for it, I'd have paid a lot less money. We were paying ninety days of something where... he met with a

counselor once or maybe attended his groups, yet we were still paying a daily rate seven days a week.

Mary's contention that reentry organizations were not truly providing reentry, as compared to the transitional services of an ATC, provide a context of the criticism of other stakeholders who called for reentry services to be "real" and for the services that are provided for reentry to be effective. Ironically, over-programming also occurs in reentry. "Programing for the sake of programming," has goals in addition to, or in conflict with, providing necessary services to help transition a formerly incarcerated person. Kleis (2009) found that some formerly incarcerated persons were required to participate in programs that did not even relate to the charges they went to prison for or their current needs and behaviors. The political and correctional pressures to be "doing something to be seen as doing something" makes it difficult to end a type of programming or reentry service delivery once it has begun, despite lack of evidence that it is beneficial. The momentum of funding paths and political connections serve to maintain the services and programming already in place. Thompkins (2010) argues that over programming is a way for the correctional system to keep an indirect eye on former prisoners and know where they are.

Westview Reentry Agencies: Fragmented and Hanging by a Thread

All three non-profit reentry organizations in Westview described their programs as based on a "holistic" approach to reentry, but none are truly a one-stop shop for formerly incarcerated persons. In terms of the range of programs offered for reentry clients, there is a significant difference in range and philosophy between a non-profit and for profit reentry provider, as is illustrated in the following two excerpts:

Second Chance Outreach: We provide counseling here, we provide food, we provide housing – we are like a one stop shop. Um, every person is an individual - every person puts in their own input - what they want with their life. Some of them don't even know what they want. So we take them where they are and we just ...pause...help them! We provide transportation ... If they need it, we've tried to do it. Medication. Medication is a big thing. We have employers we work with. We've done a lot of community education about the stigma of an inmate. You know, not all inmates are animals – there's a fear factor. We know that, we understand that, but we also know that ... (pause)... people can change. There are good people that make stupid mistakes, so we try to help them – get back on track.

Corrections Incorporated: All of our clients come from the department of corrections parole. They are referred by their agents. When they come to us they are to check in everyday – 7 days a week- for at least 30 to 60 days, depending on where they are at in the program. What we do on site is substance abuse assessment in groups. We do what's called MIT therapy...cognitive behavior therapy. It addresses criminal thinking and morals. We also do anger management and employment groups. So, when the client is referred here, they are assigned to all of some of those groups, depending on what they need. We also do random UA's (urine analysis), and monitor their drug use. The program takes about four months, if you do everything on time. Once they are out of our program, they are not necessarily off parole, but they can get an early release if they complete the program. But that's something their agent will put through...they will put the request in, but that is outside of our program.

While specialization allows organizations to concentrate on specific issues, it leads to an overall fragmentation of services for the individual client. This “de-centralized” reentry structure makes for a more difficult reentry and places additional organizational and financial burdens upon the formerly incarcerated. Hopping from one provider to another for services that often are mandated by the conditions of parole are time consuming. The most obvious impact that this has on the parolee is less time to actively search for employment or to be available for an interview right away when a prospective employer is interested in them. The logistical and financial challenges that

formerly incarcerated persons face in getting their service needs met are illustrates in this excerpt by Angie, the program manager at A New Hope in Westview:

So having that one stop shop, that would, in my world, that's how it would be. But right now because so many people are so mine, mine, mine, because you know, everybody's trying to protect their own funding, I get it, I understand. However, if we, even if we don't offer each other money, but... anybody that comes in my door, because I offer free services, I can send them to Second Chance Outreach, they offer free services if they're on the parole plans (parole mandates). Or I can send them to Our Home for housing if that's what they were providing for or for rental assistance or whatever. I can send them somewhere else. But it would be easier if they were all in one building.

Providing the full scope of aforementioned services that are needed by re-entering individuals is impossible for a small organization to handle, particularly in the financial climate of the recession and the fiscal crisis facing local, state and federal government agencies. For outlying suburban areas, the presence of reentry organizations vary greatly between communities and cities such as Westview that have reentry organizations often find themselves providing services for individuals from other suburban locations with significant reentry rates, as well as some clients from the city.

Staying afloat financially is a constant struggle for many of the reentry organizations in Westview. Having a full-time grant writer is a luxury few small organizations can afford and therefore, they rely heavily upon state contracts for services or remain in a constant state of chasing dollars from federal or organizational grants. Critics of the growth of the prisoner reentry system (PRI) has become a major part of

what Scholsser (1998) refers to as the “Social Control Industrial Complex,” serving as “a huge cash-cow” that produces profits for the PRI at the expense of the taxpayer, while doing little to link the formerly incarcerated person to the social capital and human skills necessary to become an integrated citizen (Thompkins 2010, p. 589).

The struggle for adequate funds has increased as the state’s unresolved budgetary shortfall has increased over the last several years. The continual “hustle” for money to meet payroll and justify the continued existence of the organization impact the type and depth of services offered to reentry clients. In this atmosphere, the best fit for services to the clientele can become secondary to the need to provide supervision and programming services that are funded (Thompkins 2010). For some reentry services, clients themselves are responsible for the full cost (on a sliding scale) or at least partial payment for receipt of services. Enrolling formerly incarcerated persons as clients, particularly ones that are deemed a “good risk” regarding participating in programs and services, are financially motivating for reentry service providers.

At its basest level, these pressures result in a sorting process of who *may* be treatable, helpable, or salvageable. Wes, the director of Reentry Initiatives, explains below that because their resources are limited, they have an interview process and assessment to help them make the decision if someone will be accepted as a client:

Our thing is to help them as much as we can, especially those who are ready for help. That's the premise that we provide services; you have to be ready for change. If you still have what an offender or ex-offender describes as having a bit left in you then we, wanting to be responsible for the resources that we have, we are not willing to waste those resources on someone's that not ready for change. A course [program] is never 100 percent, and so that's why, when you're conducting an interview, it's important to have more than just one person or two people during an interview and to ask all the right questions. Then verify as much as

possible what you've been told...requesting certain documents, the disciplinary report, that will tell you a lot. Their mental health records. Sometimes that can be a pain for an institution because that can be a book, with various documents. We do our own background investigation on the client.

This sorting process is also used by for-profit service providers contracted by the Department of Corrections. Although their resources are greater, the services they provide are not comprehensive. Mark, the supervisor of the Westview Corrections Incorporated office explained that they are selective about whom they accept as a client, as well:

If we get a low-risk client we don't serve them, because by putting them in with high-risk people...putting them in groups...we can do more harm to the low-risk offender. Low-risk offenders can learn a lot from high-risk offenders...and they do. Occasionally we'll say...this guy's not going to learn much here, not much good anyway. And then mental health...if they are unstable mentally. A lot of times we can't work with them. I had a guy who just couldn't sit in group because he was so paranoid. So, we had to go to the agent and say, I don't know if this is the right place. So those seem to be the two areas. But I think the agents really know. They kind of screen them first...and kind of have an idea who's going to do OK and who's not. They are helpful in that way.

For Second Chance Outreach, despite being established within the community and the state as a reentry provider, Donna described that they closed down their location a few years ago because of funding problems and considered stopping operations:

I don't want to say we took a sabbatical, but we scaled back a lot. We were down to my kitchen table. We had to re-evaluate. A lot of colleges are getting into re-entry...we did our job. We wanted to bring awareness - we've done that. Now, where are we going? Where do we personally go? Because, there is other stuff that needs to be done. We've got a plan now. We almost closed. We had our houses [transitional living] open and we did stuff with the guys there. We did a lot of praying. And, ah, no, it's not time for us to close yet...we really had some soul searching. We went eight months without a paycheck from the state. I laid everybody off. We have other donors, but everybody is hurting. So we really did some really, really, hard-core soul searching. Should we just be done? Maybe. You know, there comes a time when everything comes to an end, but it gave me time to look at what was going on.

The main precipitating factor for the near closing of Second Chance Outreach and many other social service delivery organizations was that the state had been delinquent for months in their payments to these providers. As Mary, a parole supervisor explained, the quality of services provided and viability of Second Chance Outreach, as well as Reentry Initiatives, are further impaired by the poor fiscal management of the state:

Over the years, their [Second Chance Outreach] sustainability as an agency is contingent upon the state paying their contracts. That doesn't work, because the state is, I believe, nine months behind in paying bills. The head office over here closed. They were defunct for about six months. They had lost their DASA licensure for substance abuse, but... if you don't have a license to the address and something has to be to the address itself, so then they lost their address and didn't have another one and couldn't get the license re-instated. There have been struggles, you know, and because they put all their eggs in the state contract basket. Right now, they have the same thing. They have lots of ideas and no implementation. I think that the thing that Corrections Incorporated has going for them is they have a huge parent company that has bottomless pockets ... In a nutshell, we would need to...for reentry to work appropriately, it's all resources and staffing.

Despite the deep pockets and a paid lobbyist paid by their parent company, CI was the most recent victim of budget cuts by the state. When I spoke with Mark, the director of the Westview location in mid-February 2012, he explained that they were currently in a transitional stage because they had been informed two weeks ago that their funding was being cut by 35% statewide and that almost half of their clients had to be dropped within one week. Because it was unclear if the cuts were temporary, Corrections Incorporated was coping with this loss by closing offices that did not have high enough numbers of clients to remain profitable. The Westview office was one of those non-profitable offices and was being considered for closure. When I asked Mark why the numbers of clients at his location were so low, given that the Westview parole office has

one of the largest numbers of parolees in the state, he stated that the problem was threefold:

Partially it's just because they're [parolees] scattered so far out. There's not a lot of transportation in Westview anyway. And to get to this building...there are not sidewalks, actually. The bus stop is actually, right out front. But, the problem is... its limited...about every hour. And it cuts off on the weekends...we are open 7 days a week in every other office except this one, because of that.

Secondly, the relationship between CI and the local parole office was strained.

Mark revealed that his staff felt dismissed by parole agents and that the services they offered were not required by many parole agents for their parolees. Belief in the benefits of CI's services came from just a few of the parole agents, while the other agents who referred their parolees to this business for services did so as leverage against their parolees:

They [parole agents] don't really seem to care. At least, I can only speak for these two offices [Westview and location forty miles away]. They don't care so much...especially this office...that they [parolees] complete our program. Because, they look at...are they clean, are they employed? If those two things are happening, they're out of here most of the time. I think they feel like it's a sanction. "Why would I have my client come here 5 days a week?" Even though they used it as a sanction in the beginning...they want to be in control of the length of stay. And that I can say it is pretty much specific to Westview. Across the state we don't see that as much, Westview has been a challenge that way the whole time.

The growth in available funds from The Second Chance Act has resulted in a new breed of for-profit "prison-bus chasers" as illustrated by Mark, as he talks about the importance of the bottom line for his employer and the final reason that his office was slated for closure:

The difference between the non-profit and the private is...well, internally it's different because of the money. The bottom line is...the big picture is...if Westview is

not making money, we're cutting it...that kind of thing. There's not a lot of touchy-feely going on. It's money, and that's what drives everything. So, that's the biggest difference that I see.

Within a month, the Corrections Incorporated office in Westview and the closest neighboring office forty miles away were closed because they were not at capacity and deemed not profitable enough by the parent company.

A Felony is a Felony: Color-Blind Reentry

None of the organizations providing reentry services in Westview had specific programming or a focused effort to provide culturally-appropriate services. In fact, only one service provider I spoke with acknowledged that racial discrimination was an additional barrier for formerly incarcerated persons in Westview and saw any value in providing services in which race and ethnicity would play any part. Shavonna, the case manager at Community Partners for Empowerment, responded that racism absolutely plays a role:

I receive that a lot, firstly because a lot of my clientele are minorities. I'm from the Westview area; I see it a lot in this area. It might not be, but I think in Westview we do definitely have an issue with possibly being African American or Latino, as well as having a background, kind of goes against them finding employment. Again, that's unfortunate.

She went on to say that she felt that the boxes asking what race/ethnicity the applicant is were used as a filtering system and instructed her clients to leave it blank or select "other." "You know, it's not mandatory that you check which nationality you are; I

inform a lot of my clients if they decline to answer and they meet you, they'll be able to tell if you're African American or Latino at that time. You don't have to answer that.”

Wes stated that other than separating males and females, Reentry Initiatives did not separate clients for specific programs for any reason. Although my question specifically mentioned services based on race and ethnicity, he argued that not separating clients into groups based on specialized needs is a form of protection and emphasized commonalities of experience:

We try to stay away from that. In my experience, I'll give you an example. We have a lot of parolees that were determined to be ADD, and so while in school they were put in special needs group. That contributed to their criminality, because then they begin to be teased while you're on the little bus, the special bus, and the rejection and the wounds from being bullied and so on, that did not go over very well emotionally or mentally for them. If it's a group with maybe HIV or AIDS fine, but we try not to single people out or put people into something that someone can readily identify what their needs are. We try to be very careful and mindful of that, but whatever groups we have, we've dealt with all those issues that everyone and anyone can identify with.

The one-size-fits-all model of that theoretically underpins programming and treatment development for formerly incarcerated persons is based on the majority of offenders: white and male and fail to consider needs particular to distinct groups, regarding ethnicity and gender (Shaw and Hannah-Moffat 2000). Indeed, despite Westview's significant Latino population, many of whom are first-generation immigrants, several organizations providing reentry services did not have even one staff member who was fluent in Spanish.

When asked if there were any difficulties that reentry clients experience because of race and class when dealing with landlords or potential employers, Wes responded, “We haven't experienced that. At least I'm not aware of that.” One of the RI case

managers in the room at the time, chimed in, by stating, “Stereotyping against criminals in general.” Following this exchange, Wes responded, “we had clients who will say they don't utilize a lot of the temporary agencies because they tend to lean more towards Hispanics.” To this, his case manager added, “Right, we do run into that. Of course, I always just encourage my clients to keep trying and if necessary start talking to immigration.”

Westview is home to numerous temporary labor agencies. Although there is no empirical evidence that proves preferential hiring of Latinos or undocumented persons, the social “grapevines” within parolee networks, reentry organization, paroles, and the general gossip of Westview, this is a popular conception stated as a known fact by many. Perhaps it is true for some or even many of the temporary agencies or perhaps it is assumed because many of the temporary agencies are run by and staffed by Latinos who speak Spanish. I picked up a photocopy of a list of ten placement/staffing companies entitled “Employment Agencies” in the waiting room of Corrections Incorporated.

Certainly, as Westview has a 46% Latino population and has historically been a city which has welcomed immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries for generations, the perception that Latinos have a corner on this employment sector is widespread. Peck and Theodore (2008) argue that undocumented workers have no employment papers and therefore, have no “background” of any sort, meanwhile formerly incarcerated persons, have the exact opposite – a different kind of documentation (criminal background). “Racial stereotypes both harden and help naturalize these distinctions, as the gatekeepers of the contingent labor market increasingly read employability and ‘background’ through

skin color (p. 277). Despite their efforts to maintain “color-blind” reentry service provisions, there were times during the interviews with reentry providers when race was mentioned – either covertly through the use of “racial code words” (Myers 2005; Bonilla-Silva 2002) or overtly. Donna, the Director of Second Chance Outreach was very blunt in addressing my questions about particular difficulties for clients regarding race and class divisions. She was visibly upset at this question and the following exchange illustrates her frustration with clients that saw them as disadvantaged and the organizations that she viewed as catering to this myth.

Donna: You know we’ve been hearing forever that there’s an overpopulation of black men in prison...we’ve been saying that for years. Well, now all of a sudden, you get this black woman [Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*], with all these letters behind her name, and does a study...says “we’ve got an overpopulation of black men”. Now what? Now they’re going to make this big hoop-de-do deal about it...and they’re going to do all these programs because...we need paychecks. And...like some of these black people...and I was thinking about this today, because there’s this cultural divide and all this stuff...and I’m thinking about all this black stuff...and there’s this lady on TV last night that said, “We just want equal opportunity”. And I thought...well lady, you’ve got equal opportunity. What do you want? You have the opportunity to go to college. My kid had to pay for it, so why shouldn’t your kid? You know? “Well...we want all these jobs.” I don’t believe in all this grief crap...but you know you get these people...like you [referring to me] go to college. How much money and time have you spent...to go to college...to stay up and do those papers...and they want to tax you more? There’s an organization here in Westview, a buddy of the mayor’s, you know? And I’m looking at the flyer. They help, listen to my words [speaking directly to me]...we help African-Americans, and other disabled people. Did you get my drift?

CSD: So, what you are trying to say...does it mean economically disadvantaged, or something like that?

Donna: That’s not what it said. Their message was that being black is a disability. No it ain’t. The color of your skin is not a disability...but that’s what they are pushing. Being an inmate is a disability. Because if you’re disabled... (she whispers) you

get all these services free. I argue with these people [reentry clients] all the time...you're not disabled...get your ass out there and get a job. "I can't" Why? "Because I was an inmate". You put yourself there, fool. "I'm depressed". These are cons...they play the system. And I know how they do it and (makes a loud groan and then laughs) I'm surprised I've got anyone coming in here! I'm yelling at them all the time.

The organization that Donna is referring to here is Community Partners for Empowerment and their website and pamphlets do not have the word "disabled" on them. Rather, they use the words, including African-Americans and similarly disadvantaged people, to refer to those groups that their organization strives to assist. On a personal note, this exchange with Donna was distressing not only for what was said, but that my white racial status made it seem acceptable for her to say this to me.

The myth of color-blindness is pervasive in American society and the consequences of this myth extend to the field of reentry. Although there is generalized agreement that there are racial differences in incarceration rates, particularly for young men of color (Gabbidon and Greene 2005) some contend that those differences do not constitute disparity. From a social ecological standpoint, structural disadvantages and negative life experiences are outcomes of racism and contribute to increase the probability of criminal offending behavior (Mears, Wang, Hay and Bales 2008).

Employment Assistance: A Critical Need Left Unmet

Although reentry providers, stakeholders, and parolees all spoke of the importance of formerly incarcerated persons having employment, the provision of comprehensive employment skills development and job placement services is severely lacking in Westview. Only A New Hope specialized in employment services and their

impact was minimal due to the lack of speedy implementation of the program, limited staff, limited funding, and a one-year time period limit of the program.

The clients of A New Hope participated in job readiness classes and one staff person was in charge of assessing their employment assets and deficits in order to match them with an employer sought out by the organization. Because the program was still enrolling clients despite getting ready to shut down the program in the next few months, they provided no data on the number of clients who had successfully found jobs through their program at the Westview location. Second Chance Outreach provides some employment services, but much of their programming regarding employment is informal (making phone calls to employers they know to check on openings) and primarily concentrated on getting someone ready to work, as was the case for Corrections Incorporated. Reentry Initiatives provides no employment services because it had been unable to get a grant to provide these services. Community Reentry and Recovery (CRR) offers some assistance for their case management clients regarding calling employers that they have developed a relationship with and ask them if they will give the parolee a chance. For Jen, the CRR case manager at the Westview Parole Office, finding an opportunity for a parolee client depends on the day:

So you [the employer] know it's a felony cause you are working with us...and the...one [employer] is, "It depends on the felony." So if you have a battery felony, they won't budge. If you have a...a DUI felony or a retail theft felony, they may be more lenient on how long it's been or even if, some warehouses won't even care. Um, if you have an aggravated...any type of felony they will rarely give you anything before seven years because it is the stigma of it that. Obviously, I mean...there, I believe that everyone, obviously...deserves another chance, otherwise I wouldn't be doing what I do. But, you will, you'll find a lot of employers...and it's very hit or miss, you will find the ones that say "Ok, we'll give you another chance" and then you'll find the ones that "absolutely not." Ok,

but you just hired this other guy who had a felony? “Yeah, but absolutely not.” And I know some of my guys have worked through “Temp One Services” and “Staffing 101,” um, but as far as jobs, a lot of my guys do the ‘I work for cash’. A lot of them will do...their rehabbing homes, or helping with foreclosed homes, or working landscaping for cash, you know...just to get what they can get. On the other hand, I do have clients who are extremely intelligent, some have their masters, some have, you know...amazing work ethic and background, just because of their past they can’t get a job.

Although this is not specifically a reentry program, they provided a sub-program within their regular employment services assistance program for persons with a criminal background. Shavonna explained that she would hold mini job fairs for people with a “bruised or slightly-bruised” background but that potential employers who attended these fairs insisted that the backgrounds of prospective employees had to be minimal, “nothing violent or anything like that.” When I questioned her further, she replied that most often, employers would not hire a formerly incarcerated person directly, but go through a temporary staffing agency and see if it worked for a probationary period, and then they might be hired on. Shavonna went on to say that much of the work they do prior to an interview is to get the client “ready to work.”

The adjustment of going back into the work force, the professionalism...a lot of the feedback that I receive from clients that, it’s a different world, from ideals of the professional world as far as the mentality, what you need to do. It’s just a whole different setting. The re-entry is difficult because now they have to adjust to a professional lifestyle that some of them have never been involved in. A lot of clients I’ve come across have been in the system for so long that they’ve really never had a job. So, therefore just being respectful, you know giving that type of mutual respect from a mentality of “They don’t give me respect, I don’t give it to them” So it’s kinda hard to adjust.

Interestingly, when I asked reentry providers about helping their clients find jobs, most considered “readiness for employment” programming (resume writing, interview skills development, use of organizational computers to search for and apply for jobs,

photocopying of resume, and referrals to organizations providing employment services) as employment services. Mark, the program director of the Westview Corrections Incorporated office, was clear that what his employer was doing regarding employment was not enough, but that it was typical of “what’s out there:”

We don’t really get into the employment, other than getting them to a point where they can go look for a job. I’m trying to think who in this area. I guess the unemployment office here would be the one, because that’s who we use in _____ (additional CI location 40 miles away). It’s called DES, the Department of Employment Security. They have a program called RESP, which specifically targets people with a felony background. They have a program that will help them find employment. I don’t know how successful they are, but we do make referrals.

The reasons for providing little to no direct employment services varied between organizations, but reasons most often given were lack of staff, limited funding and a specialization on other reentry needs.

I wanted to speak with employers who had hired formerly incarcerated persons and when I interviewed reentry providers, social service providers, and parole supervisors, I asked each one if they knew of employers who were open to hiring people with a background that I might speak with. Many of the employers I spoke with were concerned that I knew they hired persons with a record. I perceived their reluctance to speak with me as fear of being stigmatized in the community as a place that hires criminals. Jen, the case manager for Community Reentry and Recovery, spoke to this fear when she relayed how she had to time her meetings with her clients:

When it comes to criminal justice and the homeless, because...a lot of people don’t like to admit that they have homeless people in their communities, um, it’s a very hush, hush thing. So, heaven forbid...that’s a big reason why I try not to see my guys at work unless I absolutely have to, because they don’t need that stigma, whether it’s their boss or the higher up, they don’t need that stigma. Because you know that every job has that political side to it. I’m not going to put your job at jeopardy, because I would rather meet you at nine o’clock at night, if I need to.

Despite making phone calls to employers, only two agreed to speak with me.

Employer #1 was mentioned by a law enforcement stakeholder as a business that hired numerous formerly incarcerated persons. A vice president of the firm who was the former human resources manager readily agreed to speak with me. This business is approximately a forty-minute drive from downtown Westview. In this exchange, she explained how she had “just fallen into” hiring people with a background fifteen years ago:

Employer 1: One day in January, I'll never forget this, it was snowing like crazy, cold as everything and one of my employees who worked for me in human resources came over and said you gotta see this. So I walk over and there's this little guy, little tiny, little guy, and he's in this big parka with this big...you know, fuzzy hood, couldn't even see his little head, covered in snow, and he had walked from Main Street in Westview...here, to apply for a forklift job. My person said he's walked all this way, can I test him? At the time I just assumed he didn't own a car. He says he's on work release, and I had no clue...I didn't know what that was. I called where he lives and it's a transitional center. The next day the supervisor there calls me and said, “You know, I got a lot of other guys, would you hire them?” So I said, “Well, you know I don't necessarily need forklift drivers but we need machine operators and other kinds of labor” and so I hired about 20 guys and then my assistant said to me, “Do you think maybe you should tell the owner you're doing this?” And I said, “Oh I don't know if I should tell him or not.” But I went up and I told him, and I said, “Hey I hired about 20 guys from work release” and he said, “Work release, what is that?” So you know, I explained it to him and he said, “Well do you think that's a good idea?” And I said, “Yeah I think it's a good idea, you know, we're helping the community, we're helping you know, giving these guys another chance” and that's how we ended up with work release and so we've done it for 15 years.

CSD: So how many people, just in that 15 years do you think you've hired on work release?

Employer 1: Oh at least 1,000.

CSD: How has that gone over with your other employees? Any push back?

Employer 1: We had one employee once, we hired a woman who was an assistant supervisor. When she found out that we had hired people, she quit on the spot, very first day and said she wanted nothing to do with a company that would hire people from work release. I think that, you know, to be perfectly blunt about it, most of these guys, had they come from families with money, they would have never seen the inside of a prison or the inside of work release. And that's the truth of the matter. And that's the sad part is I thought it and I didn't say it. You know, I... wanted to say "You know what honey; probably the people that you think are so great have done way worse than some of these kids have." We had a guy once that they put him in work release for unpaid parking tickets.

CSD: Are there any complications or downsides to hiring folks with a background?

Employer 1: No, the only thing is, it's like not with all of them but... with a lot of them it's like hiring a kid at McDonalds for their first job. Because they've never had a job so, you know, you have to spend that time explaining the rules to them and why you have rules. It's just not part of who they are. Then... they get full benefits after ninety days, cause they always say... well you know you don't have to do that. Okay, I don't have to do that, but the right thing is to treat them like one of us. Which they are, they are one of us. Which is why I think so many of them do stay with us is because we never treat them any differently.

CSD: Are you aware of other employers who are hiring people with a background?

Employer 1: No, they think we are crazy, and... I know a lot of the guys that have come here off the street who have heard about us from whoever. The first thing they tell me is you're the only place I've applied who will hire an ex offender. Well, that's just wrong. That's just me again, I've had them call from agencies and they say you know what? We have all these guys who are child molesters. And I tell them, "I'm sorry I can't. I can't take that chance with my other 1200 people." I'm really sorry and I always tell them I know they need a job, but I don't think they need a job in this environment with this many other people to interact with. I said if I had a much smaller place where I could watch everybody, absolutely, but I got end to end a half of mile space. I can't take a chance. And they always say, "We understand that." At least you help as many people as you can, but I think that "We will not hire an ex offender" is completely unjustified. Totally unjustified. Then (after 3 or 4 years) the lady at the unemployment office actually called us, she said, "Did you know there's a tax credit you could be getting for this?" And I'm like, "Tax credit? I don't know anything about a tax credit."

Despite her lack of knowledge regarding work release when she began hiring formerly incarcerated persons fifteen years ago, this employer learned the ropes quickly and when the nearby ATC transferred her workers to ATC's all over the state, she found that five of them had been moved to a location in the metropolitan area and worked out a plan with the supervisor there and A New Hope to hire more men from that location and split bus transportation costs three ways, between A New Hope, the employer, and transportation fees paid by the employees needing transportation costs from the city. Unfortunately, the reentry organizations in Westview had not made a connection with this employer, in spite of the proximity to their city.

Assessment and Accountability of Reentry

Because organizations providing reentry services are de-centralized and "specialized," the threshold of defining "successful reentry" for a formerly incarcerated person is as disparate as the organizations involved. There is very little accountability for organizations and businesses that provide reentry and supportive services to formerly incarcerated persons, save providing information to funding sources (federal and state government and grant-based) such as basic statistics for number of clients served and what services were rendered. At Community Partners for Empowerment, Shavonna is the case manager of their employment program that includes persons with a criminal background. She explained that the rates of successful job finding vary from year to year, but that "12 to 30 percent of those who have successfully gotten through our programs and or received services though one of our programs have gotten interviewed and hired for employment. At the point of interview the employer is completely aware

that this individual is a former inmate.” Some of the reentry service providers interviewed for this study were unable (or unwilling) to provide me with basic statistics on these measures, by saying that they see a difference or “we are having an impact.” Wes, the director of Reentry Initiatives, however, knew their recidivism rates without looking them up:

Wes: The national recidivism rate is 66 percent, this state’s is 51.7, and ours is 9.4 (26 out of 274). We like to see that as zero. I know it sounds ambitious.

CSD: Right, so for your enrolled clients, you've got a 9.4 percent return rate.

Wes: Right. Within the last 3 years

Additionally, none had information that could be referred to as a “long-term success rate” regarding how many of their clients had maintained their freedom, successfully completed their parole or supervision, or were currently deemed “reintegrated” into society. Follow-up or aftercare services with clients post-service was informal (a former client dropping by asking to use the computer or copy machine) for two providers and non-existent for the remainder. Thomkins (2010) argues that aftercare services are limited because, for the reentry organization, the “profitable” contractual relationship has ended. For the former client, the supportive services are completed, regardless of how they are actually doing in the real world. Formally and systematically tracking the outcomes of reentry clients is crucial to evaluate the impact of the organization in general and should take place at the program level. Programs that are not effective are a waste of limited time, resources, and funding (Yoon and Nickel 2008).

Small organizations may have a much more difficult task in evaluating the effectiveness of their programs given their smaller number of staff trained to evaluate

effective goal attainment, limited funding for evaluation, and limitations of data due to a smaller number of clients served. In addition, input from reentry clients themselves regarding the effectiveness of the services and programs they participated in is another source of evaluation data that should not be ignored. While the director of Second Chance Outreach mentioned to me that in the past they have surveyed their clients to find out their needs and if their programs are helping, the reentry client is in a vulnerable position when this is done, as he is an active client. Further, because the assessment is done in-house, the assessor has a stake in the outcome and the results are kept in-house, as well.

Inter-Agency Collaboration and Turf Conflicts

Young et al (2002) contend that inter-agency partnerships would increase accountability and oversight, centralize control, and build consensus between disparate community partners. They argue that partnership-building is based on the practical realization that community members can be influential informal social control agents for former prisoners and that the community has a stake in the reintegration of a formerly incarcerated person. Due to the overwhelming needs of most reentry clients and the very limited number and capacity of the reentry and social service providers in Westview, it would seem prudent and logical, therefore, to develop intra-agency cooperation and pool some of the resources of disparate providers to provide a more comprehensive assistance experience for former prisoners. In addition, in an era of budget cuts, do fiscal concerns increase the probability of collaboration or heighten protection of one's own

organization? An examination of the risks vs. benefits to cooperation and collaboration are illuminating for exploring reentry as a system.

Ovretveit (1993) defines agency collaboration as “a small group of people, usually from different professions, who are working together across formal organizational boundaries to provide services to specific groups of clients.” Research has shown that collaboration between various sectors within the community is a financially viable way to provide key services and programs to formerly incarcerated persons. For example, few organizations have the breadth of experience and depth of staff to provide services in the vital areas of employment, substance abuse, and education providers, coordination between providers that specialize in one or more of these areas could accomplish more for a reentry client than each organization on its own (VanDeCarr 2007). In reality, however, collaboration is easier said than done.

According the Executive Director of Our Home, the resources available for returning prisoners in Westview are too limited in size and scope to be able to adequately handle the amount of formerly incarcerated clients and the wide array of services they need at their own location, much less provide collaborative services for his organization:

We have struggled; we've been unable to get another agency to place staff on site, partially because there are so few resources for it in Westview. You've got Second Chance Outreach, which is always hanging on by a thread. You've got Reentry Initiatives, which is still relatively new and small. You've got A New Hope which, every once in a while, makes some sort of statement that it's going to come into Westview in a big way, and then, never does. They're just, the people that are doing it, or the agencies that are doing it are so stretched that I don't, it just hasn't seemed viable to have one of their staff people on our site yet.

Territoriality is a challenge to overcome in any sector. Defending one's professional territory (Abbott 1988) is particularly intense in a suburban landscape where

competing organizations are in close proximity and resources are limited. Reentry organizations compete for funds, clients (particularly “good” clients with a significant chance at success), staff, resources, and public recognition.

When asked the question, “Can you tell me about a difficult problem you have recently dealt with?” all three non-profit reentry organizations in “Westview” mentioned an atmosphere of competition and lack of collaboration amongst reentry organizations. While Donna, of Second Chance Outreach thought that there was divisiveness, she explained that her organization was responsible for the collaboration that does exist:

They (formerly incarcerated persons) used to come out with really no idea of what was out there. But now, we’ve partnered with the Department of Corrections. Our flyers are at most of the prisons, plus we go in to the prisons. The Department of Corrections has come a long way, oh my God, a long way. Now they are holding (reentry) summits inside the prisons. So we go to the prisons and we say “Hey, when you get out into your community there are services. There are services all over the state”. This area has always been blessed. Nobody can tell me that this county does not have good services. Because the services were here when we started, but nobody was there to pull them together. I did a whole, whole lot of networking and building relationships, and asked “what can you do? Here’s what I’m doing, what can you do?” And there is still some division because, well, “that’s my program” or “that’s my territory”. But it’s a lot better than it was.

History of Inter-Agency Conflict

Westview is a suburb that is large in territory and population size, but small in terms of social interaction. Wes, the founder and director of Reentry Initiatives, was an employee of Second Chance Outreach for fourteen months. His background as a parole agent and ordained minister, combined with a charismatic personality seems to serve him well in this new venture. However, the personal tension between his former employer and his own organization is palpable. During my interview with Donna, his former employer,

he was mentioned as someone who also worked in reentry, but she relayed this information in dismissive tones.

Donna: When I look around at what's out there, it's all BS. A lot of people say they're doing stuff, but are they really?

CSD: So they're not a true success story, is that what you're saying?

Donna: They're picking and choosing. They don't want everybody that comes in the door... we want everyone. I don't want the ones that just made it. I don't know how other places run their program, that's not my business. But, I think it says something about them that their people [reentry clients] are calling here to see if we can help them.

While Donna touted her organization's history of bringing people together during our interview, Wes asserted that Donna and Second Chance Outreach were trying to shut his organization down. In this exchange, he related how he believes that Donna has been involved in blocking Reentry Initiatives' access to state contracts:

Wes: There was a \$400,000 contract that was allocated to Westview. That was back in 2008, so SCO had that contract; it was a \$400,000 contract, my understanding, within nine months I think they only spent like \$30,000 of that contract in nine months. Well, the next year when it came up to renewing that contract, the department wanted the money not [to] be given to the client, but to the employer, so it was \$8 an hour for 30 hours a week. Second Chance Outreach really had a fit about it. It was determined Second Chance Outreach ... it needed technical support to continue to implement the job-training program, so the contract was withdrawn, okay? In the interim, we came into existence and we were promised, at first, we went for that contract, and because we were able to do it, met with the Department of Corrections, they came in, loved what they saw, our presentation as far as being ready with that program; it was recommended ...that they give us the contract. It didn't happen, because politics got involved in it and for whatever reason it [funding organization] wanted to keep her [Donna] happy even though it was determined they could not work with her. From 2009 to now there has been over \$200,000 that's been allocated for that that's not been utilized.

When I asked Wes why he believed the conflict with Donna's organization had occurred, he explained that he and Donna had different visions; he had wanted to expand

the program while he worked there and it caused a rift and that she actively worked to getting RI's state contract for transitional housing dropped:

What I'm doing here, I tried to do there. Sometimes you can't be afraid of growth, and that was my perception, is a fear of growth. They started out as a ma and pa operation and I think they felt safe staying that way. As the organization began to grow, I think it was a little less ability to control what was taking place as far as staff was concerned. The bottom line, I was told very clearly, if I... even though it was not in my mind at that point to do this [start his own reentry organization], that they would do everything they could to destroy me. There are 5,000 something parolees that are released. There are more than enough to go around. There wasn't any money involved, because they didn't have the capacity beyond what they had, to accommodate the clients that we were serving. However, as a newer agency, we had a larger capacity, that was one problem, but the real problem was - this is our territory.

RI opened one transitional home for formerly incarcerated persons in Westview in a home that was owned by a church in 2010 and another soon after. Alderman Rogers, in whose district one of the transitional homes was located, was contacted by neighbors who noticed several African-American men at the house and wanted to know what was going on there. According to the Mayor's Assistant Chief of Staff, when the Alderman found out it was a transitional home for parolees, he went door-to-door in the neighborhood saying that "there was a prison in their neighborhood." The transitional home did not meet city housing code for housing unrelated persons, although Reentry Initiatives thought that the church had approval for the housing. In the end, the DOC cancelled its contract with Reentry Initiatives for housing and RI was forced to close both transitional living homes weeks later because of the fallout. A state contract for providing housing was later awarded to Second Chance Outreach. Wes, the Director of RI stated that he believes that one reason the Alderman became so involved is that he is good friends with Donna, the Director of Second Chance Outreach, and that Donna views RI as a

competitor. He went on to say that RI's relationship with DOC is still negatively affected by this incident.

Jason, the executive director of Our Home was familiar with all the reentry actors in Westview and mentioned the strain between these two organizations. He maintained contact with both RI and SCO and said his relationship with both organizations was good. "Donna and I get along quite well, despite the fact that she doesn't get along well with hardly anybody."

Angie, the director of A New Hope program in Westview saw the difficulties in forging relationships between organizations as arising from not just territory issues, but from funding as well. When asked what her most difficult challenges were in providing reentry services, she replied:

I would say, hmmm... there are so many. Collaboration efforts, which is difficult. Now, I wouldn't necessarily say that it's anybody else's fault, or it's necessarily my agency's fault. However, the biggest issue is collaborating together and we're all playing with the same sand. You know, let's all play fairly. Play nice. And the thing is... we don't. A lot of people are so territorial and it comes from these budget cuts, because I want all the state dollars that I can possibly get and they want all the state dollars that they can possibly get. Oh, give me some fed money, too and you know. Everybody is working in their own specialties is like A New Hope's being employment, Second Chance Outreach being substance abuse, anger management... DCFS's dealing with public aid situations. As opposed to having other organizations that could possibly deal with housing, all being under one umbrella. And you know, we're all playing with the same client.

As far as full collaboration, including client sharing and funding collaboratively, Jason, the director of Our Home commented that the probability of creating that level of cohesion was, "unlikely, if not impossible" in Westview. Thomkins (2010) refers to the competition for limited funding between reentry organizations as an "us versus them" perspective. Because of the proximity of social service providers in Westview,

competition, conflict, and differing styles of service delivery are magnified and remain a barrier to collaborative efforts.

Silos of Expertise

The vast array of law enforcement, courts and correctional agencies at the state and local levels that have some stake in reentry are decentralized and often do not see the interconnectedness between such agencies of state intervention and control in the lives of formerly incarcerated persons. For the Deputy Director of Court Services, becoming aware of how closed-off, or in her words, “silo-ed,” one’s own agency is often occurs because partners are needed when budgetary constraints limit what you can get done by yourself:

One of the things that has developed in this position is really... a need to be a community liaison with community organizations and we have never done that before. I mean we have been a real "silo-ed organization" and I think that is pretty common, um, so that's part of the evidence based practices and within that... is holding our community partners accountable that they are implementing community based practices at their level. It's tough because there is such a level of accountability, but there is no money attached. I mean, we are being held to higher standards because, the end of the line is that nobody wants anybody to go to DOC if we can avoid it, because we know the recidivism rates for that is terrible. So how do we partner with our community organizations to provide services that are going to evoke change within an individual? But once again, funding is always an issue, time is always an issue, resources, overburdened system. Those things come up all the time and that is not the fault of the offender and that shouldn't be what is driving your decision...

Sometimes government agencies are not just isolated from each other, but hostile to each other. The relationship between the Westview Police Department and the Parole Office in Westview is a case in point. Contact between the leaders of the two agencies is limited and neither feels that they are getting the cooperation or respect that they deserve, as is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Police Chief: The parole agents work with our investigators quite a bit, so... I don't think that there's a list, monthly list, to say these guys are returned, but there is some exchange of information about parole... but not good enough. I don't think we work together well at all. I don't know what the issue is with people on parole, in not providing that information. I think the information sharing coming out has been pretty poor to almost nonexistent...what would be the motivation in not giving it? The only thing I could think of is some type of political thing. We don't want to advertise to the community the reentry of people into our community and create a scare, create a problem.

Mary (Parole) : They do have a community-oriented policing [in Westview]. I've gone to several of their meetings. I've spoken at a couple of them, but that's only because they've asked. Mostly they just wanted to get an idea of what parole does and doesn't [do], but as far as actually sitting down and talking about what can we do better, and for re-entry, I don't know if any of those discussions have taken place.

An exception to this difference in purposes is the Sheriff of the county that makes up the largest part of Westview. He has actively recruited organizations to come into the jail to provide services, mentoring, and parenting skills and has become well-known throughout the area as someone who has helped several organizations and the Westside Mission Prison Outreach Program gain access to other county jails by contacting other sheriffs to lay out the benefits of a particular program. Sheriff Sanchez is on the Board of Directors for Reentry Initiatives and several reentry stakeholders expressly mentioned that I should interview him because "he is somebody in uniform who gets it." However, he made clear during our interview that programming during incarceration is just the first step:

I work with RI, and anything we can do to close down the cycle, we do our best. Our resources are very limited. I have spoken to our church volunteers many times that it is great that they are here to help when someone is in custody - but where they are really needed is outside. Once they walk out that door and... you already have their interest because of a relationship they have established here, you need to be there to be a safety net for them... that someone from their congregation can stay in touch with them so they don't go back to their same

haunts, to the same people... the same things are going to happen and they will be back... I think open and honest dialogue needs to happen. And then, in having that dialogue, I think input from people like a chief of police and sheriff's, like myself, judges, state's attorneys and all the other stakeholders. They [politicians] have to let us "drive the bus" in terms of achieving policy rather than someone who runs for office every 2 years that doesn't have a clue regarding financial impacts of the amount of labor is required to running programs. All the stakeholders need to be working together - it's best not just for the community- but for the person who is trying to straighten out their life. I mean - how long are you going to punish a person?

Travis and Petersilia (2110) contend that the differences between government agencies at the county and city level are "artificial distinctions" (p. 309) because that they have many commonalities and typically serve the same populace. However, different funding sources and organizational structural differences may be sites of contention.

Inadequate Three-Way Collaboration

In Westview, I found that collaborative efforts among stakeholders in reentry are superficial and inconsistent. Lack of collaboration took place at three levels: 1) among social service agencies (both non-profit and for-profit) providing any type of service to formerly incarcerated persons; 2) among the governmental entities of law enforcement, courts/legal services, corrections, and political offices at federal, state, county, and city levels, and; 3) among social service organizations and governmental entities. Differing objectives between enforcement agencies and direct service providers often make it difficult to find common ground. Moreover, any effort to increase collaboration among these institutions has to contend with a hostile public attitude toward reentry.

For the resource strapped reentry organizations in Westview, the idea of adding one more thing, such as collaboration, to their list of responsibilities was viewed by most

as a great idea, but unmanageable under current funding and staffing levels. Mark, from Corrections Incorporated offers his perspective on why collaboration isn't happening:

Obviously, time...and money. I don't think a lot of agencies have a dedicated person to do that kind of thing. So, you're taking from maybe a manager, or case manager...you're taking time out of what they are supposed to be doing on site, to go do that kind of stuff. And, I think it boils down to that.

Donna, the director of Second Chance Outreach also mentioned funding, albeit from a different perspective. As the following exchange shows, her focus is on funding competition between agencies and differing strategies for providing services:

Donna: A lot of its funding, because everybody is going after the same dollar. But that's about it. There's not enough money... and some its...people are trying to do...you're re-inventing the wheel...instead of coming together. OK...you've got an idea. Let's just do it together. Use the same dollars... be smart.

CSD: Are other agencies willing to do that?

Donna: A few...but they are, going to come together?

Reentry work itself can be so all-encompassing that reaching out to build bridges with fellow service providers was seen as a last priority. Bursik and Grasmick (1993) cite the need for organizations to form linkages with other groups who are working on similar issues or serving similar populations. Delgado (2012) contends that there is a general agreement "that the solution to massive ex-inmate reentry is to develop partnerships between key stakeholders, including communities (13)."

In his work as the director of a prison reform watchdog organization, Brian stated that reaching out to other organizations and activists is necessary and has become second nature. In his view, the process is challenging for need-based organizations, such as local

reentry providers, and partnership building is largely dependent on the presence of leaders in the area to bring others on board:

It's hard, the work of organizing and creating coalitions. I think it's very natural how most kind of social justice type of organizations grow up. They grow up out of needs, but it makes sense. They don't often see how they can work together. That's not how they emerge and people, who run them don't really think that way... necessarily. Often, they are fighting over very limited resources and, because, especially in reentry you might find yourself very quickly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. You don't have time to step up and look around and to see the broader perspective, I think that's almost always a question of, in the kind of luck of having a strong leader who can do that work and teach and that is a question of luck, I think, in some ways. It's not easy, it's really frustrating.

The limited cooperation that exists between organizations and agencies in Westview is mainly due to the efforts and charisma of "bridge leaders" (Robnett 1996) who have sought out and fostered personal relationships with other stakeholders, rather than an outcome of the function and philosophical standpoint of the organizations.

A Referral Does Not Constitute Collaboration

While each interviewee from a reentry organization stated that collaboration between organizations was difficult, it was desirable. However, their definitions of what constituted collaboration were superficial at best. Most of the time, this took the form of a referral to another agency that could handle that problem or a phone call. Referrals were made in the form of: "we don't do that here, you can go to _____. Here is their address and number."

The collaboration efforts in the city of Westview are more appropriately defined by the terms, contact and referral as Mark from Corrections Incorporated illustrates in this exchange:

CSD: What other organizations does CI work with in order to provide services for former prisoners...other than across the hall with parole?

Mark: When we say we work with...what that means is that we refer people there...with the exception of Sober Living, who is actually on site with us. We refer people to two community colleges. We used to refer people to A New Hope, but that's not an option right now. I would say close relationship-wise, it would be Sober Living and Reentry Initiatives. There are not a lot of other people doing re-entry...oh, Second Chance Outreach, we work with them too.

Reentry organizations seem to have one partnership that they rely on almost exclusively for referrals and that they, in turn, refer to for services they do not offer or do not have the capacity, at that time, to offer. A partnership between organizations results in greater knowledge of how that partner organization is operated and their funding constraints. Because the partnership is viewed as reciprocal, there is less apprehension of competition and a greater degree of mutual trust between the partnered organizations. Knowledge about what programming and services other organizations provide in the community and the quality of those services is crucial for any intra-agency connections. For non-reentry organizations who provide some services to formerly incarcerated persons, having positive relations with reentry providers is important for advice and referrals, as Shavonna, from Community Partners for Empowerment explains in this excerpt:

Because Reentry Initiatives is in our actual network and they have actually done some great work for sending some of our clients in need of community hours. RI's fantastic, Wes is excellent at assisting us. Surprisingly, as long as I've been here I have not had any type of competition or anything like that. What I have received are different referrals if there is something that they can't do. Wes is great at that, "I can't do that but I do have a company that will be able to assist you, here their number, here's my contact I'll give them a heads up and you can call them" So, as far as a networking base, I think we have the same missions is to really just assist people back to work. What I've personally experienced is everyone is on the same page and ready to just assist others that are in need.

Most importantly, facilitating personal contact between organizational leaders or their staffs builds trust and respect, which Jen, the case manager for Community Reentry and Recovery demonstrates in the following exchange:

CSD: Do you work with other reentry organizations in the area?

Jen: Actually there's one, and they are awesome, RI. Have you heard of them?

CSD: Yes, I have.

Jen: They do great work. They do. I refer my guys there as much as I can...um, and they work across the board. They work with specifically people only in the criminal justice so it is all built, that program is built around that clientele. The guy who runs it, who started it, [I have] so much respect for him. I try to get my clients there but... it's only in Westview so, it's only my clients in Westview who get that. So, yeah it's hard. Honestly, I graciously thank the treatment centers because they are also reiterating the referrals when they can. I mean obviously it's not their job, but when they are meeting [a parolee] they will ask what they need and say "Hey, have you heard about this." So, that is helpful at least in getting their mind to "Oh yeah, I told my case manager I was going to do that, maybe I should do that."

Lack of knowledge regarding how another organization is run or what their funding sources are can create frustration and decrease the likelihood that a positive relationship will develop in the future. Angie, the director from A New Hope, chose where to refer a client, based on how that service would be paid for. If the organization did not have a contract with the state, the client or the organization would have to pay for part of the services, as is explained in the following exchange:

CSD: Are there other organizations that you kind of attempted it [referral partnerships] with?

Angie: Yeah, some. Didn't work because they wanted money.

CSD: Okay, do you mind telling me which ones they were?

Angie: Oh, God... an organization called Reentry Initiatives. Well, if I'm gonna refer them, for, let's say substance abuse, and they didn't have any state dollars to do substance abuse assessment, that parolee would have to pay for it out of pocket, they are like, "Well, can't you fund some of the money for the client?" Well, we didn't have that type of money because we are under such a small budget ourselves. I mean, we were trying to do (work with) other organizations but again, most, some of the organizations seem to say, "Well if you refer people here"... people wanted money and we had to find the best way possible. If we knew that Second Chance Outreach was doing it for free, then we send people to them.

While funding streams influenced the referrals that reentry service providers made between each other, competition over access to funds also influenced the relationships at organizational and personal levels. In the end, reentry and social service providers in Westview have merely forged fragile connections and rely upon simple referrals to another organization to assist a reentry client meeting their parole mandates. These tenuous linkages do not provide a formerly incarcerated person with the breadth and depth of services that they need and the undercurrents of conflict and personal animosity negatively affect the reentry environment of the community.

Organizational Culture Conflict: Secular, Faith-Based and Bible-Based Reentry

Developing linkages and partnerships between different organizations and governmental agencies is challenging; as each may have different objectives and conflicting philosophies (Small 2009). The history and individual culture of an organization can be an asset and a barrier to cooperation with others in the field. That culture is developed over time because of the personality and professional qualities of the leaders of the organization and shifts due to the current stock of employees in the organization at any given time. The "outward face" of the organization (how they appear to others outside the organization) and organizational identity are part and parcel of their

organizational culture and they have a vested interest in maintaining both appearance and identity (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002).

Many reentry organizations have a faith-based foundation for their work and this shapes the goals, practices, and organizational culture of their approach. Kenemore and Roldan (2006) found that variables associated with faith (sense of spirituality, religious community, “a belief in God as a protector”, the power of prayer) were positive support mechanisms and gave the formerly incarcerated a sense of hope (16). Faith-based organizations are key players in helping the incarcerated, formerly incarcerated persons, and their families (Collins 2009). Flores (2010) found that for former members of Latino gangs, a faith-based approach incorporating indicators of masculinity to reentry services and desistance support was more effective than a secular approach.

While Reentry Initiatives is a faith-based reentry program in Westview, spiritual services were offered on a voluntary basis only, as Wes, the director and an ordained minister explains:

Sometimes they [reentry clients] ask for spiritual mentoring. We have pastors who are here every day. If someone asks for it and needs it, but only if they ask for it and need it. One of the five top things that inmates say that they need in transitioning back into the community successfully is religious support, spiritual nurturing. That comes from the SVORI Research (Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative).

At the Westside Mission, Christianity is the foundation of their approach and infuses their programs at every level, as explained by their director, Darren, when referring to their treatment for sex offenders:

For a treatment center that is approved by the state that provides treatment for sex offenders they can have more than one [sex offender on parole living there]. We aren't approved because we are Bible-centered and we don't subscribe to the official treatment [model] and we don't use a secular 12 step approach. I have

worked with a lot of sex offenders and people will tell you that there is no rehabilitation for registered sex offenders. From my biased point of view, I agree with that... because they exclude Jesus Christ from their treatment. It's not the counseling or the steps... it is Jesus that changes lives.

Darren stated that his organization did not have much contact with other organizations working with formerly incarcerated persons or concern themselves with others in the area are doing. The following exchange clarifies the main reason for their outlier status amongst social service providers in Westview:

Darren: It's because we're so overtly Biblical. We're not even faith-based, we're Bible-based. We're not recognized [by DOC as a service provider]; we don't have any certified licensed therapists or clinicians or anything on our staff. My professional background is in Bible. We don't have substance abuse counselors. We have Bible counselors. We would say your substance abuse is a behavior that is symptomatic with deeper problems, a spiritual problem, see?

CSD: And that doesn't fit within that criminal justice kind of model?

Darren: No, right. We don't look at this as a disease. We don't look at this as a disability or illness. We look at it as a sin. The turnover here is pretty significant. Finishing our six-month program, 50 guys will finish that six-month program, about one out of five... one out of six. Because... every guy who comes back, every single one, at some point in time, has stopped going to church. When you say, "So what happened? You were doing so well." Well, this happened, that happened and I stopped going to church. Staying in church, that's not the guarantee that you're going to make, but that's a... you will not make it out there unless you are part of a good Bible-teaching church.

CSD: Does your approach influence who you accept into this program?

Darren: We do not allow any sort of antidepressants or any kind of psychotropic medications. So, if you're diagnosed as bi-polar and you're on medication, we're not going to tell you to stop taking it, but we're not going to let you in. That's usually the biggest deal breaker, because what I've seen over the last ten years is the frequency with which men want to come here and are medicated for a much greater percent than it was when I got here ten years ago. We are not equipped to be a dispenser, and there's also the philosophical issue that we don't think that treating one chemical problem deserves another chemical solution. The solution is a spiritual solution,

see? The solution is found in the 66 inherent, infallible, inspired books of the Bible. Our approach is completely spiritual.

Forming connections between faith-based organizations can be difficult due to differences between “organizational worldview.” Westside Mission partners with like-minded organizations in the city and some of the surrounding suburbs, but none in Westview because “they aren’t Christ-centered and Bible-based,” as explained by Chaplin Tom, who runs the prison ministry branch of the organization. Opposing philosophies and policies have created strains between organizations that provide services to similar populations and seem to have similar missions, as explained by Jason, the homeless shelter director:

We’re the only homeless shelter, and so, every once in a while, we’ll get people accusing us of importing homeless people from elsewhere. The irony of that is that we have pretty stringent guidelines as to who can get in, in terms of geographically. Then, you’ve got Westside Mission in town, who, I think they do good work. I’m not trying to bad mouth them, but they do take people straight out of DOC, from the city, from downstate, and virtually never catch any flack because, quite honestly, nobody knows it. Since they don’t run a homeless shelter, per say, they can fly under the radar a little bit better than we can. We’ve had to do two things. First, we had to make it really explicit to Westside Mission, “If you bring in somebody from a city hundreds of miles away, and you kick them out after three days, we are not taking them. They are not from Westview, just because they only lasted in your... you brought them up here, and they only lasted three days in your program.” Then, so... they kind of got that, and then, the next thing was... people were... they get kicked out of there or whatever, and they’d show up for us and ask for a bus pass to get back to the city. For a while, we kind of did because we didn’t really see what was going on, and now, we’re like, “Hey, look. We’re not going to... we’re not paying to ship your guys to the city.”

Darren, the director of Westside Mission’s program backs up the perspective of Jason, but the political push-back and any resulting difficulties a former client of his that does not make it through the program did not seem to concern him a great deal:

So I think some pockets of the community consider us to be a magnet for bad characters. Because we get a lot ... like I said before, we have this rotating team

of missions where guys bounce from place to place to place. Of these 98 guys, a small proportion are Westside guys, they come from all over. We get guys from all over, and if the guy doesn't work out, he's out and then he's a problem for the City of Westside.

When I asked if there was a good working relationship between the two organizations, Jason replied that it typically is pretty good, but there is a history of tension between the organizations that goes back many years:

My understanding is that, back 30 years ago, when we got started, there was enormous animosity between the two organizations. It doesn't exist at that level now, it's more of a, there's a pretty substantial difference in philosophies, both religiously and non-religiously. They're a highly evangelical organization. We're highly ecumenical interfaith. Westside Mission ran a homeless shelter, in Westview, that had very stringent rules. Like, essentially, you get your shit together and you get your shit together quickly and you accept God quickly, or you're out on the streets. While they ran a shelter in Westview, there was still enormous, there's still a lot of people living on the streets because they fell through their cracks. My predecessors started Our House as an alternative to their shelter, which over time, they actually shut their shelter down, is my understanding. Then, so... I think they were trying to, I think they... first off... again, they... religiously, we are pretty... pretty different. Then, also, I think they wanted to position themselves as the good shelter, as the socially responsible shelter – they wouldn't let people do drugs and [they felt like] Our House would let anybody just flop around, sit around, and smoke weed, and shoot up heroin, and rob people, and rape people. They were the solution to poverty, whereas, we were just a flop house. That narrative had some traction in the city. I've seen some old newspaper articles that are very, very unkind about Our House. Of course, the irony now is that... I think, we're viewed as the solution, and they're viewed as antiquated, but, so be it.

Rather than forming collaborative partnerships based on common services and clientele needs, organizations are divided by the role of religion and organizational mindset.

Future Three-Way Collaboration and the Public

A variety of stakeholders most frequently mentioned Reentry Initiatives as the organization most active in collaborative efforts, largely due to the efforts of Wes, their

executive director. Serving as an informal “bridge-leader” he has sought out and established contacts with other social service organizations, law enforcement, courts and corrections officials and city and state politicians. From his perspective, collaboration is imperative for the success of formerly incarcerated persons, as he explains in this exchange:

CSD: In terms of how various agencies and the government work together in this city for setting policies, coming up with services, reentry strategies, what would you say the nature of the relationship is between the agencies and the government?

Wes: From our experience, I think it's very cooperative. I know the mayor's very supportive of us here. His staff is very supportive of us. There are other levels of government, the police chief, the sheriff, who's on our board ... because, you have to collaborate, because we need each other, even if you have a different focus... it's all the same community.

The majority of the stakeholders I spoke with were concerned about how funding issues within the criminal justice system impacted the daily operations of “doing justice work” and how program cut-backs and limited personnel impacted the probability of positive outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons – and therefore, the well-being of communities. Many saw the need for beneficial services to be increased rather than decreased, given the high recidivism rate in the state and the increased risk to public safety if the already limited services were cut. As a prison reform advocate, Brian’s perspective is not surprising, but it was echoed by stakeholders who had jobs within the law enforcement and corrections establishment:

I think this all goes to very limited resources. The DOC has to perform its core function, which is the incapacitation piece of this. The re-entry piece, they're not getting ... Not only are they not getting funded, they're losing funding. It's like anything. It's a business on some level, an organization. If you don't have the resources for it...it's not surprising they can't do it.

The following comments from the State's Attorney are reflective of the sentiments many stakeholders had regarding the need to reintegrate formerly incarcerated persons, rather than continue the in-and-out cycle of incarceration and release, from both a reformative standpoint and a cost-cutting perspective:

All of those things are costs, but...there are indirect costs to public safety. What concerns me is individuals who have been incarcerated for long periods of time and all of a sudden at nine AM you unlock the door and out they go without any thought of how ...what his or her impact of returning to a community is going to be. To the victims of that crime is that person an ongoing threat because of mental health or substance abuse issues that have never been addressed within the department of corrections. DOC struggles with the same budgetary issues that we do. I think what we are doing right now is warehousing people. And at some point when the prisons are full and you have to release people and we haven't done anything but warehouse them for a specific period of time. Well, I suppose one response is that, "Anyone who is an ongoing threat to the community, we just warehouse them forever." Well, that is not really a real option. We need to address that issue. We spend a lot of resources on the front end with investigation; prosecution...the cost of incarceration is significant. But, there is really no investment in making sure they don't return to the system. I think the reentry of former prisoners is important in terms of my responsibility to the community, but day-to day in how we analyze cases, it does not have an impact on how we prosecute cases. We see the recidivism aspect and the generational aspect as well. Unfortunately, we see a lot of people who are either referred to juvenile cases as young offenders and they go through the juvenile system and then we see them in adult court. Now, after about twenty years as a lawyer, we are seeing the kids of people we prosecuted, ten and twenty years later.

When I asked the State's Attorney what role governmental agencies should play regarding reentry, his perspective centered upon providing supportive services to reentry providers. His argument considered how in the long run, fiscal investment in reentry has the potential for greater returns than imprisonment:

There is a certain amount of responsibility that the government has to support those social service agencies that provide services to those coming out of custody, in part, because I think we have that responsibility to citizens. Because if we don't... we are going to spend that money investigating crimes and prosecuting them and then incarcerating them again. If we can drive down the recidivism rate by supporting reentry programs, it seems to me an investment of money well

spent. I think there would be a pretty good return on the investment. I think that's best offered by a NGO but that doesn't mean that I don't think government shouldn't provide support...financial support or other kinds of support.

Other stakeholders mentioned that both state and federal governments need to step up and take a leadership role to increase avenues to reintegration. Shavonna, from Community Partners for Empowerment, was troubled that employers can legally exclude persons with a background years because of “that box” on employment applications, which asks the applicant about past criminal convictions. The range of years since conviction that an application can ask about most often ranges between five, seven, and ten years. For some positions, the application asks if the applicant has ever been convicted of a felony. In her view, the federal government should restrict how far back an employer can go regarding your background. In this excerpt, she envisions a systemic change to laws and correctional policies which make it difficult for a formerly incarcerated person to leave their past behind them at some point in their life:

I think that the priority of reforming ex-convicts, they are something our society, unfortunately, throws away. Individuals that get in trouble, that are in jail, are kind of thrown into this judicial system. I think that with budget cuts and things of that nature, I'm afraid that programs to help reform and get people back to work will be nonexistent in 10-15-20 years. Then we have a group of individuals that have no other avenues and I'm afraid that the crime rate will increase more and things will be occurring and I hope that's not the case. But, based on budgets, the priority is not on reforming ex-convicts and that, to me, just hasn't been a big concern of the community to really do that. They'd rather shut their eyes versus looking at what we really have to deal with in trying to assist them. Honestly, I feel like the judicial system has it like, your destined to fail. Will... they've put... well, they've allowed employers to have a strict check list of things that they will not accept in their organization as far as background, things of the nature ...where they would have to go through an extensive background check. I think they have set them up to fail. Actually, I feel like there should be some restrictions, even some compromise made as far as if you've been in prison before or if you hadn't had another [incarceration] in one year...there should be some lee-way as far as you being able to be employed again. I feel sometimes our government fails this reform system that we supposedly have, but they don't set up opportunity for

them to reform. It's just sad and unfortunate to see that they don't have that immediate option like, "Okay, if you want to prove yourself to be back into the community here's this program that you can go right into; thirty, sixty, ninety days probation and if you complete that you'll be able to be a full time employee, benefits. I think it's, the federal [government] that needs to put in better guidelines, as far as ex-convicts coming back into the working force system and then trickle down into state and local. I just think that it is necessary, so we're not going to continue the same cycle.

Darren's response concerning the role of government was similar to Shavonna's, although it was framed within a concern for redemption, which is fitting given his role within Westside Mission's Bible-based transitional program:

To your question about what can the government do? I think they should... make total forgiveness of some people a priority. Because there are some men... I think that I've met, who I say, "Man, it's just unfair that this guy has to go through life as a convicted felon." That was then, this is now. That was a long time ago he's a different man today than he was, see? Now whether that guy's a sex offender, or a felon, or anything else, there comes a point when you just forgive and forget. See, that's the beauty of Biblical Christianity, is that it's not held against you. It's not held against you anymore. You're forgiven. You're forgiven... You're forgiven. I paid my debt to society, don't we always say that? This guy has paid his debt to society, yet he walks around for the rest of life and goes for a job....then...well.

A disparate group of stakeholders expressed their opinion that the ways in which reentry was currently being operationalized in the state was inadequate and that we needed to start providing "real" reentry services. When pressed to explain what "real" reentry services were, answers such as: "do what works," "be innovative and try new approaches" and "in-depth" services were given. Moreover, concern about the strain on persons working with offenders and formerly incarcerated persons because of the difficulty of the jobs and the additional pressure brought about by limited funding and impending cuts, was voiced by C. Bennett, the State's Attorney of Kings County:

If we are going to have transition services and halfway homes, they have to be real. It can't be one parole officer or one counselor serving 500 people on supervised release. It has to be one on one. So many people are here because of

poor impulse control or a snap decision - a moment in time that really changes their life and if they find themselves in that moment and they reach out to some parole officer or some service provider and they say they can help in about two weeks - that really doesn't help. It has to be real funding and...be able to respond in real time. To do that you can't be cutting services and budgets and paying lip service to transitional services. That's my perspective that we are offering services but they are not real and in-depth. I'm looking at the volume of people coming out of prison and it is not humanly possible, even with the best of intentions and the best employee - you can only do so much. It's not a reflection of the individuals; I view it as a reflection of the level of funding to support the individuals that are trying to provide those services. Either they need more people or they need access to more counseling services or transitional services. Just how far can you cut before the system stops working? Everyone who runs for office in the state touts public safety - but funding public safety is not same priority.

Interestingly, the Chaplain of Westside Mission viewed the state's budgetary problems as an opportunity for change, "Everybody is singing the blues because the state doesn't have any money and so on and so forth - I think it is one of the best things that ever happened, you know, in a way. The shortage of money makes people like us more valuable." The role of governmental entities concerning reentry efforts vary from state to state and but currently are limited mainly to funding reentry efforts and research into best practices. Because crime, incarceration and reentry are, at their heart, politically constructed and operationalized the political pressures on reentry actors and the communities they work in have considerable influence on how reentry is done and the impact they can have.

Hostile Public Attitudes to Reentry: "Not in My Backyard"

Getting government officials interested in reentry was not a problem in one section of Westview. Almost every person interviewed in the area surrounding Westview mentioned Alderman Rogers by name, as someone I should talk to. It is worth noting that only one of the interviewees mentioned him in a positive light. For example, when the

County Sheriff was speaking about how some people have a “lock em up and throw away the key” mentality, he asked if I knew who Alderman Rogers was. I replied that I did. The Sheriff then replied, “Now there’s a NIMBY guy.”

During my interview with Alderman Rogers, he said that the Mayor of Westview is providing grant money to his friends who run social service organizations (Community Partners for Empowerment, Reentry Initiatives, Our Home, etc.). Certainly, the mayor has a history of being involved on a personal level with assistance organizations (international and national) and has forged friendships with community activists in the Westview area. In the Alderman’s opinion, the presence of so many social service organizations brings undesirable people to Westview.

Most often, this particular Alderman was recommended as a possible interviewee because his views on reentry are so strong and extreme, and I would be able to get his side of the story concerning the closing of Reentry Initiatives transitional living homes. When referring to this event, Ray, the Mayor’s Assistant Chief of Staff mentioned that “it was made clear to Reentry Initiatives that some folks [in the community] would make their life miserable” if they tried to reopen the homes. Numerous stakeholders mentioned this incident as an example of how things work in Westview and the hostile reception many formerly incarcerated persons must navigate as they come back to the city.

When asked, “What is the main obstacle for a person reentering in Westview?” many of the responses mentioned the unwelcoming political environment of the city. The County Sheriff mentioned how difficult it is for formerly incarcerated persons to find a

place to live in Westview and how the “not in my backyard” [NIMBY] attitudes of the community made it very difficult for someone to get a second chance:

I think it is backlash from the community. The initial response is that "we don't want a convicted felon in our neighborhood." I think that is discouraging for folks like Wes from Reentry Initiatives who is really trying and it's discouraging for people who have made mistakes and are truly trying to turn their lives around. It's the NIMBY. Not everybody that comes our way is a bad person - sometimes it's a good person who made a series of bad decisions and everybody has a different rock bottom that they bounce back from. My hope is...let this [county jail] be your rock bottom- don't make your rock bottom a maximum security prison.

Shavonna, the Case Manager at Community Partners for Empowerment also mentioned “NIMBY” as she felt this community level opinion made it more problematic for employers to take a chance on someone with a “bruised” background. Even if a company or owner personally was interested in hiring one of her clients, they were apprehensive that people in the community would find out that they “hired criminals” and they would lose business or experience criticism from nearby business owners.

The tax incentive, it isn't enough for them [employers]. It's very political which I'm surprised at, because Westview is so small. It's a lot of political channels that you have to go through and that you have to know in order to possibly get an opportunity to place someone at a position. It's very political and I think that's disturbing within itself. And it appears to be, and again, I'm not sitting in on the forums of CEO's, but... it appears to be an issue of how they are going to be viewed in their community by assisting fellow inmates, that they may be getting a backlash, or bringing someone into their community with a background as extensive as that. They have that type of political need to be correct. “Not my backyard, not my issue” and I think that's unfortunate... because I think we have a lot of people in Westview that can make a difference in putting ex-convicts back to work but just decide to turn the other way, as if it doesn't happen in their community. I think some community activists have a tendency to believe “Once a convict, always a convict.” And I think that's sad and disturbing because I understand that people do make mistakes and I think that is the most disturbing thing or the biggest obstacle that I run across. Trying to promote that, this is an individual that yes, did make a mistake and wants to prove him or herself that she or he is worthy enough to get back into the work force. Sometimes I come into an obstacle where people are like, “We're not interested in that” and depending on the crime, then they're *really* not interested in it. And that's just unfortunate to

me, it's like you want them to come out to be reformed citizens but you don't give them an opportunity to be reformed. So, what do you expect them to do almost? You want them to come out, but you're saying you can't here. If you had a felony, so what would you really want him to do in this position?

When I asked what needed to change in the community for formerly incarcerated persons to have greater reintegration opportunities, stakeholders from every area spoke about working to get the community informed to decrease the backlash and open up avenues for jobs and housing. Building community buy-in to an issue like reentry is very challenging, particularly when the flow of persons from prison to Westview is viewed as a stream, rather than a trickle.

Building Public Buy-In

Getting the general public “on board” to bolster reentry efforts and reduce obstacles to service delivery may be the common goals that stakeholders envisioned, but the approaches they advocated for to accomplish those goals were quite different. Some stakeholders used a forgiveness frame, citing the morality of second chances and raising the “what if it happened to you” argument. Other stakeholders used a public safety and fiscal austerity frame.

Among those using a forgiveness frame, some felt that educating the community would reduce the stigma experienced by formerly incarcerated persons in the area and open up opportunities for employment for reentry clients. In this excerpt by the County Sheriff, community members need to be educated about what happens when persons with a criminal background are not helped:

I think they need to learn as much as they can about reentry and then put themselves into that situation. What if that was your son or daughter - how would you want them treated? I say that based on the people who are cage rattlers, they say “Lock them up and throw away the key” until it is their kid and then, they are

the first ones on the phone [to his office].” People don't want to see how the sausage is made.

Jason, the executive director of the homeless shelter in Westview, felt that gaining community-buy in didn't have to be based upon eliciting concern about one's “fellow man.” As he explains in the following exchange, engaging the community required having people understand that if formerly incarcerated persons are socially and economically isolated the risk of recidivism increases, despite how politically unpopular the issue might be:

Jason: It is in everybody's best interest for re-entry to be done well. Obviously, even if you don't give a shit about the ex-offenders themselves, it is in everybody's best interest to lower the recidivism rate. I think the two keys to lowering the recidivism rate are, one would be actually working with people while they're in prison, making sure they get the rehabilitation that we pretend that we give them. Then, two... that the re-entry process goes well. Then, maybe a third thing would be to lower the institutional stigmas. There's always going to be some stigma. You can't force an employer to hire somebody with a background, but there are some places where it's flat out built into the... the prejudice is built into the system.

CSD: Do you find any churches or activists, locally, regular citizens who could be a part of reentry work?

Jason: Sure, but they would probably come to it via personal invitation from somebody that they respect, versus, a natural tendency to flock to this issue. There's just not a constituency for ex-offenders in Westview, and that may not be anywhere, but out in Westview is what I know. If you can be tough on crime, and pro-child, and whatnot... or pro-registered sex offender, which seems more politically appropriate? There are so few organizations that deal in this stuff. Your put Wes and Donna in a room, that's everybody.

Several stakeholders felt that raising community concern for, rather than about, residents with a background could only go so far, and necessarily so. They expressed their own concerns and trepidations about welcoming back formerly incarcerated person, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

State's Attorney: On a broader scale there are some organizations out there that can perform these services. There are former inmates who have made a successful entry and they can help. But there are some businesses that are just never going to want a felon to work there or be a part of their business. They can't use that as an opportunity to go back to that circle that led them to criminal behavior. At some level we all have a responsibility to our neighbors and our community, those who are like us and those who are not like us, but I think there are legitimate concerns about some people who have come out of prison. That sounds harsh, as I say it - but personally I would have those concerns as well.

Donna: I'm not saying we need to take these people and hug them and, ya know, "Oh poor thing," and all this. They have a right to a job. Yes, the employer has the right to know they were in prison. It's a safety thing. But, I think we need to do some education for the community. I'm going to get back to the basics. We are concerned about safety too. There are families out here. I have kids and grandkids. Sometime they're [DOC] not hard enough on them.

Police Chief: To ask the public, "Hey, can we put this person that's done whatever into your neighborhood because we think that he'll do better if he's living in a neighborhood," that's a huge pill to swallow. I don't necessarily blame the public for any of those fears. We had a couple of places on the west side that people were very vocal about. I think there's a few issues: One is that when you're talking west and east, you're talking still within County One; when you're talking far east, you're talking Counties Two, Three and Four, which now we have another set of rules about the venue and jurisdiction and who controls... in dealing with which Sheriff's department and all of these other issues that surround that. So there's a lot of logistics about it. I agree wholeheartedly with the "not in my backyard" philosophy that it's where you live, but it's not just where you live, I think it's just about anybody's neighborhood. Nobody wants to tolerate those types of things, and you see with the sex offender registrations and any number of things that see where individuals have gone to prison and are now out, whether it's a probation, parole, transitional housing, sex offender registration, whatever — people want to be secure in their households and I don't blame them. Whether it's a real or perceived threat by prisoners' reentry, it is in their minds a threat. It's something to deal with.

The second frame that describes strategies for developing community buy-in regarding reentry center on appeals to public safety and economic austerity. The following excerpts expound upon the belief by numerous stakeholders that citing

practical concerns for the citizenry had the best chance of eliciting a change of public opinion regarding formerly incarcerated persons:

Mary (Parole): I can remember, I was 21 when I started [as a parole officer]. I remember a conversation I had with a bright-eyed little boy at a prison who was there to see his dad and he said, "Well, it's only because you people made the laws that said my dad was doing something wrong. It's only you. Those are your rules." Seriously, how do I have this child who already gets it... that his understanding that society made the rules that said his dad's a bad guy? I'm just there enforcing them. I'm looking at him thinking, "If those are the rules you're growing up with, that if you understand that society's rules are wrong and your dad's rules are right, you're going to be the next generation". I've been here 12 years so I've seen multiple generations of offenders. I had a family tree that I had at one point, had supervised the three generations. If you go into the sticks, you're going to see generations... generations of offenders, so we're doing something wrong as a society. Not necessarily... as my department, because you can only do what you can do. We probably are putting our resources in the wrong places. So how do you sell it to the public that that's what we should be doing. We use it in public safety all the time. Everybody uses it as a pitch to get more money, to get somewhere, or as a political "I'm going to keep the streets safer" or, "I'm just going to send drug addicts to prison" or whatever it is that ... because we're making people afraid, so they're going to pay more money or make decisions based on that rather than what's best. Obviously, there's not enough money to do everything. I don't know what the right answer is, but... what is their role, is probably to be supportive and programming. I would say that you'll have a hard time getting law enforcement support of a program. I think that most ... and maybe this is my prejudice or my jade coming out ... but most people in law enforcement, that's how they see it or we see it as that, "They're not going to change so let's give up on this group" - but it's job security.

State Representative: After the largest city in the state, we are the second largest drop off point for parole. We need more services and we need to do a lot of private partnerships. As a community we should take pride of who we are and make sure we serve everyone. Churches, small businesses, chambers members [Chamber of Commerce]...if we are not employing them properly, they are going to offend again and if could be your car could be your home or even more drastic things... bodily harm, but in order to succeed we need to help everybody succeed. I think there needs to be a roundtable of discussion with all those different entities that make up a city, a network of the city - and say how are we going to work together, collaborate together so this population is being educated and... that they

are reached out to let them know they are cared about as citizens of Westview and we understand how hard it is. It is a very scary circle to form, because people don't even want to admit that two blocks away there is a sex offender and what do we do with a sex offender? I think there are things that are over-regulated and we don't understand how much damage that does to a person's life. The ex-offender he can't even go to their school for a play... He can't go onto their school grounds. When is enough, enough? When there is every block, where there is an ex-offender and it's difficult to place a school or where are they going to live? The first thing is saying there is an issue and then, what resources do we have and where can we go with this? What programs can we put in place? We have to give them some type of hope that they can have a good living that they can support their family or they are going to go back to what they know. What really needs to be constructed of... is the city of Westview, even the school districts and community colleges, everything. We all have to sit together and see how to make this area safe...75% of these individuals will have children that will be incarcerated, that's why all of these businesses should care because it's a lot more of your tax dollars going into incarcerating a child than to put them through the educational system. It is a return on your investment.

Need for Governmental Leadership

One common thread, running through many of the previous excerpts concerning community buy-in, spotlights a need for leadership at the state and local levels.

Stakeholders from very different occupations believed that no one was stepping forward to organize the disparate social service organizations, governmental agencies, members of the faith community, and political “decision-makers” into a working group to better address the needs and concerns of a “high-impact” reentry community. The following excerpt from Westview’s State Representative illuminates the difficulty in raising concerns at the state level if the community members are not pressing for change:

Government isn't there to promote or advance or be the cheerleader for anything. We are there to protect and serve and to make sure that needs are being met, but to spring an idea like that, it has to come from the community, from the community up and not the government down. Cause, I can force a program on the city of Westview and they will reject it, but if it is from a local, then we can spread it. There has to be buy in from the community to succeed. We don't have

the resources at the state level that we used to and we also have more people "on the rolls. It depends upon the culture of the city, Peoria has a different culture and they have a program that is helping kids that graduate from High School to go to community college, we don't have that yet. The system isn't individualized...in the system we like to do things in bulk, just get people out...we don't care about what happens to them once they are out of the system. It has to be a perceived issue in the community to warrant it, and usually it is a threat. It's not a "kum by yah" moment. We are so short-sighted. For most people, it has to be a sexy issue and not something that is going to take a long time.

Too often, reentry is approached from the bottom up only, through the work of not-for-profit agencies that provide services to formerly incarcerated person and activists seeking social change. However, government entities and officials holding public office cannot be let "off the hook" entirely, regardless of how inefficient some believe the government to be. Time and time again, I found that community stakeholders did not see themselves as having much to do with reentry – that was viewed as the job of the reentry organizations. The most common viewpoint was that they were barely able to do the job they were supposed to do and were ill-equipped to add reentry to their list of concerns. I found the following dialogue with the Sheriff illuminating in this regard:

CSD: Can you give me an example of how of how various law enforcement agencies and government work together setting policies and creating services for reentry?

Sheriff: I don't think that has ever been approached as a regional group. I think it is because law enforcement that does public safety is different than law enforcement that does corrections. I think the general law enforcement perspective is trying to be proactive and trying to prevent crime from happening in the first place by engaging with the citizens. I don't think a lot of thought has been given to working with former inmates.

CSD: Do you think your voice has been heard regarding policies and services?

Sheriff: You know, I don't think so, because of what we have been able to accomplish here and when I talk with other sheriffs in the state - the topics we discuss - and we are all fighting the same battles to different degrees. As far as the county itself (County Board) - utter disappointment. If you

do a county by county assessment - by funding, we are the lowest given the population. I'm 14% understaffed currently. We haven't laid off - but I'm supposed to have 90 sworn officers but only funded for 85. With injuries, medical leave, military leave, and vacation there are times we are down to 75. Investigations can't move forward and things are in limbo. To me - it is a prioritization issue. We are here 24 hours a day - 365 days a year. We have to supply courtrooms, do evictions, and serve foreclosure summons, all legal papers, warrants, 14,000 – 20,000 warrants at any given time and three people to serve warrants. I think open and honest dialogue needs to happen, and then in having that dialogue I think input from people like a Chief of Police and sheriffs like myself, judges, state's attorneys, and all the other stakeholders, they have to let us "drive the bus" in terms of achieving policy rather than someone who runs for office every 2 years that doesn't have a clue regarding the financial impacts of the amount of labor that is required to running the programs.

Mayoral Leadership

Hunter (1985) calls for the consideration of the wider, political landscape in which a neighborhood exists regarding the impact of crime on a community. As the leader of Westview, it seems that the Mayor would be the leader with the most influence to bring disparate reentry interests together. However, the city has three distinct regions largely divided by class and race. Therefore, the political landscape of the city is not one of unity. Further, this study took place during a national and local election year. Ray, the Mayor's Assistant Chief of Staff, previously served as a top official for the state regarding prisoner reentry. In his interview, he focused mostly upon what the city has done through funding streams to provide in-direct benefits to formerly incarcerated persons. It was clear that the administration felt it was not politically feasible to utilizing political capital to provide leadership for more community acceptance for formerly incarcerated persons or encourage employers in the area to hire those with a criminal background. Stating that there is "a lot of cross-over population" between reentry and social service needs, he explained that the city has provided community block-grant

funds to organizations such as Community Partners for Empowerment, Our Home, and Sober Living. These organizations do not directly target formerly incarcerated persons, but will in essence, help some with criminal backgrounds. He explained that there were limited funds and that the administration felt that prevention on the “front end” (such as the prevention of juvenile delinquency) was a better use of sparse resources than on the “back end” when someone had already served time. In this excerpt, he describes how limited funds and the political climate made choosing who to support more difficult:

We feel that they [funds] are best deployed in creating an environment that entraps the fewest number of people into the criminal justice system in the first place. That’s small comfort for those folks who are pulled in at a very young age twenty years ago and then have had chronic problems with the correctional system and now have chronic problems having a job. I’m sure there are a lot of people that would like to see a little bit more direct reentry services...there’s also not a lot of popularity for doing it. On the political end of things, I think that if we started to divert too many of those scarce resources towards programs that frankly take more resources to have similar impacts, then you potentially risk the ability to continue to take that kind of approach.

Ray went on to say that Westview has taken the lead in the area in providing social services and city officials feel as if they are not recognized or rewarded for taking responsibility. Therefore, surrounding suburbs benefit from Westview’s social services and affordable housing and mainly concentrate on tax revenue generating by developing their commercial districts. He stated that the Westview’s bad reputation is “no longer deserved” and that city hall is working to get the city “rebranded.”

The political conundrum faced by the Westview Mayor was succinctly elucidated by Jason, of Our Home, when he stated, “If you can be tough on crime, and pro-child, and whatnot... or pro-registered sex offender, which seems more politically appropriate?”

The DOC and some state officials have touted the importance of Reentry Summits. When asked if there had been any attempt to get one of these Summits in Westview, I was told repeatedly that it has been talked about and it is needed, but it hasn't happened because there wasn't a leader at the local level to work with state officials and coordinate local service providers. Several interviewees mentioned the personality differences between those in the reentry field in Westview as a leadership problem. When asked what priority reentry holds within state government, Jason responded:

It [reentry] pops up, as a major discussion, every couple years. It's been a couple years, so maybe we're due. There was some big "hoopla" two or three years ago, where, essentially there was kind of this cry of, "Oh my God. There's going to be an enormous amount of people coming out of prison over the next couple years." There was a lot of discussion, then, that seemed to be not only at the local level, but at the state level. I've not heard anything, really, since then. My guess would be it's not really on their radar, or at least not on their radar in a way that I'm hearing about it. It just never gets off the ground in any substantial way. There's just not a constituency for ex-offenders in Westview, and that may not be everywhere, but out in Westview is what I know. . It is in everybody's best interest for re-entry to be done well. Obviously, even if you don't give a shit about the ex-offenders themselves, it is in everybody's best interest to lower the recidivism rate. I think that [if] you take somebody, you jeopardize their housing, you jeopardize their employment, you jeopardize their relationships, you stigmatize the hell out of them, yes, they're going to re-offend. Some, not 100%, and that's not to say that there's not moral culpability on their individual part, but for me, there is always systemic causes to every problem, alongside their personal choices. We can sit around and point fingers at their personal choices all day, which we really can't do anything about. There are systemic causes that we can do something about. We can set up a system that has a 10% recidivism rate, or we can accept the system that has, what, 40% to 60% recidivism rate.

The idea of Westview hosting a Reentry Summit of Hope has been tossed around for years, but while a number of reentry providers and stakeholders mentioned the value of such an event, no one had taken the helm to start the process or coordinate with another agency to do the planning work collaboratively. In my interview with the County

Sheriff, he mentioned that it has been talked about but, “It just never gets off the ground in any substantial way.” The two most expected leaders of a project like this would be Donna of Second Chance Outreach and Wes of Reentry Initiatives, as they are the only reentry organizations left in Westview at the completion of this study. Because of the lack of cordial relations between the two organizations, the probability of their being a coordinated effort to host such an event in the near future is highly unlikely.

CHAPTER FIVE

PAROLEE EXPERIENCES OF REENTRY IN WESTVIEW

This chapter presents the experience of leaving prison and attempting to rebuild a life in Westview from the perspective of parolees. It has five major sections. The chapter begins with their time in prison and their initial experiences when they are released. The second section describes re-establishing their personal relationships. The third section discusses transportation and housing challenges in Westview. The fourth section presents their interactions with social service agencies, employers, and parole officers. The final section concludes with their thoughts on the future.

The Wake-Up Call: Prison as a Mechanism of Change

Being incarcerated in prison was described by several parolees as a negative experience that changed their lives. When I asked whether being in prison had changed their life in any way, some of the interviewees viewed it in retrospect as life-altering for the better - a turning point or “wake-up call” that their life needed to change. While not a “fresh start” being released from prison was viewed by some as a chance for a start on a different path than the one they had been on prior to incarceration. Gonzalo said that he had been rehabilitated the hard way, as this excerpt explains:

I'm not the same person. I don't feel like the same person, I gained some knowledge, different person and grow up more. I was more of an impulse person, just go with things at the moment and not think about it. Now I got to think twice before even making a decision or something, because I know the consequences,

go for the long run. I'm still paying for it. Even though I've done my time in DOC, I still got to do parole. That's something, not something to be proud of, but it's done. I just got to get moving.

Finding a silver lining in the negative experience of prison seemed, for some to provide some compensation for the time and freedom that they had lost during their incarceration. DeShawn felt that his sixteen months in prison had strengthened him for whatever else may happen in his life:

Even though I had my doubts [regarding making it through prison] I still had to go through with it, so it made me a lot better person, maybe a stronger person, it made me a better and stronger person, because I couldn't just quit. I had to keep on going. Just roll with the punches basically, if I could go through jail I can go through a lot more other stuff.

For Marcus, that positive element was his health. "I found out in there that I had asthma, and that's what I pretty much did with this whole situation, I took everything that was negative with this situation and turned it around positive for my life. So it was good that I went there and found it out, because being here on the street I probably would have never knew, probably would have never got treated and never been aware of it. I got out here and I got on the medical card so I'm going to keep constant with that, make sure I take care of that. Actually I've been doing pretty since I found out and I've been taking the medicine, no chest pains. I'm the healthiest I've ever been in my life."

When asked, "What advice would you give to somebody getting out, regarding re-entry" most parolees were upbeat, even though for some, it was inconsistent with their own experiences?

Gonzalo: That it's hard, but it's not impossible. You just got to get by until you get what you're looking for. You got people who don't even have family. What can I say to them, have faith and pray to God, pretty much.

Marcus: First of all, you should have a plan. You plan shouldn't start the day that you walk out the door. You should be like me, your plan should start depending on however much time you got or whatever issues you got need to deal within yourself, how much time it's going to take to get you to do it, do that. In my case it was a year. So I started evaluating myself a year before I was released and started seeing the things that I needed to do and I started making the plans and taking it step by step, day by day to accomplish the goals to get to where I needed to be. So it starts in prison. It don't start the day that you get out or a week after you been out, a year after you been out. It's never going to work if you wait to get out here to the test and you didn't study for it. It's never going to work, ever. You've got to start studying for the test. The big test is when you get out here and you actually get into a new face-to-face and confront it. This is what I want to prepare for because in there you've got nothing but time. Do what you need to do.

Some of the same mindset themes mentioned by reentry stakeholders in Chapter Four were repeated by the parolees. They felt that if they just keep being disciplined at staying out of trouble, work hard at finding a job or staying employed, and stay positive, in time things would get better for them. Notice that all of the mindset themes rest upon the work and changes that the parolee needs to do for himself and by himself. Although many wanted assistance with their reentry, few felt they would find it.

Pre-Release Preparation

Many of the stakeholders I spoke with mentioned the importance of beginning reentry planning and services during incarceration, rather than completing assessments and service delivery post-release. The common view amongst reentry providers was that the formerly incarcerated person could "hit the ground running" upon release because they would have a connection within their receiving community from the beginning, in terms of knowing where to go and what was available to them. Further, it would allow for a continuity of services between what is received in prison to the continuation of those

needed services on the outside. In the view of Wes, the director of RI, the returning individual and the community benefit from pre-release reentry services:

It's important that we begin that relationship while they are still incarcerated so when they do return back out into the community, they are already connected to an agency that will provide the services that they need in order to make a smooth transition and to promote change. So we're very, very involved, very connected and networking with the various levels and entities, so that, in helping our communities to become safer, become healthier. We believe that a healthy community is a safer community.

The lack of reentry planning was most often seen as stemming from budgetary issues. While none of the stakeholders I spoke with held out hope that there would be significant change in how reentry planning is currently done, Brian, a prison reform advocate, argued that the way prisons and the parole system are set up actually diminish the skills and functions that an incarcerated person needs to further develop, to be successful on the outside:

We don't fund prisons to really provide re-entry. We barely fund them to incapacitate people. Anything that happens, happens ... On a system level, I think things happen because there's individuals at the facilities who take an interest in this and kind of help really drive it...here's the peculiar thing about prison. From a very professional level, we take people who have done things that they shouldn't have done and basically say, "Look, you've made some bad decisions in your life. We're going to put you in the most artificial environment possible. We're not going to let you make any choices." Ideally, you want prison to be a place where people can learn how to live better, right? I mean, not live better morally, just live better, like pay your bills, don't steal, whatever that is. We don't let them do any of that. Then, I mean, there's no way of experiencing living in prison, it's a little bit traumatizing for everybody. Even though everyone's excited to leave, you go from these two very dramatic contexts and there's just no transition. What it is we're advocating for is parole should be given much earlier, it should be given inside the facilities and right now it's not. You're dropped off, you meet your [parole] officer and your officer has probably, in an urban area, he might have 100 people on. There's a case load and that's it. That's your only contact.

While reentry services are to be offered at each prison for “short-timers” the quality and depth of the pre-release programming varies widely between incarceration facilities. Willie served a year in prison and felt that the reentry services he received in prison were helpful and that it was the prisoner’s own fault if he didn’t benefit from what was offered:

The reentry stuff is helpful, if you want to be helped. There’s a lot of there that don’t want help. I’ve been through it four times; it’s like the same thing. You have to do it when you’re ready to do it. There’s nothing no one can tell you besides bribing you or making you have something in order for you to want it. That doesn’t work, because once they don’t want to do that anymore, then you are only doing it for that purpose. You have to want to do it for yourself. If you don’t want to do it for yourself, then it’s not going to work.

On the other end of the spectrum, Andrew served sixteen months at a large rural prison and stated that the “Pre-Start Reentry Program” was held for his last five days in prison and one of the days the instructor didn’t show up. He didn’t feel that what constituted reentry was helpful as they just sat around and talked with the instructor and he didn’t receive any information on organizations that would help him in the Westview area.

Out of all the parolees I interviewed, Gonzalo spent the longest amount of time in prison. During his decade of incarceration, he certainly had the time to get to the top of the waiting lists and I was interested to see what he felt he had gotten out of the services he received. In this exchange, Gonzalo explains that his incentive for participation in substance abuse, anger management, life skills, and the reentry classes was to prove that he was reformed:

CSD: When you were in prison, did you participate in any programs that would prepare you for getting out and having life after prison?

Gonzalo: The only ones I had was substance abuse, anger management, then life skills, I believe, and the reentry program. I'll say the re-entry program is good. There's a lot of information that they give you before you get out. That one I actually can say I give them an A-plus. The other ones, no, not so much. Anger management and substance abuse, not so much.

CSD: You don't feel like it helped you very much?

Gonzalo: Help me? I never had a problem. I was just doing it to get the paper to show some ... to parole board that I actually was looking for some rehabilitation, even though I don't feel I have a problem with that, I was just doing it.

CSD: You were never diagnosed as having substance problems or having anger management issues, but you chose to go into those programs to....

Gonzalo: That I'm doing something on my behalf to show that I'm trying to get back to society, then be good.

CSD: Were you in any education programs while in prison, for your GED?

Gonzalo: Yes, I thought about that, but in prison I couldn't do it, because you got to have a job and no school at the same time. Either you had to have your job or school. You had to choose. I didn't want to let go of my job because of the money, and supporting myself.

While the lack of reentry transitional services in prison are certainly lacking, the provision of developing job skills, occupational training and furthering one's education while incarcerated are often cited to tout the rehabilitative effects of incarceration. Petersilia (2005) estimates that only about 25% of inmates participate in vocational training programs and 33% in educational programs while incarcerated. These ratios are a sizable decrease from pre-release participation levels from the 1990's. In the state in which this study was conducted, the total capacity for educational and vocational training opportunities within the prison system that remained following budget cuts was a mere 2,500 slots (Festen with Fisher, 2002). In 2005, prisons in the state held 46,103 individuals and another 35,385 were on parole (Peck and Theodore, 2008).

Although some parolees interviewed received some reentry programming – it was not comprehensive or thorough. The depth and breadth of programs available in prisons differ because of facility type and number of prisoners incarcerated at a particular facility. Tony was able to receive a drug assessment, anger management classes and parenting classes while in the county jail. Meanwhile, although John was incarcerated for one year, chances to benefit from educational programs, treatment, and vocational training were dependent on how long a sentence an inmate had – as a short stint did not allow enough time to be eligible for certain programs or get into programs that had a waiting list:

It ain't enough time to do what you've got to do. You see what I'm saying? It takes two years for barber school; it takes two years for that machine stuff. There's not enough ... there's not very many slots. They can have a program but they're only going to take 10 or 15 people or such.

For certain classes, academic eligibility requirements had to be met by prisoners before they were accepted into the class. Willie was able to take computer technology and job technology classes that provide a certificate of completion from a local community college after being incarcerated after just one month; however he had to take a test to check if his grades were above a sixth-grade average to be able to be in the classes. Those who are unable to pass the test go on a waiting list. He stated that he wanted to take a class for anger management and other “treatment classes”, but never was selected during the year that he spent in prison.

Parolees reasons for taking programs and classes were mainly centered around increasing their job prospects when they were released, trying to change some aspect of their lives that they viewed as having contributed to their incarceration, such as anger management, or it was part of their sentence, such as substance abuse treatment. Like

many others, DeShawn initially thought that certificates of completion would help him get hired:

While I was incarcerated I received my custodial, my commercial custodial maintenance certificate, it's like a janitor...then, a career technology certificate, it's like I'm certified to work on computers, like Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel and things like that. I went to school and everything like that, so some of those credits transferred over. It hasn't helped though.

The opportunity to participate in programs and classes gave structure to their days and many parolees mentioned that they took "whatever I could get into" just to keep busy. For prisons that are deemed a "treatment prison," such as the facility where Jose` was incarcerated for two years, there are many more offerings:

I did take up a trade school in there. It was like a pre-apprenticeship electrical wiring class. It was like a six-month course and I got a little certificate for that. There's just so many different things like 24/7, Dad's program, and just reentry stuff. Especially the last 6 months you're in there, you go to a different building which is more oriented towards reentry. They have a lot of speakers come. It's less a group. Then, speakers come and CRR (Community Reentry and Recovery) and CSAC (Community Support Advisory Council). They have all kinds of resources for jobs, just anything, helping with your IDs. There was actually a place that came out that paid for you to get your license and everything and I needed to get my license renewed, so I took advantage of it. They sent me a money order to get my ID and my license renewed, which was cool. They do offer plenty of stuff. It's just a matter of taking advantage of it.

While Jose` felt that this program worked quite well for him, John was incarcerated in the same prison for one year and was unable to take advantage of most of what they had to offer. Although he began his GED in prison, he didn't have time to complete it and was continuing to work on it online at the time of the interview. John spoke about being frustrated at being around opportunities, but unable to benefit from them personally:

I only had a year and at that prison they've got all type of industry stuff there. It was like a long waiting list. The waiting list could be a year and a half...that's

another reason why I went there because of all the industries they have there. If he [prison official] probably would have told me...[during intake] that I didn't have enough time to do none of that, I probably wouldn't have even gone there. I did want to get my forklift license because that was the main thing. I wanted my GED and forklift license. When I got there they told me I didn't have enough time. I was like, now I'm stuck down here and I can only take GED for so much time then after that it's like...I ain't going to be doing nothing around here. Least if I was in a regular prison, I'd be doing nothing like everybody else, all in the same boat, then I... later on I find that I can't go to a transitional [Adult Transitional Center] cause I'm at a treatment prison.

The majority of the interviewees stated that there were some opportunities while incarcerated to learn about resources and organizations to assist them upon their release from prison. For the few parolees who became aware of reentry organization while incarcerated, they learned of its existence through a reentry event held at some prisons (similar to a "job fair"), by being personally contacted by an organizational outreach worker who went visited the prison, or by seeing literature at the prison about the organization. Repeatedly, the parolees I interviewed stated that most of the organizations they were aware of were located in the urban area. While they felt that this made sense, given that so many of their fellow inmates were from in inner-city, they felt that they were on their own when it came to returning to Westview, as Jose` illustrates in this excerpt:

A lot of the stuff was really oriented towards the city. That's where the majority of the inmates are from. You had all kinds of halfway houses there, but...no, there was never really anything for Westview. There was a place that was a recovery home [40 miles away] that they came there [prison]. It's mostly city stuff.

John (age 26) chose to be incarcerated at one of the "treatment prisons" because he felt that because it focused on treatment, he would have a chance to gain some skills and hands-on training. John has never held a legitimate job; he has only sold drugs and felt he needed help to get a job. However, he stated that there was too much talking about

things, meetings, and lots of rules instead of anything that would help him learn a skill and get a job:

I figure, okay I'll go there because I've been to other penitentiaries and I might as well try this one too. Plus, it's a place where everybody in there is in treatment. Everybody is trying to do better. Instead of trying to help me or something, I felt like they really treat you like a kid there though...some of the stuff was good as far as some of the material they had on relapsing and all that stuff. I used to smoke weed a lot and I ain't smoked since I've been out. I ain't touched nothing...When I got out, it was like most of the stuff they said they were going to help you ... I ain't get no help with that. No finding jobs, no nothing.

John's frustration increased when he was released because he felt that the reentry program had lied to him. "They told me they'd help me with housing, they'll help you with food. They told me they'd help you find a job. When you're there, they so-called have people sending letters back telling how they got a job; this place found them a job and all this. I don't know. It was a rumor going around that stuff was fake so I was like uh-oh." Upon release, he called the places they told him about while in prison but received no assistance. When he called places around Westview, "They were like, you can call this place and they'll help you find jobs out here, but you've got to call some of the urban places." At the time of the interview, John remained unemployed and had received no assistance of any kind from a reentry organization.

For the parolees who served enough time to have access to programs, many were unable to get into the programs or occupational training they felt would be helpful to them because of waiting lists for open slots. The lack of programing capacity and the shallow depth of some programs made waiting to get into some kind of classes or training a common occurrence amongst the parolees I spoke with:

Chris: They make things ... It looks good on paper, "This is what we're offering" This and that, but they make it nearly impossible for you to even get

involved in this program, there are so many roadblocks, they say “Okay, well we’re full right now.” or “We don’t have available teachers to teach this.” They’re saying they’re offering all these assortment of programs but really, in truth they’re not. Nothing. As soon as I came down there I tried to get in things, to try to get me some type of tools, try to help me when I come back. Hopefully, there are some things that you can teach me that I can take advantage of when I do re-enter in the world, but it didn’t happen. I just got the run around the whole time I was in there. They were supposed to give you a parole class before you leave. They don’t do that, I guess because it costs money. I tried to do this class “Job Readiness” and they turned me down and I wasn’t able to do that.

Marcus: They told me, “You’re on a waiting list and it might take you eight months to a year to get this position.” So even like I tried to get into the drug program--they’ve got a drug program at the prison that I was in--and the drug program it helps you get out early and also it teaches you about the do’s and don’ts of drugs and everything like that. I tried to get into that and they told me it’s going to be a year, year and a half wait to get into the program. I worked in the kitchen for nine months as a cook. I finally got in there right toward the end of my bit, they let me in and that’s what they do there. When it gets close to your time of release then they’ll let you work and try to do, but first when you first get in there you just sitting there miserable. A counselor there, he helped me get in the class called Lifestyle Redirection. It was a three month program where it tells you about your character, your self-esteem and pretty much how to control your attitude and stuff like that. I mean this 12 week program it was beautiful. I mean if I had the chance I would take it again. I would take it while I’m out on the street actually. That was really, really, I mean, we graduated, we got a little certificate for that and everything. So that program really helped me a lot because when I was younger I had a lot of anger issues and that program taught me to look into my inner self and pull out the things that I need to pull out and basically just look at myself from the other side. It helped me a whole lot. I mean, like right now today even like my sisters and my family still think like, “Oh, you’re a lot calmer. You don’t even, the little stuff that used to get you it doesn’t even bother you now.” I also finally ended up taking a college course at the Richmond Community College. It was career tech, a computer class, and it taught you pretty much how to operate computers and stuff like that. So that only lasted a month. That was the only thing about that, I wish it would have lasted longer so I could have got more out of it because there was so much to learn in the class and so little time to do it.

The parole, corrections and law enforcement stakeholders I spoke with repeatedly mentioned DOC’s Adult Transition Programs (ATC’s) to be the crown jewel of reentry

efforts by the state. As one official put it, “they are the only thing that works in DOC.”

For inmates attempting to gain access to the ATC’s, however, space is limited and the small window of time for acceptance can pass while an inmate is dealing with administrative issues, as Marcus explains in this excerpt.

The work release program you’re in prison, but they basically send you out and take you to jobs that hire fellows and they’ll give you rides there back and forth and that’s why I tried to get in that program. They denied me and one time they told me I had warrants and I went back and forth to court and I cleared it up. Then they told me that I don’t qualify so I’m like why I don’t qualify? I mean I meet all the requirements [a nonviolent offence] to qualify for it. Then after so much of like, it was like 9, 10 months they give the run around about it. Then after you get six months short then you don’t qualify for it. So I put in just enough time so where I could qualify and I had cleared everything up and everything was all good and they tell me oh, well you can’t go now because you’re too short (less than 6 months before release). I’m like oh, my god, you sat here and dicked me around with all these lies and then tell me now I’m too short so now I’ve got to stay here and finish the rest of my time and I can’t do this.

Although Shavonna, Case Manager for Community Partners for Empowerment, did not specifically mention the Adult Transition Centers by name, she is describing the functions and structure of an ATC as she describes what out to be offered to transitioning prisoners in this excerpt:

It’s a whole rebuilding and I think there has to be a facility set up for exactly that to be rebuilt in all aspects –physically mentally and spiritually. Allowing them to get acclimated back into... first of all, paying bills and things of that nature. Freedom, but with restrictions in a sense, weaning them off the mentality of being in prison. You do need to have some boundaries and guidelines before you can just throw them back into freedom without any information. There are courses, classes, even extent of counseling, just things that will get you back into the mindset of dealing with first of all, where you are been and where you want to go, a realistic plan to get them back on track. Not just throwing them back out, unable to get a job, and now they’re “what do I do now?” That’s unrealistic to me for success. You have to have a plan. Any process says there must be a plan, and I feel that’s where our system has failed.

Like a Bird in a Cage: Getting Out and Fitting In

The majority of the parolees I interviewed felt that when they were about to be released from prison, they thought they were mostly prepared for the adjustment. They were anxious, but excited and were very happy for a few days. After the initial euphoria of being out of prison wore off, they began to feel overwhelmed and the reality of their situation begins to sink in. Parolees spoke of feeling out of place, scared, and pressured to make up for their past wrongs to their family by earning money. Twenty-three year old Chris stated that he was not prepared at all to come out after one year in prison:

On your own, you try to formulate some type of plan, like “This is what I’m going to do when I get home. I’m going to get a job. I’m going to try to get back in school, because I know I need a degree to try to be competitive in this job market. I know the job thing might be a little shaky because I’m a felon now. I’m going to try to get me a barber’s license. I’m going to try to get into something.” None of that happened when I get home. I’ve been looking for a job, with no chance; I can’t get in a school because I have no money.

The behaviors that an incarcerated person needs to develop and hone during their imprisonment are in direct opposition to the skills they will need to successfully adapt to life outside of the prison walls (Rotter et al 2005). In the following excerpt, Chris equates living in prison to “the twilight zone” and explains how difficult the mental shift is going from “the inside” to the outside world:

You learn how to live in there because, it’s like the twilight zone. You can’t take of your understandings from the outside world inside with you because it’s not applicable, it won’t work. You learn how to survive, and you’re your just thrown back in society, and it’s like you’re naked. It’s like you have nothing. I’m blessed because I have the little things that I do have but it was a complete culture shock. I couldn’t believe I was free. I couldn’t believe it, because when you’re in a situation... that is that deep, you think that you’ll never get out. They can take time from you when you’re locked up.

Darren, the executive director of Westside Mission spoke about how institutionalized some of his clients are because some were fearful of the few freedoms they had at his organization:

The men in this program, and the ones in particular, who are ex-offenders are deep down really, really afraid of independent life in society. It's amazing to me, not knowing much about life in prison, and not really having studied that area, I see enough to know that, I say to myself, "Boy, when you're in prison, you must have like, very, very few choices that you have to make," because I think here [Westside Mission] you have very few choices and dictates so much of what you do, but the little bit of freedom that you do have and the liberty is overwhelming for some guys.

Before this study began, I invited a director of a reentry organization to speak to the students in one of my classes about reentry, and she brought along a reentry client and his fiancé to speak, as well. The reentry client had been incarcerated four times during his life and commented that each time he was released from prison; he didn't know how to live in the world anymore. One comment he made that resonated with me was, "I haven't even flipped a light switch in years and I need to find a job in a couple of weeks?" The adjustment from a completely structured environment to one on the outside where life is unpredictable can be overwhelming, particularly for persons who served long sentences or were in maximum security prisons. Indeed, Chen and Shapiro (2006) contend that the harsher the conditions of confinement are, the greater the criminal involvement and recidivism rate. In the following exchange, Gonzalo, who was incarcerated at the age of eighteen, speaks of feeling like he didn't fit after a decade in prison:

CSD: What did you feel like coming back out [of prison]?

Gonzalo: First, I felt a knot in my throat. I wanted to cry, I was so happy, I couldn't even explain. After that, I started getting more pressure as far as

getting a job, having the electronic monitor. That was another thing. The first month, the first weeks was hard as far as mentally goes. It's a struggle. After that settled, had to get back on my grounds and realized that I got to do good and stay out of trouble, not to go back to that place. Not scared, but I felt out of place, uncomfortable. I felt almost like when you put a bird in a cage, and they're just looking around trying to see how they can get out or something. That's almost how I felt, but I'm stable now.

CSD: Have you been able to support yourself at all since you've been released, or has your family pretty much been helping you out?

Gonzalo: My family. I got the Link card, but most of it is my family and being able to get a job takes a lot of weight out of my shoulders, because now I can feel more independent and be able to give back to them what they've done so far for me.

CSD: Can you tell me what you think your biggest needs were when you were released?

Gonzalo: Insurance, medical needs. We don't get that. Yes, like medicine for medical needs and stuff. Money. Just the Link card is good enough as far as food goes, but if I'm sick, then eating food is not just going to take it all away. I had to rely on my family to help me pay for medicine and stuff.

When I asked parolees what their first few days were like after their release, they spoke of feeling elated at gaining their freedom, but still not feeling free. The effects of incarceration were still with them and they were still learning about the ways that their time in prison had changed them. They also expressed fear because of the uncertainty of their future and the threat of messing up and going back to prison:

Jayell: The hardest part is getting thrown back into the world with nothing. You're going to struggle. You're going to be tempted to go back to your old ways, however you made money easily; you're going to be tempted. What was tempting for me was, I had to do this on my own. My family is nowhere around, somewhere I can run to them. The temptation of, "Well, I need this and this ..." What was tempting was... I get out, I get into a halfway house, not knowing what the halfway house is like, not knowing who's there, who runs it, what the person's name is. All I know is, the drugs are still going to be a temptation. Once I get stressed, who knows what I will turn to? Just the fear of the unknown, plus more. My first two days, I didn't go to sleep. I was so happy I was free. I've only been out for

three weeks. I've got to say, job searching is a little hard, especially when you don't have a Social Security card. I'm waiting for it to come in the mail. It's been two weeks already since I filled out for it.

DeShawn: It was different. It felt good, but at the same time it felt like everything had changed. Within a year everything... seemed like it had changed. It was the same at home, but this had all changed, like, the people I used to hang out with are no longer on the street, they were all in jail. My cousins that I used to hang with all the time they all caught a federal drug case, so everybody that I would hang out with were all incarcerated, they weren't coming home for a long time. It was like I'm out here by myself. I still had other friends and stuff like that, but they're all in college and everybody else had their own stuff going on, like... they are all grown up now, so it was kind of like different, like the love I used to feel I didn't feel any more. I felt it from my family still. Like, I'm here now and I have to step up, I have to grow up. I have to start doing things and stop thinking about everybody else.

John: I felt pressure. I have to get a job now, now, now. But then... nothing. It made me feel depressed. I felt like I had a chance maybe doing something different. It ain't happened that way though. I want the income. I'm not trying to go back that route [drug dealing] though. I'm done. It's over for me. Almost five years in the penitentiary. I'm alright.

Marcus: Well, the first few weeks were like happy, joy, happy to be home, happy to be around my family, happy to be around my kids. So it was just pretty much happy go lucky. So I would say after about two to three weeks then reality started to set in and I'm like, "Okay, well I've got to get up and get a job. I've got to stay motivated" and I've got to, you know what I'm saying, get around and do something because this is basically like I'm still just sitting in the cell. I mean I'm happy to be around my family and able to communicate with them, hug them and stuff like that, but I still feel like I'm trapped. I'm still going through issues and stuff now because, like... in there there's so many germs and stuff like that so I became this real clean freak. So, now I'm at home and my son may throw a sock on the floor and I'm like, picking it up and I'm always washing and scrubbing and they're like, "Daddy, why are you...?" I'm like, "Hey, in there there's so many germs and disease; you've got to be as clean as you possibly can."

Several of the previous parolee interview selections mention the pressure that parolees felt upon their release to get a job and earn back the trust and respect of their loved ones. Few participants went back to family members or significant others without

some interpersonal difficulties that had been exacerbated by their time in prison. For parolees who were unemployed or who were working with limited hours or minimum wage, the continued dependence on their family or significant other troubled them and for some, it was a source of increasing tension as weeks and months went by without a job.

Rebuilding Interpersonal Relationships: Stigma and Redemption

Reconnecting with family members or loved ones after release from prison was impacted by how much contact they were able to maintain during imprisonment. Staying in touch with family members during incarceration was difficult for the majority of the parolees I spoke with. The quality and quantity of inter-personal interaction depended on the length of time that a parolee had been incarcerated, the accessibility of the correctional facility they were at and the comfort level a prisoner felt at having family members visit him in prison. For some, their only contact had been letters from home and rare phone call to family members. Phone calls were sporadic or non-existent because of the inflated cost of calling collect from prison to their loved ones. Manny's reasons for having no visitors during his eight months in prison were not merely financial. Although his girlfriend wanted to visit him with their son, he didn't feel that the risk to them was worth it. "I think they could have, but I didn't want them to. There was gas. It's a long way by herself. I don't want her driving that far by herself. Something could happen."

Men with young children on the outside who had regular contact with their children prior to incarceration stated that they tried their best to stay in touch with their family. Marcus stated that he worked hard to stay in constant communication with his family while he was incarcerated. He relayed that knowing how his children were doing

in school and what activities they were participating in helped him to stay focused on the positive things in prison and not get sucked into the negative things that were all around him. His fiancé (whom he considers his wife), their nine year old son and her two children (that he considers his step-children) wrote letters several times a week and they visited him frequently during his incarceration. As he explains here, upon getting out, he felt somewhat overwhelmed by what he felt he had to do to meet everyone's needs, including his own:

Well, I felt there was needs for everybody, me and my family, also. So, I did what I can to... which I'm still doing, to try to fit in. Like I said, I changed the attitude stuff and they all have saw this and it's like really crazy, it's like amazing. I'm basically living the life that I've always wanted to live, it's just that I don't have a job right now. But everything else is there, I mean, I'm getting the family together to where we take part in cleaning up the house and stuff like that, which they had a problem with that before. So, I mean, as far as with my household, my family, all of that is good. Only thing I'm just missing a job. I think once I get that job, I'll be complete and I'll be able to stay focused and complete my goals and take care of my family and do the things that I'm supposed to do.

Incarceration puts a great deal of stress on families and intimate relationships.

More than just having a member locked up and away from the family, incarceration takes a financial and practical toll on families, particularly for spouses or intimate partners who have children together. Family members on the outside, while not behind bars, suffer the emotional and financial consequences and carry an even greater workload than before, as there is one less pair of hands to help out at home (Braman 2002; Western and McLanahan 2000). They suffer from the "contaminating" forces of having a loved one in prison, as it is often assumed that there must be more than just one criminal in the family (Lewis 1995; Goffman 1963). Family members suffer from guilt by association, the conjecture that there must be something wrong with the parents if that is how their kid

turned out, and judgments that they must not be religiously devout (irrespective of what religious background the family has) if this is how their family behaves.

Twenty-three year old Chris stated that when he went to prison, all of his family pulled away from him except for his mother, whom he was living with at the time of the interview:

When you go through a situation like that, people tend to distance themselves throughout time, family, friend, or otherwise. It happens eventually, and usually the people that ... The only person that really holds on is your mother, at the end of the day. This is...the family that I was born and raised with, who I've always been with and they showed no support. All I had was my mother, my girlfriend, that's it. I was so close to home [while incarcerated]. It was so completely convenient for them to come see me, it wasn't a big commute or anything like that... because I understand I got myself into that situation, so I don't want to put ... I put myself in the situation, so I don't want to put a burden.. It's great that I have my mother because she's very supportive. At the end of the day, don't nobody love you like your mom.

For families that offer a place to stay, even temporarily, their support often includes financial assistance, job leads, “putting in a good word” at their employer, transportation assistance, and the unquantifiable benefit of having someone listen, counsel and believe in you (Tromanouser 2003; Griswold and Pearson 2005; and Naser and LaVigne 2006). According to Tromanouser (2003), reconnecting with loved ones who can provide an emotional support system is critical for former prisoners to cope with the shift from being incarcerated to being in society again. When I asked parolees what had been lost while they were incarcerated, the flowing exchange with Gonzalo is indicative of the responses of other parolees, who spoke about their relationships with family and friends, the loss of trust, and time away from their family:

Gonzalo: I lost a lot of close family members, they passed away. Respect, probably, from some people. What's that word I'm looking for, not confidence, but trust. Yes, lost trust from some people. I'm gaining it back,

but definitely, you lose a lot of trust in people. Now they be looking at you like, "Is he going to do something or not?" Even though you're not.

CSD: Do you feel like you've got something to prove?

Gonzalo: Yes, I do, constantly. Like I said, I'm real patient and understandable. It's not something I can just say, "Hey, guys. Snap out of it, I'm not that person." I know I got to work my way through it.

CSD: You don't feel angry about that?

Gonzalo: No, I don't. I can't, because if I do, that means I'm still living in my past. I got to live in my present.

For twenty-two year-old DeShawn, reconnecting with family is complicated by the fact that a cousin was the informant on his case. His first cousin was caught dealing drugs and gave information on DeShawn to lessen the charges against himself. "So, trying to save himself, he turned me over." He explained that during the sixteen months he was in prison, he learned who would be there for him when he got out because of how they treated him during his incarceration:

It's like when your incarcerated you really find out who cares about you. My immediate family they were always there for me, but some of the surrounding family they were there, but they weren't really there, like, it's not my problems, so... we love you and we can't wait until you come home, but it's not my problem, so we don't really care. That's how I felt. I don't know if that's really how it was, but that's how I felt. I really don't associate that much with that family anymore. It's like everybody just wanted me to drop it and just throw it away. I'm trying to, but at the same time, I think about the experience I had. I know it's my fault, I do know it's my fault, and I played a part in it, so I took my responsibility. But at the same time... for my own flesh and blood, we had the same last name and everything. For my own flesh and blood to betray me for something that he didn't even have to do, because I was going to take my weight regardless, but for you to even help, like, convict me. I'm hurt.

Regaining the trust and respect of his parents is an ongoing issue as well for DeShawn. In this excerpt he relays how he feels he has let his family down, because his

male family members have served time and they all impressed upon him growing up to not make the bad choices that they had made:

My parents, they stay on me hard, it's like, "Man ease up" but at the same time I understand what they are saying. They want to know my every move, because they don't want me going back to selling drugs, but... it wasn't like I had a problem with it, but they don't want me to go back to prison at all. I understand, but at the same time I get so mad sometimes. I don't even want to think about drugs or none of that stuff. I don't want to think about that, because if I do... I get mad about what happened, but it's like I did it to myself. It's like a long line in... my dad has been prison before, my brother has been and I've been in prison. My dad told us when he got out of prison, he was like I've done enough time for both of you, you don't need to do any time, and you don't need to get into that stuff. It hurts him a lot to see me struggle, he's like, "I'm just helpless." He's like a PO [parole officer], he's like, "Come over here and do all this" stuff, how police use to act. I can't do anything about it.

The feeling that they could not make amends for what they had done and undo the damage with their family members was extensive among the parolees I spoke with. Further, a majority of parolees mentioned that their family had problems while they were growing up and that things were still conflictual. Jose` related that his mother had been abusive during his childhood and he did not see her much anymore because she is difficult to be around. Several more spoke of having absent fathers or were raised by relative because their parents had died while they were young. While most had some sort of contact with a parent, a number of parolees mentioned during their interview that they had "burned bridges" with extended family members because of their behavior in the past and by ending up in prison. Thirty-five year old Andrew described only sibling as a very successful college administrator who "has a two-time loser brother" (indicating himself) and that the very tense relationship between them is "another source of frustration and guilt and grief for me." Manny has six brothers and he too has strained relationships with

his two brothers who live in Westview. He explains in this excerpt that he has not been able to repair the relationship with his brothers:

My parents have all passed away. I have my brothers, but they don't really accept me to come back; because, of the mistakes that I have done. They don't think I've learned. It's hard... We talk good, it's just they don't want to do me favors no more. They figure, they do me a favor, they think that I'm still going to mess up, so they're not trying to help me anymore. They are like, "Grow up, you know." They're mad at me; because, they just think I haven't learned nothing like that. I've lost good jobs. I've had a drinking problem... I'd go to their house drunk and they would be mad. I'd drink all their beer and they'd be mad. They just got tired of me.

Being able to reestablish connections with loved ones proved challenging for most of the parolees in the study. Increased family tensions or being rejected by family members when they were released was a source of pain and shame for these men most were not surprised by it. However, the majority of parolees expressed that the relationships they most wanted to “get right” were the ones with their children.

I Missed a Lot: Partner and Father Role Development

Research regarding the impact of marriage and children on the development of desistance from crime is significant. Chaplain Bob operates fatherhood programs in several county jails and recently began a motherhood program through the Westside Mission Prison Outreach Program. He expressed a belief that trying to be a good parent to their children helps formerly incarcerated persons stay on track:

Fatherhood motivates men, because inmates don't want their children to be prisoners. These men know how their own fathers have fallen short and they also know how they fall short as dads and when they become aware of how much they, as dads, are the major influence on their kids... not to diminish mom's influence but, quite frankly, dads influence outweighs moms. And when they are absent, it's very hard to replace... even when other men step up. When dad's not at home, these kids are really handicapped. It gives inmates more incentive... For them to become the kind of dad their kids need, they gotta become the kind of men that God created them to be. I believe this can have a major impact on recidivism.

Half of the parolees I spoke with were fathers and several had more than one child. A few were the father figure for their girlfriend's children that they considered to be their step-children. A few of the fathers had children with multiple mothers, but most were able to see their children frequently if they lived in the area. Tony currently lives with his girlfriend and their young daughter, but has a two year old son in another state that he has never seen. Between his incarceration and parole, he has been unable to see his son from a previous relationship, but is planning to do so as soon as he gets permission to leave the state from his parole officer or will have to wait until he is off of parole. Depending upon the quality of the interaction with the mother(s) of their children, parolees either had easy access to see their children or had to fight to do so.

Gonzalo is from a tight-knit family with many extended family and friends living in Westview. He has a ten year old son with his former girlfriend, who was a baby when Gonzalo was incarcerated. During his ten years of imprisonment, he saw his son five times, largely because his parents and the mother of his son do not get along, so it was difficult for them to get agreement to take Gonzalo's son with them to visit him in prison. He has no formal visitation rights at this time and is considering legal action to attain visitation as he explains in the following dialogue:

CSD: Are there times you felt judged or labeled because of your background?

Gonzalo: Yes, yes. When I first got out, I think we went to somebody's party for their kid, and it happens to be some people that knew me, that just knew that I just got out and stuff. In a way, when I was in the other corner with my sister, I could tell they were talking about me. I did feel like I was judged and labeled. My baby's momma, too.

CSD: How are things going with her?

Gonzalo: She's hard. I ain't going to lie, she's not easy. To me I think that she thinks everything is just easy for me or something. She doesn't know how much I struggle to get stuff, am moved to do stuff. She just thinks that I got out, I need to get a job and I need to support my son and pay the school. That's how she thinks, which is not that way for me. To me, I looked at her like, "I did 10 years, I got a record on me, I got an ankle bracelet, and I go look for a job. It's not going to be easy. I..[have]medical needs that I got to pay for myself, too, and I can't pay for it. How am I supposed to help you and help myself too? I can't do this right now."

CSD: Are you able to see your son?

Gonzalo: Yes, I see him here and there. I try to stay away and by me staying away from her, I got to stay away from my son, too. I got to balance it out. She allows me to see him, but it's always some, "Why you didn't tell me, why you didn't ... " Well, "I don't have to tell you nothing. He's my son. If I was to be the person that I used to be, I wouldn't tell you nothing." I would just grab him and bring him to my house, but every time I got to go see him, it's got to be some type of agreement or something before I can do anything with him. That's why I said it's hard and just dealing with that right now.

CSD: How is it with your son now? Is he pretty accepting of you?

Gonzalo: He accepts me. Thank God for that. It's just the mother. I thought about it. Basically, what I want to do is get settled and have a stable job, my job, and being able to have my visitation rights where I don't have to deal with her, period. Since she doesn't want to do it the right way, I guess I'm going to have a stranger tell her what to do.

CSD: You feel like you've got to go through the court system.

Gonzalo: A judge, yes. Let a judge tell her what she has to do now. I don't have to deal with that.

Few interviewees had a fatherhood situation as complicated as Chris, who told me during his interview that he had two children, a son and a daughter, who were both two years old. I replied, "Wow, twins?" "No," he replied sheepishly. Trying to recover from my mistaken assumption, I then said, "Well, that sounds complicated." He explained that

it actually has worked out pretty good, as he lives with his girlfriend and their son, and has regular contact with his daughter, who lives with her mother in Westview.

The range of emotions parolees expresses when talking about their children was significant. For Willie, who had little contact with his daughter prior to incarceration, he has now stepped up and is living with the mother of his daughter and is a much more involved father. Although Willie is being a better father than before prison, he and his girlfriend have relationship difficulties because life was hard for her during his imprisonment:

She went with me through penitentiary and that's hard, because when I'm locked in there, she's locked in there with me, and she has to serve time like I serve it... because she has to suffer as well. I had just gotten back in my daughter's life because... I've been in penitentiary so much and then me, being in the streets, I wasn't ... I always took care of her, like sent her money. Once I seen what was created from... what I had created, I'm like, "Okay, this is different," you know? It's different for her [daughter] because I was never there. Now, everything's "Dad," you know... I put her in her ballet and her dance classes and her gymnastics or whatever she wants to do. It's something different because my other money usually goes to jewelry or expensive clubbing.

Despite Willie's more engaged parenting, there have been several times where his girlfriend has moved out of their home. Willie explained this happened because, "it was bad, I fell into a couple of events" but would not elaborate. The last time this happened she moved out for two weeks and then came back. Further, Willie stated that he was still spending time "on the streets" and he had no plans to change that behavior.

Manny expressed a great deal of pain and emotion when speaking about his absence from the lives of his two children because of his imprisonment. He has a daughter from a previous relationship and a young son with his current girlfriend, with

whom he lives. In the following excerpt, Manny explains how his time in prison had been hard on all of them:

She [former girlfriend] doesn't hold my daughter back for me to go visit her. She doesn't hold anything back from my daughter for me. It's not her fault. She just hopes that I learn someday and stop messing up; because, my daughter needs me. She's not trying to take her away from dad. My girlfriend, I've got a son with her and everything is good. It is better than what it was. It's getting better. It was hard... They grow up so fast. My son grew up so fast when I was in there. When I got caught he was barely learning how to walk. When I got out... he didn't want to be around me. He knew me, but then he didn't. I had a shaved head. I came back out with hair. He didn't recognize me. It hurt me. It hurt me a lot; because, it's like he was pushing me away. He didn't want me to carry him. It took three days, a little over three days and I was able to hold him. It made me mad. I was mad at myself, nobody else. He knows who I am now, so that's good. My daughter, I know she was sad. I missed her softball games. I missed two summers. She was in All Stars both years. I missed a lot.

His most recent stint in prison was for eight months, but six months prior, had been in prison five months – all for the same reason, driving with a suspended license. Manny has never committed a violent crime, his first arrest was for DUI and all of his subsequent legal issues are related to his driving without a license. He feels that he has to drive to look for a job and help take care of his children. His lack of employment is a source of strain in his relationship with his girlfriend, because she is working full-time and she takes care of everything right now. Further, not having a job imperils his sense of being a man and his ability to be, what he termed, “a good father:”

We get into arguments about that. I don't think she's mad at me anymore for it. She would just say stupid things sometimes to make me mad. It's like, damn it's my fault. Sometimes I would say it's her fault too.” He feels that he has to drive to find a job and there are times she doesn't feel like driving him, or can't because of work. “If I'm driving, why don't you tell me not to drive? It's not just my fault. You can say something too. Don't give me the keys. Don't get mad at me. We can get through this.” It's just arguments for that; because, I can't get a job. I want to help out too, though. I don't want to be at home all day. I want to make some money and buy things. Gifts at Christmas... I didn't buy anything for any of my

kids or anything, birthdays. It was sad. She [girlfriend] gave me some money to buy my kids some things. It's not the same.

Prior to his incarceration, twenty-three year old Chris had been employed for years and had been living on his own. Although he had only been released from prison for five weeks at the time of our interview, he explains in the following exchange how not having a job is hard on how he feels about himself as a man:

CSD: I know your dreams of being a barber, that didn't work out because of the restriction. Do you have some other ideas or things that you really want to do?

Chris: Honestly, I'm at a loss. I would love to be a musician. That's my dream, to be a rapper. That's what I always wanted to do, but that ain't paying the bills. As far as a realistic goal, I'm at a loss.

CSD: Right now, it's just about finding a job?

Chris: Just any job, any job. I'm not picky by any means because the beauty of getting a job is you can keep looking for a better job. I'm not picky. I just want to be able to make some type of money, so I can feel like a man, because that's the thing... I don't feel like a man, because a man's supposed to be a protector and provider. That's what you supposed to be. I can't provide by any means. I'm living with my mom. I ain't living with my mom forever. I'm a grown man living with his momma. The key to getting out of that situation is money.

Marcus' twenty-six months of prison time gave him a lot of time to think about his family and how he wanted his life to be when he got out. His attitude change and the expectations of his fiancé` have resulted in a gender role reversal in their relationship since their reunion, as this exchange illustrates:

CSD: So in terms of taking care of your family, how does that work with you and your fiancé`? Is there stress?

Marcus: No, because she, that's the one thing we talked about, too, because she was working the whole time that I was incarcerated. She was taking care of everything by herself. So basically there really was no need for me. She don't need me and she lets that be known. She said to me, "I don't need

you really. So if you want to get out here and decide you want to get into drugs and start getting out of it, it's not a problem for me to send you right out the door because I can do it, as you obviously can see, on my own." I'm glad that she told me that and let me know that because that puts something on my mind. Now I'm thinking like okay, it's obviously that she can take care of these kids on her own and she can pay this mortgage and do everything on her own. That's obvious. So what I got to do is, get in where I fit in. That's why I'm glad I worked on the attitude and stuff like that, and she see that and she just loves me to death. So now around the house I do stuff that I didn't used to do. I wouldn't take out the garbage. I wouldn't do laundry. I wouldn't do dishes. I wouldn't, all of that is changed. I go in there if there's two cups in the sink I'll wash them. It's one load of laundry; I'll throw it in and get it done. I'll go out and I rake the yard. I go out and I cut the grass. I'll go clean out the shed. That's why I say this incarceration was bad but at the same time it was good because I got the positives out of it and I got to see myself for what I was. So now I think about stuff like that. I'm like, "Man, I didn't like to do dishes, now I wash the dishes." Hey, I was washing dishes in there for 2000 inmates, so I was in there cooking for 2000 inmates, so I should be more than loyal if I do it for my family. So I have no problem. Then, she see that little stuff and she's like, "baby", she just stop [and say] "I love you and give me a kiss. I love you." But she's just letting me know, she's basically putting her foot down and that's something that I've always wanted from her out of the relationship because she's always been the one where she'll just be quiet and she wouldn't say nothing, she'll just sit in the back and wouldn't voice her opinion. So, now I know I need to make my adjustments and do my tune to that. So that's been working out, I mean... corresponding, the talks and conversations that we had throughout jail is still carrying on now and it's like it's the best thing... it's what I've always wanted from her.

While speaking with Marcus, he expressed such joy and humor at discovering that he had to find a new role within the family unit and was working to prove himself. His love for his family was evident and his voice choked up while speaking about his family. He made it clear that they were his priority and whatever he had to go through or change for them was worth it. For Marcus, this change in perspective occurred during incarceration when he decided that he needed to let some "friends" go for the sake of his family.

The Friendship Cost-Benefit Analysis

While some parolees mentioned that they had lost friendships during their incarceration, mainly because they were not around and friends had moved on. Others mainly spent time with immediate family members to ensure that they weren't tempted to go back to their old ways. Tony is thirty-five and has been to prison four times. As he explains below, this time when he was released, he has only spent time with people he knows well to reduce the chances of going back to prison. "I'm old, so I'm not looking for new friends. Everybody that I got, I got. I don't need nothing else. I mean, I'll be nice to you, how you doing, how you doing, yes ma'am and that type of thing because I'm polite like that. But I'm looking for no one to be my friend no more. I'm all right."

Some parolees mentioned that they had purposely cut ties with friends who they viewed as negative influences once they were released from prison. Marcus provides the most elaborate and illuminating example of this type of social analysis. Knowing that spending time with his old friends could put him at risk for going back to prison, he wanted to decide who was "worthy" to be his friend and how was risky to be around. While in prison, he performed what I have dubbed the "friendship cost-benefit analysis" to determine:

Who I'm going to associate with, if I am going to associate with them... why? Every person that was my friend came into question. I wrote them up. Question: why is this person my friend? Is the person worthy to be my friend? Is it worth it? [Are they]still in the negativity? Everything, and most of them, went and... nah, nah, nah, nah, all of them had flaws, red flags. Nope, nope, nope. There was only three friends that I kept that's worthy. Actually, these are the three friends that helped me get the jobs that I've had that I got terminated from. I've had to change all my friends, I've had to change all of my ways. I've got guys that I've hung out with for 20 years and they stare into the negativity and they call me up, "Hey man, I see you around, why haven't you come talk to me?" "For what? What

reason is there to talk to you? You couldn't even send me a letter and say what's up, how you doing or anything like that and now I'm supposed to get back out here and hang out with you and then drink and smoke and do the things that we used to do?" No, that's what led me in that direction to end up there, so why would I want to go backwards. I've got like three friends to where [prior to prison] I had hundreds. I've got three friends that I actually can call friends that I can call them up and "Hey, I ain't got no car, can you give me a ride?" Just like, remember I was telling you, I couldn't even get a ride here [for the interview]. I called my friend and they let me use the car.

Lying Low: The Risk-Assessment of Social Interaction

The fear of going back to prison because of a technicality of being "in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong people" creates an additional barrier to the social capital development and social interaction needed for reintegration and job prospects for formerly incarcerated persons. While some parolees were engaged in activities with their families and children, others were spending most of their time at home. Self-imposed social isolation was seen as a necessity for James. Although he had been released from prison for over five months when I interviewed him, James did not spend much time outside of the house and was very selective about where he went. He chose not to socialize with people too much because he is trying to stay clean from ten years of addiction to heroin and cocaine. In this exchange, James describes how being in Westview makes it a little easier to stay away from drugs because he doesn't know very many people:

CSD: What do you do in your spare time?

James: I usually be at... if I got free time I usually try to study or I'll be listening to the gospel on TV or something like that or reading pretty much.

CSD: I know it's a battle every day, but do you feel positive about where you're at right now in your ability to stay clean?

James: Yes, because I'm always tempted. I mean, just as far as wanting to do it, but just like it's... you can always find it. I know I could be in places where I know they might even have it. I still don't want to go to it, so I feel hopeful that I'm not going to be using, but I know it's best to probably stay out of places that are ... like old places. Like I said, I don't know too many people. I don't really hang out, but out there, it's like I go... I know where I used to go and get it. I know they probably still out there.

Each parolee was asked if they were involved in any community activities, such as playing sports or attending church to see if they were socially isolated or having positive social interactions. Most were not involved in any organized activities or sports leagues, but several spoke of working out or running to stay in shape or release stress. Chris explained that he was very hesitant to get involved with any activities or get into social situations because of the fear of being in the wrong place at the wrong time:

You get terrified, when you come back because... I don't know, I'm so scared of something happening to put me back in prison, because if I'm in the wrong place at the wrong time, and say for instance, I didn't have nothing to do with anything, they're not going to believe me. I'm walking on egg shells. Like I said, its conditionary freedom because, I guess a part of [my] mind could still be locked up. You're here in the world but your mind ... It takes a mental test, so it's like, I'm trying ... every day I have to think like I can't give them no excuse to take me back to prison. I can't do anything, be around anybody, go anywhere that could possibly give them an excuse to put me back in prison. I have to watch every move I make.

Parolees who actively cut out or restrict social interactions to control what influences they are around is an indicator of a change in mindset. Mindset change can occur because the formerly incarcerated person has been incarcerated more than once and they can't bear the thought of that happening again. Only two of twelve parolees interviewed for this study were first-time offenders. Most participants had been incarcerated as juveniles and at local jails prior to going to prison, and several had been to prison three or four times.

Tony had been released for four months and was currently on home monitoring at the time of our interview. He described that he has been on his own, running the streets since he was eleven years old. He was first incarcerated at age eighteen and has been incarcerated four times in his life. Tony has restricted who he spends time with to limit any negativity around him, but regrettably, he is also hampering his social capital development by staying away from a social institution that could assist his reentry. Although Tony wants to attend church services and feels it would be beneficial for him, he explains below why he has not taken that step:

CSD: Are there things you're involved in in the community? Are you doing any sports or church activities?

Tony: No, I need to go to church, I just don't have the money right now to get the clothes. They always say come as you are, but I don't want to go in church in no gym shoes on. If I do go and I do commit myself to God and I do pay myself forward to move towards him, I want to do it right. I don't want to do it ... do you know what I'm saying? If I step into that light, I want the light to shine on me. When it shines, I don't want nobody to critique me. Oh, look at this guy. Even though it doesn't matter, they're judging me. I'm doing it for God, but I just want to go in there and just ... nice shirt. I always wanted to wear a suit. I've never worn a suit.

CSD: Really?

Tony: Never. Thirty-five years old, I've never worn a suit, tie, none of that. I want to do that. Nice haircut. I want to do that. Because I think that I could ... I would look nice like that.

Tony was emotional as he relayed this information to me and it was one of the most defining moments of this study for me personally, I know I will never forget hearing him say this to me. He was so saddened at having missed out on such a regular, normal rite of passage for a young man, and staying away from a congregation that could assist him spiritually, socially, mentally, and perhaps occupationally was distressing.

Gonzalo, a practicing Catholic, has regularly been attending services since his release and attended chapel services while incarcerated – but did not have any other interactions with clergy or religious groups while incarcerated. When asked what has helped him the most making the transition from prison to home, he replied “Family support and most of all God, my belief in God. That helps me a lot.” His belief system is a strong part of his coping system. While he had planned on living with his parents upon release, the parole papers had his sister’s house as primary residence. This was a surprise to him as parole had apparently transposed the addresses for no stated reasons. When asked how he felt about this he stated that he, “just took it like God knows His way, so I just go with the flow.”

Transportation and Housing Challenges

Most parolees arrive in Westview with a significant list of needs that they are unable to meet on their own. Within this population subset, substance abuse issues and limited educational attainment are common. In addition, incarceration itself results in strained family relationships, and social networks that may have been weak prior to incarceration become even more tenuous during a family member’s incarceration. Most prisoners are not financially well off and are in even worse financial shape after their release. They have lost their prior job, have missed child support payments, and may owe court costs, restitution fees and will be required to pay for some of the mandatory requirements of parole (substance abuse assessment, anger management classes, etc.).

Although Westview has bus service, its hours and routes are very limited when compared with public transportation in an urban area. Public transportation within the

city is limited to bus service which does not encompass the entire city. Only five out of the twelve bus routes in in city operate on Saturday (with limited hours) and there is no bus service at all on Sundays and holidays. Furthermore, all bus service ends shortly after 6 PM every day. While there are two Metra train stops within the city limits, this suburban train line is convenient only for those headed to locations towards the largest city in the state.

The parolees interviewed for this study felt that lack of transportation was an obstacle for them in being able to find a job and impeded their ability to “get back into living life,” as Chris explains in this excerpt:

_____ [Westview’s] public transport system really sucks, like their buses. No rhyme or reason to their bus routes. They might be there at such and such time, they may not. Especially with me, my transportation ... I completely rely on people who have to go to work themselves and have things going on themselves. It’s like I have to really schedule anything I have around their schedule. That limits me a lot because my mother, she works full time. She works from 7 to 5 every day. Her hours, those are business hours, those are times that you would do an interview or something like that.

The lack of evening hours for public transportation is particularly hard on parolees, because oftentimes jobs that are available to them, such as warehouse work or stocking shelves, are jobs that are night shift. When I asked Tony if finding a job was more difficult this time around, he explained that lack of transportation was what was preventing him from having a job:

If I had a car, I would have a job. I’ll be real with you. I’d be able to move around...plus I know places that are hiring, but I can’t get there. How am I going to get there? Certain places that are hiring, buses don’t even run that way...I just haven’t found a job that’s in my local area because I don’t have any transportation. Some jobs nowadays, especially by us being ... well, not inmates, but parolees, we have a background, so a lot of the jobs that you get are based off ... well, not overtime, but they want you to work late nights. It’s hard for me to

have transportation. Say, for instance, they wanted me to come to work at three to twelve. I would be able to go at three, but how would I get home?

None of the parolees interviewed thus far had their own car upon release from prison. Many participants in the study needed to get a ride from a family member or friend or were able to borrow a car to be able to complete the interview. Several took to bus to the closest stop and walked over a mile just to participate in the interview for this study. Jayell, the youngest parolee in the study, lived in transitional housing and had no access to transportation of any kind, because he had no money for the bus. He stated that he walked around the city every day, filling out applications and asking about jobs and when he got tired, would go to the downtown library (about a mile away) and apply for jobs online. Having a vehicle not only helped to look for a job, in some cases, it was integral to getting the job. Jose` was able to get a car after a few months at his job and then was able to get a part-time job delivering pizzas, to supplement his income.

For Manny, transportation needs are the greater part of why he is in trouble with the law and at currently at great risk of going back to prison. He does not have a driver's license because he was caught nine times driving with a suspended license. He will need to hire a lawyer to fight to get it back and pay a substantial fine. As he sees it, he still drives because he has to – to be able to live his life, look for a job and help take care of his children:

Every time it was suspended they added three years suspension every time I got pulled over, I was suspended. That's nine times three, that's 27 years "I don't have a license to drive. I have to sometimes. I just have to take that risk still. To get to work I have to get to work. If I was to get a job down the road, then I could ride a bike or walk, or get somebody to give me a ride. A lot of jobs are not around here. A little closer I think I'd take the risk. I've got a family to take care of. I have to sometimes do it.

In terms of housing, very few recently released former offenders are able to afford their own place right out of prison, given that many are in debt as a result of their incarceration (court fees, fines, and back child support) and as a group, incarcerated persons on average have very little savings (Petersilia 2001). Obtaining housing is one of the most difficult challenges facing formerly incarcerated persons and is critical for a decent chance to reintegrate into society, as housing can serve as an “anchor” for employment and obtaining necessary services (Delgado 2012, p. 60). Westview has only a few subsidized housing units and there are very few affordable apartment units. Wes, the director of TA explained that the city has placed strict regulations on landlords and this limits who can stay where:

I think there's four different subsidized housing facilities out here and each of those have their own personal regulations. Some of them will take you if you don't have a drug conviction, some will take you if you don't have a violent conviction. It's hard knowing who takes what and trying to match them with the right parolee first of all. Then all the private landlords, like I said, because of the city ordinances they have to do background checks. The city puts all kinds of pressure on them not to allow this, not to allow that. If this happens, you're done. So then they're like, well, I don't know, I can't take that chance.

Jason, the executive director of Our Home, commented that the difficulties in obtaining housing following release from prison are significant and have been exacerbated by a 2008 city housing ordinance which mandated that landlords had to pay for criminal background checks for all rental housing. The background checks typically cost \$25 and are typically paid for by the applicant:

I think things are getting worse for those getting out of prison. Particularly, right now, the housing market, the rental housing market is a landlord market. There are so many people looking to rent now because there's so few less homeowners that, so many people got forced into renting that, there are very few empty units. What that means is, a couple things. One, landlords have jacked up prices. Two, they can really pick who they want to have as a tenant. Whereas, even five, six,

seven years ago, you kind of had to take whoever was willing to pay you the monthly rent. Nowadays, you can run really, really stringent background checks, and because you've got six people applying for the apartment, so why take the guy with homicide record or a drug dealing record when you've got a family with little kids, with no record? It's been a lot harder to find housing, now... and then, the laws around sex offenders have gotten bizarre. They're, essentially, an unhelped population that's been given pariah status and told to, essentially, to not exist. That was not the case eight years ago. The local housing authorities develop the rest of the regulations, and there's kind of a race to the bottom to see who can make the most restrictive requirements, as they relate to background checks, so that one community doesn't get flooded with all the ex-offenders. HUD could take a little more leadership here. Certainly, the local housing authorities could, but HUD could too to say, "Hey. You know, actually, we're not going to give you that much local control that you can, essentially, ban anybody who's ever smoked a joint and gotten caught for it anyways." What has happened locally, in terms of the offenders in general, is that Westview has a law that... essentially says that landlords can be held accountable for what happens in their units. They essentially encouraged everybody to really, really do substantial background checks or risk having their units, I don't know exactly what they do, to flag for something and find them, or whatever. The idea is that a landlord can no longer say, "Well, hey. If you got a problem with 123 Main Street because there's drug dealing going on there, just arrest the tenants. That's not my problem." Well, now it is their problem, and so, the goal was, as I understand it, to force landlords to do very stringent background checks, and essentially, just not let anybody in who's going to be scary. Now, they have to do the background check. They don't have to screen out any particular population, but they do have to do the background check. A lot of them just weren't doing the background check before, and now they are. If you weren't doing it before, you were blissfully ignorant, and now, you're like, "Oh, my God. This guy's got, he's got a homicide in his past or a drug deal. I'm not going to rent to him." The legislation around housing... that's unnecessary, in my mind. I think it's designed to force people into other communities that don't have these laws.

Andrew had to spend a great deal of time, effort, and money to find an apartment on his own in Westview. Although he paroled to his mother's home, she is dying of cancer and the stress of seeing her "dying in front of my eyes by the minute" was too much for him. He would just walk the street several times a day to get out of the house and felt that staying there increased his risk of going back to prison. He relapsed twice, "just alcohol" while living with her and decided that he had to find his own place if he

had a chance at staying clean. As he explains below, the places that will take someone with a criminal background are the last places someone like him should be:

You can't get in anyplace. You have to lie to them and if you lie to them and they find out anyway, which they will, then you get evicted, lose your deposit... I spent about \$300, almost \$400, in two weeks' time at different apartments, \$50 nonrefundable deposit check, credit and criminal background check, \$40\$, \$35, \$50, \$40, \$35 it was, "No, no, no," but you can't... go to a place unless you want to go in the ghetto where, if you've got a few hundred dollars you can move it. No check. They don't even know who you are, don't care. Long as they think you can pay rent, it's where drug dealers go. The landlords don't care because they know they've got money, but if you want to go some sort of suitable environment, a stable environment, it doesn't have to be a nice upper class subdivision or a townhouse community or even an upscale apartment complex, but you want to go to some place where they're not openly dealing drugs. Where's there's not violence, there's not 15 liquor stores around you, trash, you want to go for a better way of life, you can't. You're penalized for being honest. You're penalized for striving for a better way of life and you're penalized because just the frustration of rejection brings, and it makes people want to give up.

Tony was living with his girlfriend and their young daughter when interviewed.

Although his neighborhood is not safe in general, he feels safe because of the security measures in place because it is low income housing:

I live in low income [public housing], and I mean, it's cool, I have no problem with that, but where I live is pretty safe. I mean, it's ... I don't know if you know, it's the hood. I don't know if you know about the hood or whatever, but it's the hood. Plus my building is camera, camera, camera, camera. Every step you take from the moment you enter the building to whoever apartment you go to, you will be on camera.

Eight of the twelve parolees interviewed were originally from Westview and many felt that it was the best option because they had some family members living nearby. For Chris, it was his only option:

I came back [here] because my mother ... It's my only source of support. Of course, you're not going to hit the ground running. You're not going to have a place to live, you're not going to have a job, no source of income and anything like that. You're actually going to have to lean on family members. That's all I have.

A few of the parolees had family in the urban area or other suburbs, but viewed Westview as a safer place to return to because they had children, as Tony explains:

I wanted to be a good dad, so I chose to stay here, and I also liked the atmosphere. It's not as violent. Peaceful and it's a good place you can raise a kid.

For those that considered returning to someplace other than Westview, the financial and logistical obstacles of affording, locating and moving to another city was too much to handle so soon after their release. Many, such as DeShawn, wanted to be out on their own in the future, but:

I always knew I was coming back. I thought about other places, but that was going to be too much of a hassle, so I'm like I know I can come back home.

Numerous studies on the “collateral consequences” of incarceration have shown that the negative impacts of prison go far beyond the prisoner – families of the incarcerated bear financial costs, stigma and housing difficulties (risk of being evicted if family member living in the home commits a crime, even if they are not involved in the crime (Delgado 2010; Rodriguez and Brown 2003), and even if the charges are dropped (Hirsh et al 2002). As a result, many formerly incarcerated persons have damaged family relationships because of their criminal activity and are unwelcome to live with them. Most notably, this was the case for Manny, who had brothers in Westview, but had learned through his past incarcerations that it would be futile to even ask to come back to stay with them. He had no contact with them during his incarceration and did not feel that they would let him parole to one of their homes:

No, I didn't need to. I don't think they would have taken my call anyway. It was collect. I didn't need to talk to them. They're adults. I'm just their brother. It will be all right. I'm a grown man. They are too. Nothing to cry about.

For Juan, family tensions meant looking for someone outside of his family to take him in:

I had a longtime family friend that was willing to let me parole there to his house, because I could've gone to my mother's but me and her don't get along the best. It was a good place to go at that time. I didn't want to go to a halfway house or anything like a recovery home or anything like that. I had a good friend who let me parole there [Westview].

Families who already have extended family living with them may not have room for yet another family member (Roman, Kane, and Giridaradas 2006). As Jayell explains, a combination of housing restrictions and no available space meant that he had to parole to a transitional home:

My grandma said that the house was packed. My mom said that she was on Section 8, so I couldn't go there. My dad [in California] said, "Don't even start the process, because it'll take like three to four months," and I was getting out in two weeks...when I got out, I called them and asked them if I could get a ticket or something to go out there with them. He said, "Give me a couple months to think about it." That's not a guaranteed thing.

The lack of transitional housing for formerly incarcerated persons is nationwide, and Westview is no exception. The affordable housing that is in the city is concentrated in and surrounding the downtown area. This area of the city has the highest crime rate and the city has numerous gangs within its boundaries. As this exchange with Gonzalo demonstrates, it is hard to feel at home, when that place that is dangerous for you:

CSD: Do you consider the neighborhood you're living in a safe one?

Gonzalo: Safe. I wouldn't say that. It's an avenue, a four-lane avenue. By being on an avenue, it just means that everybody drives through that avenue.

You never know who's going to pass by. For me to be outside the house and just cutting the grass or something, I don't feel safe.

CSD: Is it the same neighborhood that your former gang is in?

Gonzalo: They're close by.

CSD: Have you been approached at all by your former gang? Have they ... do they know you're out?

Gonzalo: I don't talk to them. I don't contact them. We're not allowed to have any contact with anybody gang-affiliated or none of that stuff.

CSD: Did you consider moving to a different area at all, or did you always know you were coming back home?

Gonzalo: I did consider it, but due to the fact that the parole ... that I got to do parole, you got to follow the paperwork and wait for approvals. I just figured it would be easier for me to come live in _____ [Westview] and then move from there afterwards. Me being part, or was part, of a gang, you always had that fear, that even though you're not doing that no more, that somebody else might still remember you, enemies or whatever,. No, it's not safe no more for me. I feel it's not safe. If I want to step outside my house and sit on the porch with my nephews or kids, and somebody just happens to drive by or something like that.

Navigating the Reentry Environment: Reentry Agencies

Most of the parolees I interviewed had little to no knowledge of reentry services that were available in Westview. Only a few were given information prior to leaving prison regarding reentry services in their area or anywhere else, as pre-release reentry services were minimal or nonexistent at some prisons. Upon arrival in Westview, at the initial meeting with their parole officer some received the name and address of where they were to go to get an assessment or complete mandatory classes, but that was where the help ended for most. While many parolees felt that it would be nice if someone would help them out in terms of getting a job, several felt that they were supposed to do it on their own. The following conversation with Manny is reflective of the feeling many interviewees expressed - that they had to figure out what to do by themselves:

CSD: Were there any re-enter organizations that you heard about in prison, or that came in prison to say, "If you come back to Westview. We're here for you."

Manny: No.

CSD: Has your parole officer hooked you up with anybody to help, besides telling you to go do the drug assessment?

Manny: No

CSD: No one has said anything in terms of resources or where to go?

Manny: No.

Gonzalo received some paperwork in prison of organizations to contact, but when he got his food stamp card and found that it didn't help him with medical care, he had gotten frustrated and stated that he "blocked it out, and didn't think of no other type of help. I just figured I guess I got to do it on my own with my family, and that's how I've been doing it so far."

Even for long-term residents of Westview, the names of the operating reentry organizations in the city were largely unfamiliar to them upon release. Additionally, the programs and assistance available to formerly incarcerated persons at various reentry programs were not fully understood. For example, while in prison, John had been told of reentry organizations that could help him in both in Westview and the urban area. He stated that he had called Second Chance Outreach, but they couldn't help him because, "That's for people that ain't got no home or nothing, who trying to ... it seemed like the people that didn't go home, those are the ones who got the most help."

Seven of the twelve parolees in the study had some sort of contact with either a reentry organization or substance abuse treatment provider. Only three of the parolees were receiving regular mandated services from reentry organizations and just one was enrolled in an actual program. The reentry organization most parolees mentioned was

Second Chance Outreach. While this organization does provide some transitional housing, they offer several other services and programs and offer some degree of employment services. Several parolees interviewed received an assessment or counseling there and, although a few had called Reentry Initiatives looking for assistance, only Marcus completed his assessment there.

For most, the only contact they had with organizations specializing in reentry work occurred when they went for their mandatory assessments required by parole. As Marcus explains below, the reentry organization he was sent to was not one that could help him with the one area he needed help in – finding a job.

There was only this one place, the parole agency where I had to actually go to the parole evaluation. I went there and it was called RI. So I went down there and all that checked out (drug evaluation). He's like you don't need no treatment. You were just wrong place, wrong time, then you know what I'm saying, one shot deal, pretty much that's all it is. But the guy Wes down there, he's real cool. He's like man, if you need anything, any clothes or anything like that, it's not much, but I'll help you the best that I can. That's about it. Other than that it's just... They said they don't do nothing with jobs though. That's what he told me. He said they just help, like help you maybe get into a shelter or help you get clothing or if you need medicine or stuff like that. He said he don't do nothing with jobs.

The one parolee participant that was fully enrolled in a program was Jayell, who was living in a transitional living home operated by Second Chance Outreach. During our interview, he indicated that staying clean from drugs while in the transitional home was challenging, as another parolee was using and was returned to prison for dropping dirty and the neighbors threw parties and had drugs around. In terms of services that he was receiving through the organization, he said they had helped with his resume and typed it up for him and he had taken job preparation classes for several weeks. In terms of job

assistance, staff would let him know if there is a job that they heard about that is a fit for him, but no placement services.

His job search strategy consists of using the computer at the main office of Second Chance Outreach or the library to apply online for positions or walking around town to apply for jobs. He had no transportation and was not provided with bus passes from SCO to look for positions outside of walking distance. Although the organization told him they had bicycles that their clients could use, there were none that he had found at either the transitional living home or the main office. Jayell was the only parolee not interviewed at the local public library in a private study room. Because of his lack of transportation, he was interviewed in the conference room at Second Chance Outreach and he spoke softly and turned around to look at the doors frequently during our forty-five minute interview.

When I asked him if he was “getting what he needed from SCO he turned and looked at the door and then turned back to me and whispered, “No.” His next sentence was, “Did it just get really quiet out there?” I stayed silent and listened for a moment, but didn’t hear anything unusual. Jayell then stated, “I really don’t like talking about Donna. You can tell that she gives attitude here, with anything she says. There is always an argument. “Within ten minutes, Donna knocked on the door and asked how things were going. I replied fine and asked if they needed the room. She replied, “No, just checking in.” I could tell that this interruption bothered Jayell and he continued to speak in a very low voice to me throughout the remainder of the interview.

There were several instances where parolees who had contact with a reentry organization for assessment or counseling were in need of other services, particularly employment assistance, but did not directly ask the organizational staff for assistance beyond what their parole mandates were. For instance, James was given the number to Second Chance Outreach by his parole agent and told to get his mandated drug assessment and sixty hours of counseling there. He attends classes twice a week and as he explains in this exchange, so far it has been helpful:

James: It's good because we talk about things that everybody pretty much goes through as far as with their situation, being in a drug situation, using and just about ways to try to stay away from that. It's been OK because you get a chance to look at certain things that I probably wouldn't have looked at had I not gone.

CSD: Have you received any other kind of assistance at SCO?

James: No, that's it.

CSD: That's it. Did they offer anything or have you asked if they could do anything else for you in terms of ID or any of that stuff?

James: No, they didn't ask me.

CSD: They haven't asked you and you haven't asked?

James: I haven't asked, no.

CSD: Do you feel comfortable asking them for additional help?

James: I don't think I need it. I just take care of other things. I've already put that at the forefront of what I'll be doing as far as getting the ID. It's been little personal issues and stuff and trying to deal with them. Things like that, so I'm putting that off a little bit.

Whether these parolees truly felt that they could find a job on their own or were hesitant to ask for further help is unclear. A majority of interviewees stated that they would like to have assistance finding a job and that the state should do a better job

connecting them with someone who could do that. Only one parolee stated that he didn't need help of any kind to reintegrate after prison. Although Willie had received information on reentry organizations and other social service providers that could aid him, as he explains in the following exchange, he had not called any of them and didn't plan to:

Willie: They gave me cards and stuff and told me, "Oh, yeah, we can do this and stuff," I'm just like, "For what?" I can get jobs anywhere. I know people.

CSD: Did you have any parole mandates that you had to go and have assessments or had to go to different programs?

Willie: Yes, they didn't enforce it; I didn't care. I've always had that mentality. I don't, for what? I know I have a drug problem. Yes, I was like, "To tell you the truth, I'm going to smoke weed. I only got a year of parole." You're not going to ... DOC is not going to take me back to prison for smoking weed.

CSD: Did you have to do an assessment?

Willie: I never went to that.

For the few parolees who did have even minimal contact with a reentry organization, I found that some did not take steps to advocate for themselves with reentry persons who might be of assistance to them. Given their statements regarding mindset, I believe that their mindset of self-reliance hinders their ability to ask for help and believe that they will try their best to get things done on their own. Tony has a history of using drugs and alcohol and attends meetings once a week at Second Chance Outreach to meet his mandated forty hours of drug counseling for parole. Because this organization has a contract with the state, the cost is covered by DOC. His response was similar to James' feelings about the program offered at SCO:

It definitely is a ... we get to do a lot of talking and back and forth, talking about problems, helping each other out. It's good on a communication side of things. Because I don't really hang with a lot of people, so it's good to talk to different people and listen to different people's situations.

I asked Tony, as well, if he had asked the staff at SCO for help finding a job.

Although he had considered it once he got to know people after a few counseling sessions, he chose not to because of his interactions with some of clients that are enrolled in a more extensive program there, not just coming there for counseling:

I haven't really applied myself with asking them for help because there's a couple of guys that's in that program and they're asking me for a job, or do I know anybody. If you're in the program and you're asking me, that's letting me know there's no jobs where you guys are at, so there's no need for me to even be snooping around where you guys are at, because you guys don't even have a job.

Andrew was one of the most aggressive help-seekers in the study and began looking for assistance right after he was released. In the following excerpt, he explains how he felt that enrolling in a program at a reentry organization would have set him back farther than the little bit he's been able to do on his own because of the way the programs were set up:

I called A New Hope and, here's a waiting list of six to eight weeks just to be interviewed and then after that it's a triple interview and then after that you've got to jump through more hoops. Then I called Second Chance Outreach... well, they will put you, it's like a twelve day...and you have to go Monday through Friday from eight in the morning until four and you have to go out. All those days you have to be there. It's mandatory. If you miss one day, you have to start all over again. What about the person that only has a day or two a week [available] like me?

At the time of our interview, Andrew had been out of prison for over five months and had been able to get a part-time job working for a friend with landscaping and lawn maintenance. Andrew was not willing to quit the job he already had, even though the pay

was low and hours were intermittent, in the hope of securing another job after completing the program at Second Chance Outreach

A few parolees mentioned having a parole mandate to take classes unrelated to their crime and had been unable to do so because they had to pay for the classes. Some wondered if they were going to get in trouble with their parole officer because they had been unable to get assessments, go to counseling or classes on their mandate because they did not have the money to pay for them. In the passage below, Chris hints that the organizations providing assessments and treatments have a financial incentive to say that you need the help:

They told me a part of my parole stipulations is to do drug and alcohol abuse classes, which I have no history of that. My case is nowhere near related to drugs and alcohol. Of course, I have to pay for that, and anger management and psych evaluation. These are all things I have to pay for out of my pocket. I don't have a job, so how I'm going to pay for them? After I do these evaluations, if they rule that I need this classes which, of course they probably will because it would be in their best interest to stay on. It all has to be through a state ... what's the word to use? It has to be approved through DOC, certified.

DeShawn's situation is similar to Chris', in that he was mandated to go for substance abuse counseling classes upon his release even though he didn't have a history of drug use. DeShawn's parole officer referred him to Second Chance Outreach for the assessment. He explained to me that he told the counselor there, "I don't want to come here, I don't use drugs, I just was selling drugs to pay for school. I don't have a problem; I need to find a job, that's my problem. I'm just a drug dealer, well, I was a drug dealer." He had then called all the places that he had been told about but hadn't found the help he needed for employment assistance. At his mandatory meeting with his Community Reentry and Recovery caseworker, he learned that they didn't have any job leads for him.

DeShawn then called A New Hope but they weren't enrolling anyone anymore. He did go to Second Chance Outreach for his assessment and then was referred to a substance abuse facility for his mandatory drug abuse classes. Echoing Chris, he felt that during his assessment, the counselor's interest in his employment status was not about helping him find a job:

CSD: When you went to Second Chance Outreach for the drug counseling, did they ever talk to you about employment services, helping you, or anything?

DeShawn: No, not at all, it's just about drug counseling and stuff like that, not at all. They asked me if I had a job, I was like, "No, I don't have a job." They were like, "Oh okay." Next question, they just went to the next question. It was like, okay they asked me if I had a job so I can pay for counseling, since if I have a job it's really the only way I can talk about... or pay for counseling.

Because the reentry organizations in Westview do not have broad-ranging employment services, the employment prospect differences between parolees who were receiving some services from reentry organizations and those who received no assistance were minimal. Even with regular contact with reentry providers, parolees were performing the most difficult reentry task on their own – looking for a job.

An x on My Back: Stigma and the Job Search

It is well recognized in the literature that the ability to get and keep a job is positively associated with staying out of prison (Travis 2010; Petersilia 2003). The financial benefits of employment make it more probable that a returning prisoner take care of their basic necessities, contribute to their family's needs and pay child support. In addition, the social and psychological benefits of employment include connecting with the larger society and enhance the sense of well-being and self-esteem (Liker 1982).

Despite the emphasis by parole on the necessity of looking for work, it is clear that job seekers with a criminal background face steep obstacles in actually finding a job. Freeman (2003) found that overall, formerly incarcerated persons have low hire rates and earn less than similarly skilled workers without a criminal record. He contends that both “supply-side factors” (individual factors of limited skills, low educational attainment, mental and physical health difficulties, and limited work experience) and “demand-side factors” (employer reluctance to hire formerly incarcerated persons) impede job acquisition by the formerly incarcerated.

The supply-side factors of the parolees interviewed vary widely. The educational acquisition of interviewed parolees was diverse for such a small group, four did not finish high school or have a GED. Of these four, none had gone further than their sophomore year in High School. Two had earned their GED’s years after dropping out and one parolee had a High School Diploma. Four parolees had attended college for some length of time; one of whom is one semester from earning a Bachelor’s Degree.

Of the twelve parolees interviewed for this study, only five were employed just prior to their incarceration, two of whom were paid “under the table” and often shorted on their wages. John is twenty-six and has never held a legitimate job prior to going to prison; he has only sold drugs for a living. At the time of their interview, only four of the twelve parolees were employed, one of whom was working two to three days a week intermittently.

Although Willie was able to go right back into his prior job as a drummer for a rap recording studio, the majority of the parolees experienced an uphill climb to find

legitimate employment. Jobs which require few formal skills and educational certification are largely located in the service sector. These service sector jobs are also ones which often require contact with customers – a contact which many employers may be hesitant to foster with an employee who has a criminal background. While some employers in the area are known to hire people with a background, the following excerpts demonstrate that their interactions with these same employers were not so welcoming:

Marcus: Like I've looked online there's all of these jobs that hire felons, "Oh yeah, we hire felons and just come apply here. We'll hire." That's just hearsay. You go there, you do the application, you put that felony [on the application], you don't even get a call back. You call them, you try to check up on it, follow up, they don't even want to answer the phone.

Jayell: I've heard jobs tell me, "You don't qualify, because your background's too bad." I'm like, "OK." I've had times when people [his mother and step-dad] say, "You're not trying hard enough." I am. Makes me feel like crap. Like I didn't do my best, so I'll strive to find the best way to do everything I'm doing.

Andrew, was still looking for full-time work, but had been able to secure a part-time job with a friend. He worked several days a week and hours varied from week to week. On the day of our interview, he ran out of gas with his mother's car on the way to the interview and said that he panhandled for spare change at a gas station to put gas in the car. Earlier that day, he had been turned down for two jobs, a part-time job at a fast-food place and garbage collection. In the following excerpt, Andrew related how humiliating it is to be rejected again and again:

Can't even be a trash man. They say, "We can't hire you man. You've got this and this and this." I know what I've got and I know what I put down. I put all those things down on my application. I was acknowledging that I have these things. You're looking at me, telling me that like I've tried to deceive you. I came to you. I got all these on my background, but I'm a good person and I have good work references. I need a job. They say, "Okay, we'll see what we can do." Apply online, whatever. I did that. It's, "Sorry we can't hire you." "Thanks buddy. You

should maybe tell me that when I told you I had all these against me. You could have saved me the time and the headache and the frustration of getting my hopes up. Then people say, “The guy didn’t try hard enough. Has an excuse and a story for everything.” If I have a story and an excuse for everything, I could say, “Well, you’ve made a piece of red tape for everything you can think of to create an obstacle.”

The stigma of a criminal background has a long shelf life and it carries legal, economic, and social consequences. Those employers utilizing background checks were found by Holzer and colleagues (2006) to be those least likely to hire former offenders.

John’s experience of losing his first legitimate job on his first day at Wal-Mart provides a good case in point of how a criminal background has staying power for years:

They gave me a uniform and everything and I was going to be working at the tire and lube station, messing with the cars, helping people with the cars. The first day I got there, right before I was about to clock in, he told me he wanted to talk to me and that's when he told me. "You know I told you we hire felons, and you told me what your crime was, but I've got to let you go." That's when I went back to selling drugs, that same day. The same day, went back selling drugs because it hurt. That was depressing, my first job. I knew I had a job and they did that. I couldn't believe it. They had me take the shirt off right there. (Laughs) I'm like, "Man, what?" I couldn't believe it... I was sick. So I know it's all [not being able to find a job] from my first case from eight years ago. The guy at Wal-Mart, he told me that. He told me, "It ain't because you're on parole. It's your first case, that's what he told me. The day laborers [temp agency] they won't even hire me. She told me, she said, “Your background is too bad.”

The stigma of ex-con, ex-offender, parolee, and the like, makes it difficult for any criminal charge to ever be left behind, even after many years, you are labeled with those terms. Skinner (2010) questions when such labels should no longer apply and advocates for the use of terms such as client, patient, and consumer. He argues that what someone is called impacts the identity of the person and the way they are received and perceived by those they are seeking services from. The stigma of being labeled an ex-con has negative consequences (Delgado 2012) and carries psychological and practical weight that

impedes reintegration long after incarceration or even parole, has ended. The excerpt below is Chris' insightful description about carrying the weight of stigma:

I was a full time employee doing fine, had my own apartment, car, able to financially provide for myself, my children. I was okay, and then this situation happened. You lose everything. You're expected to come back out and be a productive member of society, but they take everything from you, and then they break you down, as far as... they kill all your self-esteem. Hopefully, you're strong minded individual because if you're not, you won't make it because they dehumanize you at every turn. Then they expect you to come out in society, and you have this X on your back, that stops you from doing so many things. Trying to get some type of employment, especially in the economic climate that there is now. You got people with degrees working at McDonald's, you're up against this, and then you have a felony on your background. It automatically puts you out of the race, whether they're willing to admit it or not, that's the reality of the situation.

Restrictions upon where someone can live (sex offender registration and public housing bans), citizenship rights (voting), and occupations that are off-limits to those with a felony conviction (such as a barber or child-care) are in place to increase public safety, but also create additional barriers to re-entering society (Winnick and Bodkin 2008; Smyth 2007; Henderson 2005). Further, the hours available for parolee to search for a job or show up for interviews are limited by attendance at mandatory programming or limited movement hours because they are on electronic home monitoring. They must get approval from their parole officer to alter movement days and hours and this can take several hours of days (Thomkins 2010).

When I asked parolee interviewees if there was any particularly difficult problem they had recently dealt with, Gonzalo mentioned his parole mandate for being on electronic monitoring:

I honestly think it's [ankle bracelet] a setback for somebody being released from prison, for the simple fact that, if you go to apply for a job and they say, for instance, they say "Can you come in today and have an interview?" I don't have

movement in this thing. I got to tell them, "Hold on. I need you to know that I'm under house arrest, and I got to ask permission for me to go out and have an interview for you to hire me, or potentially hire me." To me, this is more like a setback. I can't say, [I will] "be there in a half an hour, hire me." Once you call them, the parole office has got to call them to make sure that this is correct. For me, if I was to hire somebody, and there's two people here, and one is on parole and the other is not, and the person on parole is giving me this much trouble, I don't need him. I'm going to choose the other person, if I was that person hiring people. This is how I feel. Instead of DOC helping, they're giving us more of a setback with the ankle bracelet. I understand there to keep us and monitor or whatever, keep an eye on us, but the way I look at it is, if a person is going to do something, they're going to do it regardless of an ankle bracelet or not. For the people that's trying to do good, like me, it's a setback. That's how I look at it. If that could get changed, I think that would give a thumbs-up for the next person, so they don't have to struggle.

Chris viewed his electronic monitoring as conditional freedom and also stated that it gave an employer a negative view of him before he had a chance to even meet them:

I'm on ankle monitor right now. Say for instance, somebody wants to interview me at one o'clock. I have to tell these people I'm on ankle monitor, so he can call them and see if I was actually there because I'm not going within my timeframe. How do you think that looks through a perspective employer? If you're meeting somebody for the first time, you're like "Oh, yeah. I'm on ankle monitor." What would you think? "Oh my God, he's a murderer." The mind is a funny thing. I have to try to get my foot in the door, and get myself "Oh by the way, I'm on ankle monitor. Is that okay?" It's hard. It's very disabling because I feel like its conditional freedom. I don't feel free.

Formerly incarcerated persons I spoke with were well aware that their job prospects would be limited and that it would take time and a lot of effort to find a job. However, they found that even their previous employers and employers of last resort, namely temporary agencies, did not want to hire them. The following excerpt by Marcus is indicative of the surprise and frustration experienced by a majority of the parolees I interviewed upon finding those doors closed to them:

I even went back to the old job that I was working at before I was incarcerated and I worked there for six years and I went in the office and I saw some of the same people that I knew in human resource. "Oh, how you doing? All right, well,

we need to do this, do a new application.” They type them on the computer, “oh, wait a minute”, they start locking doors and everything and I’m like what’s going on? Then, they called the big manager, Chris, down to talk to me, and he’s like, “Well you were an excellent worker when you were here. We appreciate the six years. You’ve got records here that still haven’t been broken right now to this day, but due to the fact of this on your background we’re not going to be able to rehire you.” I’m like, are you serious? All the hard work I put in for six years and I can’t even come in at a minimum wage or a seasonal job or just something to support my family right now—previously, you know what I’m saying, just being released. I need something. Chris was like “No, I’m sorry.” He’s like, “What you can do is once this fall off your record and it’s seven years old you can come back and we’ll hire you.” I’m like, “Oh, my God.” I was even fired from a temp agency. This was a temp agency that I always had luck with finding a job. They would always find me a job, no problem. I went there and I applied and everything and the corporate office actually sent me a letter [stating] that we cannot use you and we are terminating your employment. From a temp agency!

Young former offenders face even steeper odds on the job market as they may not have had much of a chance to have a significant work history prior to incarceration (Arditti and Parkman 2011). Their age combined with their criminal background is a double-whammy on the job market. The age old hiring conflict personified by the statement: “You aren’t qualified because you don’t have experience” and countered by “How am I supposed to get experience if you won’t hire me” is even more severe when a criminal background is attached. Being incarcerated as a teenager, as Gonzalo and Jayell were, makes the job search even more problematic.

It is not a misperception by former prisoners that finding a job will be a long and tough process for them. Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2006) found that the majority of employers in the Chicago metro-area would most likely not knowingly hire someone with a criminal background. Unfortunately, some of the information prospective employers attain on persons with a background is not accurate and the quality of background information varies from state to state with little recourse if it is incorrect.

Marcus had been able to get three warehouse jobs but only worked for a few days at each job before being fired for his felony conviction.

I started three jobs. I've started three jobs where I worked days and they come with security. Hey, we need to see you in the office. What's going on? We're terminating you. Your background came back. I mean, I'm truthful. I put everything on the application. I put my crime, I put all of that. But I've been working since I was 14 years old so I've got a good work history background. So by them just looking at my work history background they not looking at that, they see it right over, "Oh, man, you've got all the qualifications, come one, we're going to hire you right now, take the drug test, come on, you start tomorrow." Then I work a day, maybe two days and they [are] like "Hey, we can't use you because we got your background back and we don't allow this and your crime has to be seven years old." I'm like so what am I supposed to do for seven years until this falls off my background or falls far enough back to where you can accept it. What am I supposed to do? I mean that's, I mean it's not going to stop me. I figure it's their loss. Somebody will get me eventually, you know what I'm saying because I'm a good hard worker and my work history background shows that regards to my felony history, you know what I'm saying. I'm going to keep trying. I'm not going to let it discourage me. I'm going to keep trying until I get it done.

Frustration with the "a felony is a felony" view of employers was expressed by several parolees. Those with violent crimes on their record understood that it would be held against them for all jobs, but non-violent offenders like Marcus felt it made little sense to ban them from all jobs because of a felony unrelated to the job they were applying for. Marcus went so far as to get an official copy of his criminal record to check if there was something on it that he was unaware of, thinking that this may be the cause of his inability to stay hired on. He found that his record was correct - just the one conviction for possession. "It's not like I got an armed violence or a murder or rape or something like that. I could see something like that disqualifying, but it's a drug case, I mean, and... it's not like, this is not a medical job where there's drugs around where you

have the fear. This is a warehouse doing Halloween costumes and I don't have no theft on my background or nothing like that.”

Tony had been applying at many of the numerous temp agencies in Westview. He had been told each time that they couldn't hire him because of his background, but that he should come back in a year to re-apply. He was very discouraged by this because he didn't see how things could change in a year. As he explains below, what you were locked up for should be considered:

How could they be different because you're going to ask the same question? Have you been convicted of a felony in the last seven years? All I can say is “Yeah.” So what's the use in me coming back next year just so you guys can have my paperwork on file, saying that I attempted to get a job here? Or are you going to give me a job? I believe you can get a job by being out of jail. But it depends on what you were in jail for. The term is everything. Because you can have a felony for stealing, you know what I'm saying? You might want to give them a try. Okay, well, I'll give them a try, there's nothing to steal around here. I'll keep an eye on them. But when you say he was locked up for attempted murder, you're not too comfortable. Even though you don't know me to the point where if I changed or not, you just automatically ... you don't even want to deal with that. You don't even want to give it a chance. Who can I blame? I wouldn't want to just ... I mean, I'm not being down on anyone, but some guy comes in my business and wants to work for me and I look his background up and he got locked up for attempted murder and did time in jail, it depends on how I'm feeling. I might give him a chance, but nine times out of ten, who wants to give a guy a chance like that?

Parolees interviewed were pragmatic about how difficult finding a job had been. Although they were resigned to the fact that their background counted against them and that they had planned for that, it did not lessen the frustration and helplessness they experienced when they were rejected for jobs or were fired after only a few days.

“I Don't Want to Be a Nobody”: Truth and Consequences

Numerous parolees stated that they would like a chance to explain their situation and show that they had changed, but felt that online applications hindered the employer

from seeing them as a person, not just on paper. With certifications in custodial maintenance and janitorial services, DeShawn's parole officer told him to apply at hotels. "I applied at a couple of hotels, they never called back, I don't know if it's the way I'm going about the application or what, but it's all online so it's not like I'm getting to talk to them."

Although securing employment has a positive impact of desistance from criminal behavior, obstacles to finding employment and housing may work as negative incentives where the rules of disclosure and the stigma it reinforces serve as disincentives to continuing to find legitimate employment (Peck and Theodore 2008). The parolees I spoke with how had been unable to be hired or stay hired for longer than a few days were discouraged and fearful about their future. As the following excerpts indicate, their fear was not just about lack of finding a job, it also encompassed anxiety that they would give up, make a mistake, and commit another crime that would send them back to prison:

Chris: I've put in more applications than I can count. It's like, if you don't tell them you're a felon, they find out later along the line, you lose your job. You have to... upfront honest and all you're looking at is a piece of paper. You're not talking to me yet. You're not having an individual conversation. You're not giving me the luxury to be able to show you who I am. You're just looking at this piece of paper. "Oh, he's a felon." It's a violent crime too. Of course, as an employer, you're thinking "Okay, he has a propensity of violence. He might get into it with one of our customers, and one of his fellow employees." You know? Whatever, it's stigmatized. It's a lot to have to deal with and have these obstacles against you. Some people aren't strong enough to be able to prevail over this type of stuff.

Andrew: To those who are former inmates its extra weight, extra walls, extra thick walls. I have an education. I can speak and sell myself, but it's the mistakes that I've made in the past that you can never really escape from and most parolees, I think, have those troubles. The stigma of being an ex-con...it's like stereotypes. There is some truth to stereotypes and to be honest, maybe a lot of those employers maybe have taken a chance in the

past, been burned or heard from someone. It's almost like your barriers that... are placed by us, ex-cons, because there are barriers there because of us acknowledging that and the stigma didn't become a stigma just because people that got out of prison were angels. There's a reason, but at the same time these barriers are preventing anybody from moving forward. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. It makes people who truly have the intention and the desire and the ache to turn everything around, it takes all that ache and desire and momentum and drive and it just wads it up and throws it away. Just the rejection and the frustration whether you're trying to get a job, whether you trying to get into some social services, getting a place to live

DeShawn: I don't want to be just a nobody, I don't want to be a nobody at all, that is my fear, I don't want to be a nobody, I want to be somebody, I really want to be a somebody... Has a lot to do with me, I need to start putting more and more effort to things, but I just don't know what, I don't know how to get started, that's why I'm asking help for... but it's just like nobody hears you crying.

Stigma is experienced externally and internally and how it is experienced is an individual one. Stigma can result in a sense of shame at the cost to oneself and the collateral effects on the family of the incarcerated. The ability of a formerly incarcerated person to obtain housing, get a job, repair relationships with family members, develop new relationships, and become an active member of the community is made more difficult when the baggage of having a criminal record is publically available online. Formerly incarcerated persons who did not have a family member or friend that could help them get a foot in the door with an employer faced a much more difficult task of finding employment. They often faced a difficult decision of telling the truth up front or lying about their background and having a job for a longer period of time. Marcus explained that he was told by others with a background that he would have a job longer if he would just lie about the background:

You have to lie on an application and just work until they decide to come and let you go. Like, eventually they'll let you go but you'll get a longer run than straight

up telling them the truth. I find that to be real crazy. How could you get a longer run at working, you've got a better chance of being dishonest. In most places, if you put no, they don't even check it. Maybe they might check it three, four months down the line, whatever. Whereas, if you put it on there, they go right there and run it and they tell you no right in the door.

In the following excerpts, parolees found that telling the truth on an application was a situation where you are “damned if you do, damned if you don't” and either way, a felony is a felony:

Andrew: I'm working two and three days a week right now and that barely pays my rent and it doesn't cover anything else. I ran out of gas on the way here. It doesn't cover little things and what are you going to do? Force someone to hire you? There's a line of five to ten applicants for one job... and they say when you get released to mention that you're a former inmate and they [employers of formerly incarcerated persons] get tax breaks. They're not worried about that. They're worried about the merchandise they have in their store or their warehouse or their lawn equipment if you're a landscaper or whatever it is, they're worried about it coming up missing because you're an ex-con. Do you be honest or do you try to fill out an application and don't put down that you're a felon, maybe work there a week or two and they find out, they get the criminal background back, sometimes it takes a few days or a few weeks, then you get fired anyway for being dishonest. I've had that happen and the person said, “If you would have told me upfront, we wouldn't have hired you, but then I wouldn't have looked bad in front of my supervisor and then here's something and I'm fired either way.” She goes, “The bad thing is you're a good guy. You do great work and you would have been an asset. It's just your past.” Or I hear, “You took the chance to tell me that you're a felon. Unfortunately our policy is to not hire felons” and I've had that happen.

DeShawn: The thing to me is not getting a job it's keeping it. Once they find out I have a felony it's over, you can't work here anymore. Sometimes when I first got out I was telling them straight up I have a felony, but now I don't even tell them that. They will find out... a couple of days on the job it's better than nothing. I don't know why it's like this but it's like you have a felony... it doesn't matter what kind of felony you have, you have a felony, so I could be a rapist or a molester, a murderer, anything of the sort, any felony you could think of, scammer, whatever. It doesn't matter you have a felony, so you're in the same bunch as them. The other day I just had, it wasn't an interview, I just talked to a dude about a job, I said I wanted a job, I need a job here. He was like, “Oh you have a background”, and I was like Yes.” He was like, “Is it a felony?” I said, “Yes.” He said,

“Well, I don’t even want to ask that because a felony a felony.” One time I went to fill out applications, a warehouse job. I applied and she said “Oh, you have a felony?” I said yes, and she looked at me like I was going to rob the place.

Manny: I don’t even want to put it down, but if I don’t...I didn’t one time and then they told me, I got the job and then they said, “No, we can’t send you to the job; because you have a felony.” I said, “But its traffic. It’s not violent. I didn’t rob nobody. I didn’t kill nobody.” It still was a felony, so they wouldn’t hire me.

Since his imprisonment, Marcus has turned negatives into positives in many areas of his life. At the time of his interview, he had been released for two and one-half months and he stated that that was the longest time he has ever been unemployed in his life since he began working at age fourteen. He responded to his difficulties holding onto a job by being proactive and creating his own neighborhood lawn care business:

Since I’ve been out, like, I’ve been raking people’s leaves and stuff like that and cutting grass and stuff. So, I’ve been doing stuff like that and people pay me \$10, \$20 or whatever. I even printed up some little flyers; I’ve got some flyers when I go out. Yeah, that’s what I’ve been doing for work. Little odds and ends and stuff, it’s something. I mean it keeps me active and it’s also helping people out. Like everybody on my block, I basically did their first one for free. So I went down when I first got here, I was cutting grass because it was nice. I had the lawnmower; I had a few dollars for some gas. When the leaves start falling, I just raked up everybody’s first leaves. So then after that it’s like oh, here, I’ll give you \$20 if you can cut it for me. I’ll give you \$20 if you can get the leaves. So that’s what I’ve been doing.

John had been released for three months and his lack of work history made it difficult to find work in the formal economy. His only income is from occasional handy-man tasks, such as painting or cleaning done for a friend:

I go paint for my friend's dad. He'll give me a couple of dollars. He gives me little odd-ball jobs, stuff like that. That's what I've been doing every now and then; every now and then when he calls me. A secure job... that's depressing. I want something secure, but I can't.

James was living at his mother's home and did not qualify for any food stamps or housing assistance. Though less organized than Marcus, he also went around the neighborhood looking for small jobs to do and has earned a little income in that manner:

I get money through side jobs for people, if they need help around their house. Lawns or maintenance. Somebody might need help with their car or something like that... or cleaning up a basement or something like that.

“You Have to Know Somebody”: Personal Networks of Employment

A poor work history prior to incarceration may be due to the same personal characteristics that led them to prison and the chances are good that few of those personal characteristics were improved upon in prison. (Marcus: some folks in their 50's never having a real job and not knowing what a W-2 is because they have sold drugs their entire working life). Even an extensive work history (which is not the norm) gained prior to incarceration loses its value with time away from the market during incarceration and long after due to the stigma of a criminal conviction (Apel and Sweeten 2010). Given the current state of the economy and a significant unemployment rate, employers do not have to seek out formerly incarcerated persons to hire. In a tough economy, they are, more than ever, the workers of last resort.

Rarick and Kahan (2009) found that finding a job quickly after release is positively associated with desistance from criminal behavior and not going back to prison. Rhodes (2008) contends that beyond the financial benefits of having a job and the time it takes up in the day, the social atmosphere of a job increases the likelihood that formerly incarcerated persons will be influenced by co-workers serving as positive role models.

Marcus: In this day and age and the way this world is now pretty much even with getting a job you have to know somebody. It's not like you can just walk into the company now, fill out the application, we like your qualifications, you're hired. No. You have to, with those three jobs that I had that was three people that I knew. That's why they even went and looked and went through the interview process and actually hired me. It didn't matter, if I didn't put on there I know Jo-Jo such and such that's been here for 12 years, they wouldn't, threw it right in the garbage like it was nothing. So you have to know somebody. So if you get them leads and if your parole agent or whoever your reliable source is that can help you, if they giving you these leads now the ball is in your hand. It's up to you to take this list and alright, I'm going to go to this address.

There is not a great deal of research on how social networks are utilized by those transitioning back to society from incarceration. For some formerly incarcerated persons, the thought of going for help outside the family is unthinkable until all avenues within their existing social networks are exhausted. Whether it is independence or a manifestation of the strength of family ties, they did not seek outside assistance. Berg and Huebner (2010) contend that utilizing family networks for finding a job and the impact on staying out of prison can be positive or negative. For families with other members who are or have been incarcerated or are engaged in criminal behavior, close family ties can increase the probability of going back to the same behavior and lifestyle that led to imprisonment.

When I greeted Gonzalo for the interview, he told me that he had just found out the day before that he had gotten a job with full benefits. He was very excited about it and it seemed like he couldn't wait to tell me about it. The job was an hour away, but he said he had gotten his driver's license and his sister was letting him use her car. Orientation was in two days and then two days after that, was his first day. When asked if he was satisfied with the pay, he said, "I think its \$11 an hour, so can't complain. It's a

blessing.” His father worked for the same employer and he stated that his father put in a good word for him, as he explains in this exchange:

CSD: The interview you just had yesterday, was it the first one you had since getting released?

Gonzalo: No, I had a few others and didn't get hired; one was at Wal-Mart. The other one was for a wood [manufacturing] company and I didn't get hired.

CSD: Do you think your background played a part in not getting hired for those jobs?

Gonzalo: Yes, I would say so because I got three charges, and the most that stands out to get a job is the burglary. For me to go and ask for a job to somebody, they're going to look at my background and say, "You got a burglary, like I want to hire you." It's not like I can go and say, "I'm not going to steal." No, that's not what your paperwork says. It's pretty much; you got to put it in God's hands. If it's meant to be, it's meant to be. If not, I got to move on and look for another one.

CSD: Did you feel like not getting those jobs was a setback for you? Did that ...

Gonzalo: No, it's just more encouragement to keep going, like, I guess next time, I'll put something on my application like, "Look, I would like to be interviewed by a person and explain myself."

CSD: Right and you were able to do that because of where your dad works?

Gonzalo: Yes. On the application I actually put, "Look, I really need a job and need another chance. I need to work and I love to work and I love this stuff. Just all I need is a chance." I put it out there and I figured, "If they read it that might stand out more than my background." It did, I guess. Thank you, God. The job search ... this job I just got comes from my dad. He works at this place. I went in to fill out the application about a month and a half ago, and the company's in California, so the paperwork has to go through them. I was waiting for a whole month and some change, wait and see if anything. I had told my dad, since I filled [out] all the applications at different places that, "If they were to hire me, should I take the job or just wait for your place to say something?" Yesterday, he called me and said, "You got to come in for an interview." I was like, "Here I come then."

CSD: Can you tell me what kind of a job it is?

Gonzalo: It's a warehouse and they hired me for a forklift driver. I love that stuff. I actually waited more than 10 years to get back on a forklift.

CSD: Having your dad there, will that be good, too?

Gonzalo: Yes, more pressure.

CSD: Tell me what you mean by that.

Gonzalo: Pressure, no. I'm more just making fun. I wouldn't say pressure, but I guess I got to do good. I was doing good, I've worked for him before. He's going to be watching me.

Gonzalo is the only parolee in the study with a full-time job with benefits. The doors that his father was able to open for him were crucial for him to find a job after over ten years in prison and just a few years work experience before that. Other parolees stated that although their families let them know about job openings, they personally could not help them get a job because of where they worked and the skills needed to work there. John is on his own when it comes to finding a job. When I asked if any family members were helping him out, he said they are no help because, "They've got felonies too. My brother, he don't work. He ain't trying to. My dad, he just got locked up the other day" [in county jail].

Fostering mutual-trust relationships between reentry service providers and employers in the community is integral to being able to provide opportunities for the continuing flow of the formerly incarcerated into high-impact communities. Peck and Theodore (2008) contend that these relationships could easily be broken if a reentry client does not work out well and they will no longer consider hiring any former offenders. Some reentry organizations had developed a relationship with several employers over the years and mentioned that those employers would call when they had openings or

needed to hire for a specific temporary job. During my interviews with reentry organizations and parole, I asked for the names and contacts of employers who worked with them so that I could contact them for an interview. Out of a compiled list, I only had two employers agree to be interviewed. When speaking with employers, I was asked many times how I got their name, what “I was after”, and where this research would be published. Repeatedly, human resources managers responded that after speaking with the owner or director of the company, I would not be able to come for an interview.

Dealing with Parole: More “Gotcha” and Less “Hug a Thug”

Parole is a crucial part of the reentry experiences and impacts the degree of success a parolee achieves. The quality of interaction between a parole officer and a parolee, as well as a good fit between the parolee and the type and amount of programs a parolee is mandated to participate in (Colon 2009). While parole divisions have recently seen cutbacks, states are increasingly contracting for-profit correctional corporations to manage and oversee reentry services and provide “case management” (Thompkins 2010). In Westview, these services were provided by Corrections Incorporated and Community Reentry and Recovery.

The budget deficit pressures in the state are creating unprecedented political and financial pressure to decrease the number of recidivating parolees to prison. During my interviews with the two “acting supervisors” of the Westview parole office, the supervisors informed me that they were required to call an DOC supervisor at parole headquarters to get permission to revoke parole and send someone back to prison – irrespective of the reason for the revocation request. Therefore, having a new criminal

charge pending, multiple “dirty drops” (positive drug tests), or violations of electronic monitoring/home confinement, the parole officer and their supervisor would rarely be able to convince the DOC supervisor that parole should be revoked.

How parole has operated as an institution in our history has been largely dependent upon the political mood of the country towards crime (Irwin 2005; Simon 1993). Since the late 1970’s the traditional “social work” (rehabilitative/assistance) model has been supplanted by a just deserts (punative) model wherein discretion is limited and mistrusted and rehabilitation efforts are met with cynicism. Parole currently exists in a no-man’s-land between the competing political interests of crime control and social conditions (particularly fiscal conditions). The purpose of parole has moved away from reintegration and is largely a system of risk-assessment, management, and containment (Lin 2010; Simon 1993).

While the personality, attitude, and experience shapes how each parole agent “does” parole, the organizational culture of the department of parole at the state level and local office level impacts the type of parole agent someone will become. . Currently, any “social work” aspects of parole are disdained by many parole agents, as recounted by

Mark from Corrections Incorporated:

Although we have a very good relationship with them...they see the clients very differently from what we do. We obviously are here to work with clients to get them back into the community...rehabilitation and things like that. Parole officers generally aren't into that so much (laugh). They want to catch the client doing something. They want to put them back into prison...or on electronic monitoring...thing like that. So it's kind of hard to walk that line. You've got to maintain a good relationship 'cause they are our customer. Yet, we have very different opinions on...you know...criminals, basically. You've heard of hug-a-thug? That's one thing our agency has been called. Yeah. So we hear that from parole. And, even though they do give us clients and they'll work with us. They

still say things like that to us. Directly to us. Like I had one [parole agent], three weeks ago one of them came in and said, “I don’t like this program, but I sure like the people that work here. But she refers people here.

Despite acknowledging the need for parole agents to provide assistance to parolees in finding a job and obtaining needed services, according to Mary, only two Westview office parole agents had social work tendencies regarding their job. Research on parole in California found that the social work aspects of parole were mostly rhetoric and the overriding day-to-day perspective and activities of parole agents were policing-activities (surveillance, control, and containment). The prevalence of the law enforcement perspective by parole agents may be fostered from their earliest days on the job, as the most important factor determining success as an agent was whether or not they met their minimum supervision requirements each month, not their assisting services to parolees (Petersilia 2003). Irwin (2005) argues that parole is a type of social welfare agency, given the plethora of needs (employment, housing, educational, and health) that many parolees have – but one without the funds to do so adequately. As most parolees are required to obtain assessments (drug and/or alcohol, anger management, mental health, etc.) parole agents will provide basic information on where those assessments can be completed and may provide tips regarding what employers in the area are open to hiring those with a criminal background.

Every parolee interviewed for this study reported that the relationship with their assigned parole officer was intense for the first few meetings upon their release, as their parole officer made the expectations and requirements of parole clear. After those initial meetings, however, the relationship changed to a perfunctory “check” of the parolee “being where they were supposed to be and doing what they were supposed to do

(regarding mandated services)” and an occasional drug test. Upon their release, most parolees expected that the relationship with their parole agents would be adversarial.

Marcus: He’s a really good guy. I mean he’s straight up with me. I already know the kind of officers in there [prison] that I’m dealing with so I know what an asshole could be. So I prepared myself and I was praying and I’m saying hey man, I hope when I get out hope I get a decent guy and this, that and the other. Once I went to the parole school, they really had a parole school like about an hour, you really don’t tell you nothing, but it’s just part of their procedures, I’m guessing. The guy was telling me, and I listened to what he said, he was like, “well your parole agent is what you make of him. If you go there and you come off like you want to be this bad ass or be a criminal they’re going to treat you like that. But if you come off and you’re straight up with him and you’re not going to have a problem whatsoever.” So I heard that and I took that to mind and I put that to thought. So when I got out I’m like okay, I’m going to treat this guy like a respectable man, even if he is that asshole, I’m going to treat him with man respect. So he came and the first day he tried to get all tough and he pretty much was pushing my buttons to see where I’m at and how I’m going to deal with it, but I was prepared for this, like I said, I prepared myself for this. “Yes sir, no sir, would you like to come in the house?”

During the two and one-half months that Marcus has been on parole, his visits from his parole agent have become more perfunctory, as this excerpt explains his most recent visit, “I’ll go out and he’ll ask me all the regular questions, have you been involved with the police, are you doing this, checking in? Yeah. I’ll see ya later. Within five minutes, he was gone.”

Several parolees expressed frustration that the relationship with their parole officer had not progressed to one of assistance after enough time had gone by that the parolee could “prove himself.”

CSD: If I asked you to rank him [parole officer] on a scale from one to ten, one being not very good and ten being real good, how's your relationship with him?

Gonzalo: I would say it is about eight. The way I look at it is, he don't know me. I just got out and all he knows about me is my background. I have a saying,

"Don't judge me, I'm not my background." I'm a different person, but by him just knowing me, I know it's going to take a while for him to say, "I guess I can trust him a little bit more or something." I understand that.

CSD: Right. Do you feel like you can go to him with problems?

Gonzalo: No, I wouldn't say that because, it's only been three months, going on three months.

CSD: Has he been a resource for helping you find services or any assistance that you need?

Gonzalo: The anger management assessment, yes. He gave me the address for that place to go get the assessment when I first got out.

CSD: Did he help you look for a job? Did he give you any leads and say, "Here's some possible places to look at ...?"

Gonzalo: No. No, he just gave me my days for me to go and look for a job.

CSD: The days when you can be released from the house?

Gonzalo: Yes. Since I got that electronic monitor, he gave me days for me to go out and look for a job and I think there was another day for, I think it's called ART, recreation time.

CSD: Tell me what that means.

Gonzalo: Recreation time, he gave me Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from eight to three to go look for jobs. On Sundays he gave me from 12 noon to six PM to go with my family wherever. Basically saying, you can go out and have fun. Grown man, 28 years old.

CSD: In terms of your job search, is your parole officer giving you any leads?

Marcus: No, I've asked him and he told me pretty much oh, there's nothing really I can do. I'm like, you've got to give me something. He's like, "Go to Party City Outlet, I've got some guys that's going up there that's felons being hired." I'm like, "I've been there, I worked there for two days and they fired me due to my background." So how you got people that's there that's felons and why would they fire me. I mean, does it vary what kind of case you got or what? When I talked to him, he was nonchalant about it, like it's really nothing he can do about that. So I'm not going to trouble him with that and I'm not going to let that stop me or be a downfall. I'm going to continue to strive and I'm going to go out here and I'm going to

get this job. It's Christmas time coming up, some place is going to hire. Everybody's getting busy; somebody's going to need somebody.

For some parolees, particularly those living with their family, after the first few visits by their parole officer, the officer did not get out of the car to speak with them. They viewed this interaction as dismissive and felt that the parole officer couldn't wait to get out of there.

I reported this to you [PO] last time that I had the job there and this is what happened due to my background, now I see you again you tell me to go to the same place that I told you last month I got fired from due to my background. Oh well just go again. How I'm going again, I didn't, come on man.

Yeah, then when I do ask him about something, I'm going to ask him again when he comes this month. Have you found anything, any leads for jobs, anything kind of programs, any, can I volunteer somewhere or something. What you got for me? I'm quite sure, it's like I said, they've got so many people on their caseload they just want to, if it ain't about taking you back to prison they don't even want to deal with you period. They ain't got no conversation for you, nothing, don't bother me, don't call me. Then I can understand from their perspective you've got a thousand people like [makes noise]. Then you're figuring like man, let me just, this guy missed a call, let me just send him back so I don't have to deal with him squawking in my ear about a job. (Marcus re: his parole officer's lack of helpfulness)

When asked if their parole officer had given them leads on jobs or obtaining reentry services that were not a parole mandate, all replied that they had not. None had been given a suggestion to contact a reentry organization or received pamphlets or contact information on the reentry organizations located within Westview.

Marcus: I wish that there were more programs to help people out to be reentered. There's not really no programs and the programs that they do have and that they did have, like back in the days they've all been cut or reduced to where it's not even helping at all, period. They have let the parole agents out there, they should be more intervened versus just trying to I'm just going to take you back because you're doing wrong. They need to try to help more with the offenders being more positive. I mean like help them find that church home. Help them look for that job. Give them leads on that job. Here's 20 jobs right here you can go to and check it out. They all hire felons, I know I checked them out myself. Versus just saying just go

over here, they hire felons, I know because I sent somebody over there. Nah. Do some research, do some, I know you've probably got a thousand people on your caseload and this, that and the other. I mean you're not doing nothing. You're more interested in I've got a thousand people, if I can get 100 of them to go back that's 100 I don't have to deal with. Come on, now that's not, that's not helping out society at all, period. It's not. But if you've got a thousand people and say alright, I'm going to take this paperwork and I'm going to do this work for them and help them out and I'm going to give this to them and it's up to them now to do the research. I've done what I've need to do. I've got them all good leads. So now it's up to them to get out and do the legwork and accomplish that. Out of that thousand you're going to get about 100 that's going to go out and actually do the legwork and do something and then you're going to get 250 that's actually going to get hired. Now that's 250 civilized civilians that you don't have to deal with instead of you just getting rid of 100 just taking them back to prison and starting the whole process over again.

Delgado (2012) argues that what formerly incarcerated persons really need is a “broker,” someone from the community that would assist on the individual level on the ins and outs of getting back into society, finding a job, or gaining training/education to make that job search more fruitful. But most do not have anyone like a broker. They're on their own. Shavonna, from Community Partners for Empowerment observed that for many formerly incarcerated persons, their status in society and access to power changed little after their release:

They are very frustrated. They felt like they're still in the prison system and to a certain degree I can relate to that because of the positions their put in. Unfortunately usually 9 times out of 10 they are not put into the corporate America scene, they're put into positions that are often go unseen or unheard and they felt like their right back, their into the system. They feel invisible, they've already felt, a lot of them have been anywhere from a year to five years already in a system they were working for the state for 7, 10, 12 dollars a month and they come out. Even if they are making minimum wage or higher, it still makes them feel exactly the same way.

No “Bits Left: The Reentry Mindset and Views of the Future

For some incarcerated persons, particularly those from an area with high incarceration rates active gangs, incarceration can be viewed as badge of honor. Delgado (2012) writes that “the community environment will dictate if stigma, or pride, is the prevailing view of the prison experience” (p 47). In the world of corrections and reentry, this is referred to as “a bit,” as explained in this exchange with Wes, the executive director of TA:

Wes: Our thing is to help them as much as we can, especially those who are ready for help. That's the premise that we provide services; you have to be ready for change. If you still have what an offender or ex-offender describes as “having a bit left in you” then we, wanting to be responsible for the resources that we have, we are not willing to waste those resources on someone that's not ready for change.

CSD: What do they mean by “a bit”?

Wes: More time. I can go back. I feel like I can do another sentence. I know how much time that this sentence will carry and how much time I have to serve.

Twenty-six year old John first went to prison for three years at age nineteen for shooting at someone and has been incarcerated twice since then. The following quote reflects his change in mindset as he spoke of wanting things to be different this time when he was released:

I'm going to try and not go back no more. ..Last time I came out with the same mentality and the same thinking – that I don't care. I care now though. I don't want to go back. When I left the penitentiary the first time, an old timer asked me, he was like “You got another one in ya?” “Yep” (laughs), I said that, “I got one more left in me.” He was like, “You a dumb-ass.” I ended up catching the case, too. I came back. It's over with... I ain't got no more. I can't believe I said that.

Tony was seventeen when he first began to get in trouble with the law. He said that he really didn't know any better at the time, because he was out on the streets and

running with a gang at an early age. Now, he feels that he is more mature and too tired to keep making the same mistakes. Further, being away from his daughter during his incarceration was hard on him because he realized that he needed to be there for her. In the extended conversational passage below, Tony describes why his change of heart took so long and his incentives for change:

Tony: What I did that night [attempted murder], everything changed. Everything changed. I went to jail at 20. From [ages] 11 to 12, I was in the streets. From 11 to 12 to like 20, I was running around in the streets... I grew up in the 90's. Do you see what I'm saying? I grew up in '91, '92, when there was just the whole ... things were different. Half the people that I grew up with... They're either, like I said, in jail, dead, drugs, or disease. Everything changed in that nine years. Everything changed. My whole ... being alone for nine years gives you a lot of time to evaluate everything. Even though I still chose to come out and make a couple of more bad choices after doing the nine years, I still knew better. I just chose to think that I could get away with it, but it's only so long before you can get away, before you get caught. Once you get caught, you have to deal with everything. I don't know what you would call it when you have to deal with everything, even the things that you didn't get caught for, I guess you would call it bad karma? I was locked up from the time I was 20 until I was 29, and during that course of a time that I did, I learned a lot. I still made bad choices when I got out, that's how I ended up getting in trouble. Sorry, but ... I still learned a lot about the people that I allow myself to associate with and the people I allow to come into my circle and be around my family and different things of that nature. I got tired because it's hell in there. I have no ... I don't mean to be disrespectful, it's fucking hell in there, and I love my family, and I'm tired, and I'm old, and I just can't do it anymore. because I cannot stand to be away from her [his daughter]. I'm scared. I am very scared. Because I'm just scared. Just me not being there. Saying... to be those extra eyes when she [his daughter] may be naïve, and not know... I know. Whatever choices that you make, if you can live with them, live with them. I can't live with being in jail. I can't live with being away from my daughter. I can't live not being able to ... when I get through with this interview with you, [I can] walk home. Instead of me having this interview with you in jail and when you leave, I go to a cell. I can't live with that no more.

CSD: What advice would you give to somebody getting out?

Tony: Stay focused. Remember what you went through. Don't forget it You can't forget. I don't know if I'm institutionalized or if ... or what, but I don't forget. I always think about jail. Not that I think about it like I want to go back. I just remind myself like ... that shit is out there, and if you don't do right, fuck up if you want to. Excuse my language, but fuck up if you want to. It's waiting. It's not going nowhere. That ... excuse my language ... that fucking jail ... those jails will be up until you're gone and your kids and their kids and their kids ... unless we stop, and the only way we can stop is remembering what we went through when we was in there, so when we come out here, we're focused.

CSD: So you think about it to keep you on the straight and narrow?

Tony: That's what I mean when I say think about it. I don't think it like, "Hey, what are you guys doing in there?" I think about it like ... I don't want to go back, I'm not going back, and the only way I can't go back is stay focused. I've got to look straight. I can't get sidetracked or I can't let nobody come all the way from over here and take me all the way over here.

Several of the parolees I spoke with expressed frustration at fellow inmates who saw imprisonment as something to brag about. In this excerpt, Marcus relates how he reacted to men in prison who viewed multiple stints in prison as a badge of honor:

I'm like how could these guys sit here oh, this is my fifth bit. This is my sixth bit, this is my seventh bit. You're sitting here talking about that like that's proud and that's something to be proud of. I'm in here ashamed on my first one and I'll be feeling like crap if I ever come back in again saying this is my second time. Half of them sit there and they [say], "Yeah, I did 10 years and I got off in three months and now I'm doing 10 more." I wouldn't even want to tell nobody that. How could you be proud of that? I would not even want to tell nobody that. That's ridiculous. I guess that's their way of showing that they're the bigger man. I can do prison time or this--this is not where you want to be at. I mean think about it. But there's guys in there, they [are] career criminals. That's what they do. They get adapted to it so long, that's why I say you get sucked in, you get adapted to it. They don't know nothing else. They get out here and they can't function. They can't deal with the reality. They weren't never even planning on how to deal with it when they get out here ... I mean their negativity helped me to be positive too. They weren't even thinking about, "Well hey, I'm going to go out here and try." [They are saying] I'm going to go out here and I'm going to get this kilo and I'm going to work this kilo out of my momma's house." I'm like, "Take a second and just think about what you're saying. Listen to yourself. You sound so stupid. You will be right back here quick." They mind set was that they just

wanted to continue living that lifestyle and doing, there was nothing else better. But when you ain't got no reentry programs to help you and give you some light so that there is a future at the end of the tunnel, then it's really easy to fall back that way.

Because Gonzalo spent ten years in prison, he frequently saw men he knew who had been released coming back to prison because of parole violations or a new charge and was upset by what he then viewed as a lack of effort to be successful on the outside.

I would just judge them, because I was like, "I'm done, been here all this time, you did all this time. You go back out there and you don't even last two months or whatever, and you come back with another case. You love this place in here? There's nothing to like in here." This is what I used to say. Now that I'm out here and I went through all these little struggles, I see why people go back. If I didn't have family support and a place to live, I would be forced to go back to my old ways. Now, for me, I understand why these people go back, if they don't have anything else to rely on but their old ways.

When I asked if prison had changed them, everyone but Willie said that it had. Jayell, at age twenty, replied that in prison he "lost a piece of my mind. The piece that I lost was the piece that tells me, I know everything. I lost the piece of my mind, but gained knowledge." Willie, on the other hand, was pretty confident that he is done going to prison but that he is not really going to change his ways to ensure that it won't happen again. He has been incarcerated four times in prison and numerous times in city and county jails. He is from a gang affiliated family and as he explains in this exchange, he's not ready to "be finished" with the streets, but is less involved than he used to be:

Willie: This is as long as I've stayed out [eight months on parole without a violation or being re-arrested] so, and plus I'm older now and so it's like, I'm mature. I got no more bits in me to do. I'm not as rowdy. I'm still affiliated, I'm still a member, blood related to a mob, but I don't have to do it because I'm over a lot of it and I don't too much... listen to any of the business.

CSD: So is it that you are affiliated, but not active?

Willie: Yes. I'm active if it has to be done...because there's a lot of good money in the streets, it's a lot, easy money, good money. Ninety percent of Westview is in gangs now. What you're making in a year, we're making in a month. I have plenty of family members that's in mobs and we run the mob and we own the mob...I'm still getting away with the things that I have gotten away with [in the past]. ... usually when I'm in prison I get in trouble a lot. I'm usually in Seg [segregation unit]. I'm usually gang banging, I'm usually doing all of that, selling, doing everything that you're not supposed to be. Streets inside there, just a more enclosed area. This time I went, "I'm not going to get in any trouble." Even if I'm mad and I try sometimes, the streets [fellow gang members] will be like, "Man nigga, go on home. You don't play this game out this long, go home." They tell me all the time, "Go home...you know we got guns in here." I go up there, smoking, drinking, and ride around. My girl's at work, yes, I ride around with my boys.

Following this statement, Willie proceeded to say that "you people" [researchers] shouldn't worry so much about prisoners because he believes, as he relates in this extract, there is nothing anybody can do to change people:

You have to do it when you're ready to do it. There's nothing no one can tell you besides bribing you or making you have something in order for you to want it. That doesn't work, because once they don't want to do that anymore, then you are only doing it for that purpose. You have to want to do it for yourself. If you don't want to do it for yourself, then it's not going to work. It's up to that person if they want the help. That's why I say you guys shouldn't stress yourself too hard to try to help the ones that ... because it's ... I don't blame you, you guys have got beautiful hearts, you do, you know? It's like I hate to see you ... I'm glad you come to see me because I'm serious, but, think of the ones [other parolees interviewed] that you've talked to already. You know if they're still here or out [of prison]?

I found it ironic that Willie is talking about how a formerly incarcerated person has to want to change and he is insinuating that some of the parolees I have interviewed may be locked up already – considering he is the only parolee I have spoken with that is actively and admittedly still using drugs, affiliated and running with a gang, and not attempting to fulfilling his parole mandates. Except for Willie, all of the parolees I interviewed saw incarceration as an awful experience (at most, Willie considered it

unpleasant) but, most viewed it as something that had to happen for them to change their ways.

Parolee Perspectives on Solutions: The Role of Government and What's Missing in Reentry

I asked parolees what city, state, and federal government agencies should be doing to assist people getting out of prison and reentering society? Gonzalo mentioned that instead of allowing inmates the choice whether or not to take programs while incarcerated, he felt they needed to be mandatory. In addition, he felt that the requirements for being able to participate in reentry programs in prison limited who could receive those services and that there was not enough room for inmates who wanted to get into the program and they couldn't. "Space is limited, or either their cases, either they got a homicide or something. I think they need more help than I do." Marcus, too, viewed the current offerings as inadequate and viewed time in prison as an opportunity to effect change, if there was something else to offer to an incarcerated person:

I think there should be way more job opportunities. Way more. They should give people a second chance; especially if it's your first time ever being in prison, you should most definitely right off the top give you a second chance. I mean, even like say to look at my background. You can see that I've been working all my life, why would you want to like basically blackball me like that. There should, if this is people's first time being in prison there should be a program as soon as you get out that sets you up with a job like that. Give the person a second chance. Or at least let you get your unemployment benefits until you get, find you a job

Ideally, one of the strategies that would help formerly incarcerated person re-engage with their community would be through opportunities for them to "give back." In this scenario, community organizations and former offenders would work together to create community service projects that would benefit the community and offer an outlet

for the talents and positive public interaction that formerly incarcerated persons need to reintegrate (Travis and Petersilia 2001). Marcus wanted to use his experiences with the criminal justice system to steer young people away from crime and utilize volunteer work as a reminder to stay away from his old ways:

Pretty much all my life I've always been around older guys, but in there [prison], like the older cats, that are like 50, 60 years old, they see me and they're like, "Man, you're a good young brother." The people, the older generation don't help with the younger generation no more. There's like a project not too far from my house and I was thinking about going there and, like I said, I'm going to do some volunteer stuff since I'm not working just to keep me motivated and active. So I'm going to go there eventually and I'm going to talk to them about starting a little league baseball team for the summer and stuff like that. I want it to be co-ed. I want it to be boys and girls. What I want to do is, I want to do stuff like that to help other people to stay motivated and stay focused.

Opportunities to "give back" can provide formerly incarcerated persons with a chance to fulfill a form of community restitution. In addition, being viewed as a person who "has value" is integral to increasing one's social and personal worth externally in the community and internally regarding their own sense of self.

CHAPTER SIX

CREATING A REENTRY SYSTEM IN WESTVIEW

Reentry is more than just getting out and surviving that nebulous period of time between the opening of the prison gate and being a citizen restored (or initiated for the first time) to their place as a community member. What can be done to create a true reentry environment for formerly incarcerated persons? What can be done to confront the inconsistencies in what reentry claims to do and what it actually provides? This chapter suggests ways that reentry could become more of a collaborative, functional system where the claims of assisting reintegration can become more of a reality, as well as the limits of what reentry can do in a mass incarceration society.

The habit of looking at criminal behavior as rooted in the individual has the unfortunate effect of assuming that the solutions to criminal behavior lie within the individual, as well. The development of the “disciplined self” is touted through individual success stories, a “pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps” American ideology, and the reticence of the American populace to see some criminal behavior as a response to failing economic, educational, family, health care, and political systems. Deficits of educational achievement, job skills and training, work history, coping strategies, and social capital are not a result of the actions (or inactions) of the individual alone. The community context within the larger society matters regarding the growth and development of individual

potential. Addressing reentry only at the level of the individual ignores structural barriers that impede one's ability to reenter society.

Reentry beyond Triage

Critics argue that reentry has become a “catch-all” attempt to deflect attention from the crisis of mass incarceration (Clear 2007; Nixon et al 2008). In addition, although reentry sounds assistive and rehabilitative, parole mandates tend to be used for supervisory and control purposes and ultimately serve to lengthen the reach of corrections and the punishment system (Nixon et al 2008). Many parole mandates are too limited by lack of access to resources to be therapeutically advantageous. Given the current state of incarceration, the presentation of reentry as “the solution” to incarceration is an ill-conceived one. In its current manifestation, reentry offerings are more triage than comprehensive treatment. Triage, as a medical process, is used in crisis situations to make quick decisions regarding: who is in the worst shape, which patient can be saved, and if so, what kind of limited resources should be used on which patient. In reentry triage, this takes the form of risk assessment and “salvagability determination” regarding one's amenability to the “disciplined-self” programs offered by reentry organizations. I assert that the current offerings of programs and services for formerly incarcerated persons in Westview are enough to “patch someone up” enough to get them released, find temporary (albeit insecure) housing, and meet most of their parole mandates *if* they have family members or loved ones who will help them pay the fees. The aforementioned, however, does not meet the depth and breadth of the needs of the reentering population in

Westview. The most needed services and supports, job search assistance (rather than job readiness training) and transportation assistance services are not offered.

Scholarship on reentry has long called for a comprehensive approach to reentry that encompasses interrelated areas, rather than merely focusing primarily upon employment (Clear et al. 2003; Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2006; Visher, Debus, and Yahner 2008; and Western 2008). While bringing down recidivism rates is the main impetus behind programs such as reentry courts, Weed and Seed funded reentry cooperative initiatives, and the Reentry Partnership Initiatives (RPI) developed by the Department of Justice, fostering community involvement and collaboration are key components in their approach. For example, the PRI program, specifically works to create linkages and interaction between criminal justice agencies and organizations, social service providers, and various community groups (Young et al. 2002). For over a decade, the concept of community justice (recently referred to as restorative justice) has been advertised as one way to address the recidivism woes of the failing criminal justice system (Clear and Karp 1998; Bazemore 2000).

The scope of incarceration, and thus by definition, the scope of reentry in the United States is so large that there must be leadership from the top, not just funding. I contend that this leadership should take the form of creating opportunities for true collaboration and cooperation. Research has shown that being able to provide comprehensive services for those returning from an incarcerated state provides a better probability of reintegration and decreased recidivism rates (Smyth 2007).

Beyond Short-Term Remedies

One of the programs publicized by DOC as a way for communities to decrease recidivism, Redeploy, may in fact be impeding innovative strategies because of a financial penalty assessed if recidivism does not decrease by 25%. The bureaucratic operationalization and funding schemes for how supportive services are provided to criminal justice involved persons (including those with a current case, under court supervision, incarcerated, or on parole) was viewed by the Deputy Director of Court Services (from the same county as the State's Attorney) as products of "short-term thinking:"

Redeploy has grants offered by human services within the state and the purpose of it is to cut down on offenders being sentenced to DOC, just a way to move funding from DOC to probation, for communities, to keep people from being sentenced, so it's prevention and intervention...but, because there's no requirements on what it is, why the decrease? Is it jobs? Is it substance abuse? Is it anger management? Throw a stone and you can hit any of those things. How do we know that we are meeting the right need in terms of decreasing DOC commitment? ...and yet there's nothing in the state that says, "You know this program works - use this one." One of the problems has been that the state is behind in getting the dollars to the communities. So, that's been problematic. And if the programming is successful, sometimes, and you show that decrease and sustain that decrease, then you don't have a problem anymore, right? Because you have decreased your number of commitments to DOC, so then you are not eligible for funding anymore. "We don't need to fund you anymore, you solved your problems." They take your funding away and all your programs go away - you are too successful.

As the main funding sources for reentry services come from state and federal agencies, the government should be taking an active role in effective-practices assessment to determine the efficacy and professionalism of reentry service providers. While the cost-effectiveness of programs and services may be the main driving force

behind assessment, the government should also ensure that citizens who are formerly incarcerated persons are gaining the best chance possible at a second chance.

Concern over the lack of oversight and evidence-based practices in reentry work was voiced by Brian, a prison reform advocate:

I think part of that is just kind of a focus on failure. We need to balance that with a focus on what works and if we could fund that. I think on every level, tracking this sort of stuff. So much of criminal justice has always been about just throwing something against the wall. Maybe it sticks but then no one even watches if it sticks. They just do it. I think we need to experiment. We need to think outside the box but also kind of be very ... we should track what we're doing and fund what works and either modify or amend what doesn't work.

Community justice advocates have called for a commitment to restorative justice (reintegration of the offender into the community (through non-stigmatizing methods and cooperative, rather than coercive means) after making restitution and providing services to those harmed – typically including both the victim/s and the community at large (Lilly et al. 2007).

Changing Silos of Expertise into Networks of Collaboration

Currently, the array of organizations and governmental agencies that provide services to formerly incarcerated persons have contact with one another intermittently and on a “needs only” basis. This fragmented system allows for gaps in services to be unrecognized and unaddressed (Smyth 2007). Because services are decentralized and there is an absence of leadership, the result is a loose network of services and providers that a reentering person has to navigate, largely on their own. Bazemore and Erbe (2004) call for a transformation of the professional roles of parole officer (“rule enforcer”) and professional provider of services (“service broker”) to work in collaboration with the “natural helpers” of the community (faith-based organizations, schools, community

activists, and civic organizations) to marshal community resources to motivate and support the agency of the formerly incarcerated person in their reintegration efforts.

Public relations efforts are needed to increase involvement of the community at-large, to remind everyone that they are a stakeholder in the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals. Further, it is imperative for community members to see reentry programs and assistance as related to public safety, community development and stability, rather than charity. Bazemore and Erbe contend that when everyday citizens are left out of intervention and assistance strategies, feelings of distrust and concern can amplify into active opposition, ““if support comes from understanding, and understanding from involvement and participation, there should be little wonder that community attitudes about criminal justice often range from apathy to hostility.” (p. 34). What is needed is a reentry net or “system of reentry” made up of an array of services and providers under an umbrella organization building intra-agency coordination and collaboration (Smyth 2007).

Localizing Corrections and Reentry

Brian, a prison reform activist, sees the solution to the reentry challenges of small communities as structurally-focused – a systemic change in how convicted criminals are handled from the beginning. Brian contended that corrections should be handled most often at the county level, rather than at the state level. Therefore, the vast majority of criminals should be offered diversion programs, probation, or incarceration at the county level, thereby utilizing state prisons for the most serious crimes and those individuals

who pose an imminent risk to public safety. His contention that communities with the largest and loudest voices tend to be better heard by politicians is explained below:

To me, I think crimes occur on a local level, they don't occur on the state level. The final end of the justice system is to kind of put them on the state. Unless you have a decision maker who's from that area, then that's not where their [State Politicians] head is and there are limited resources. One thing I would like to see... we need to return the justice system to the local level. I think that would incentivize smart prison reduction. I think it would incentivize a better spending of money. Right now the justice system is essentially a way of transferring costs. I think that's one reason why you have such large prison provision. Once a person goes to prison; it's no longer the county's problem, until they come back. I think the reality is that no one designs these systems. They are put together piecemeal often without much forethought and then the status quo is a very powerful thing. I think the more we can return the criminal justice to the local, to the counties and make it a county responsibility, I think it would encourage much better policing, community correction, everything and maybe we can send the most high level offenders to the state level. Certainly, the bulk of the prison population can be much better managed at the local level.

Social service organizations which cater to the needs of parolees can hardly be useful if their services are not utilized. Therefore, any steps that can be taken toward increasing the probability of "service-seeking" by formerly incarcerated persons may influence reentry and eventually, reintegration. Having those services nearby to the parolee's home may positively influence usage because the effort and cost required to access those services is lessened. As Small (2009) remarked, "what is local is also convenient and therefore likely to be used (203)." The proximity of social service providers to public transportation is an additional benefit within the neighborhood context. In addition, the presence of service organizations that serve formerly incarcerated person close by are more visible (Hipp, Petersilia, and Turner 2010) and may be learned about through informal social networks.

Creating a Reentry Environment

Blessing, et al (2008) calls for the development of partnerships at both the cross-agency and cross-community levels. In terms of cross-community partnerships, already many of the formerly incarcerated who come to Westview for assistance from the social service organizations located there are from surrounding communities within the same county or even the inner-city. Westview cannot do it all – they must reach out to nearby communities to pool resources and experience. Frankly speaking, this community needs to initiate the partnership, and, given the past behavior of surrounding communities on the issue of reentry and social service provisions in general, those surrounding communities are comfortable with the way things are.

While the current federal, state, and city budget shortfalls are not a good starting point for reentry work, Brown and Severson (2011) claim that stressed finances can serve as opportunities for inmates to learn new skills within the criminal justice system, such as, inmates growing gardens for consumption within the prison. Looking at the fiscal crisis as an opportunity for innovation and collaboration will take strong leadership and a willingness to take political risk. Collaboration between governmental agencies and between social service providers to formerly incarcerated persons also increases the possibility for inventive programs and strategies. Developing relationships with both small and large business owners, who can provide “know how” and mentoring relationships with formerly incarcerated persons to start their own businesses, is a win-win relationship for the ex-offender, the tax base, and the community-at-large.

As most reentry services are done within the community, the management of reentry should be at the local level, as well, rather than at the state level (DOC and Division of Parole) where it is currently based. Travis and Petersilia (2001) recommend creating a community justice coalition or corporation supervised by a reentry court to negotiate the intra-agency interactions and coordination of service delivery. This approach would require the philosophical “buy-in” regarding the benefits of reentry at the city and county level. In Westview it would be crucial for the mayor to demonstrate strong leadership, as the city has four counties within its borders. In practical terms, this means cooperation of the members of several county boards, multiple county sheriffs, the police chief and the city aldermen.

Beyond Myths of Background Primacy and Color-Blind Reentry

Because this is a study on reentry, I initially thought that my inquiry would focus only on life after prison. However, the more interviews I conducted with parolees, the more convinced I became that I had missed step one in the inquiry process. Focusing primarily on reentry assumes that each person entering this “no-man’s land” of life between prison and a going back to society with the rest of us. Unfortunately, for many released prisoners, they were not a part of that larger society before they went to prison and had even less of a chance to connect with it post-release.

Re-entry’s a problem, but I don’t know that that’s where I would start. I would start with the absolutely miserable failure that is the war on drugs. If we put less people in prison, we’ve got less people we got to worry about re-entering. Instead of re-entry, why don’t we focus on non-entry? There is a lot of money in the Prison Industrial Complex, and there’s a lot of money if this is labeled as the solution in re-entry, especially if ... you’ve got for-profit companies, now, doing it too, which I guess that’s, I don’t know. I don’t know what I think about that, quite honestly. (Jason, Director of Our Home)

Stagman (2010) argues that for those who were socially and economically marginalized before prison, entry, rather than reentry, is the appropriate term. Reentry research has been criticized for placing a narrow focus upon evaluations of “what works” and an emphasis on developing a “disciplined” ex-offender, while ignoring the effects of economic changes and current race and class relations (Delgado 2012; Hallet 2011; Pinard 2010; Chin 2010).

Race and criminal background intersect to construct a comprehensive negative stereotype that includes the former offender and the location (community) in which they reside. Peck and Theodore (2008) decry the lack of individuality that the label of criminal causes. They write that in Chicago, because your zip code shows what side of Chicago you are from, it defines how you are seen by others. In Westview, there are three “sides of town” and each have distinct racial and class divisions. In fact, is it common upon learning that someone is from Westview, to be asked, “what side?” The majority of parolees in Westview resided on the eastside of the city - an economically depressed section which includes the downtown area. Further, the approach taken by reentry organizations, service providers, and corrections agents in Westview are based on the need for former offenders to change their mindset, to move away from criminogenic thinking and commit themselves to pro-social behavior. These “responsibilization strategies” are similar to drug treatment policies touting personal transformation (Garland 2001; Nixon et al 2008) and imply that formerly incarcerated persons need to “shape up” and try harder. Approaches based on this premise completely ignore the structural impediments to full social and economic participation for a person with a criminal

background. Furthermore, the infrastructure of the criminal justice, which was historically developed under racialized and politicized social forces, has not changed over time. Disregarding the effects of numerous structured inequalities on reentering individuals has the “politically comforting result” of race (and racism) becoming a non-issue.

The current reentry environment in Westview (and I would argue elsewhere) operates as if the criminal justice system is color-blind. For some of the stakeholders in this study, being asked questions about possible effects of racism or the topic of race itself resulted in narratives equating all formerly incarcerated persons simply because they were felons. While many recognize that there is racial disparity in the probability of being incarcerated, most do not acknowledge or reflect upon how distinct social contexts of race, experiences of racism, class, and cultural background shape attitudes, outlook, and behavior (Williams 2006; Cole 2008).

So, do race, ethnicity, and class matter? Do reentry providers recognize the additional obstacles faced by men of color, particularly poor men of color? Is the avoidance of “all things racial” impacted by the scarcity of reentry resources or a manifestation of color-blindness? I believe that the failure of providing necessary services is systemic and constitutes a concrete manifestation of the strength of the “disciplined self” ideology.

In both criminological research and public opinion, the social problems of criminal behavior, poverty, substance abuse, amongst others, remain firmly rooted in individual explanations. The individual is blamed both for creating the situation (bad

decisions, bad morals, poor work ethic, etc.) and for not striving hard enough to change themselves or their situation, regardless of the structural conditions of the job market and housing availability (Bowling and Phillips 2002). Bowling and Phillips (2002) maintain that “supposedly ‘pathological’ forms of behavior are functional adaptations to the reality of joblessness (p.60). Therefore, race is not an excuse (often referred to as “playing the race card”) for criminal behavior; rather, racism is a criminogenic risk-factor (Cole 2008). We must recognize that institutional level racisms persist and the cumulative effects of experiencing racism are part and parcel of the varied causal factors influencing contact with the criminal justice system. Institutionalized racism and classism are an undeniable part of the criminal justice system, yet the policies and programs developed to prevent criminal behavior, punish crime, and prevent recidivism largely do not acknowledge or contend with the effects of a racialized society (Cole 2008) or what Mears, Wang, Hay and Bales (2008) refer to as “adverse life experiences” (p.310). Racism is embedded in American social institution and endemic in the daily lived experiences of persons of color, particularly young, men of color. Incidences of racism create an environment of stress and frustration, increasing the probability of violent and antisocial behavior, criminal involvement, and behavior that causes self-harm (Williams 2010). Given the empirical evidence that race, ethnicity, and class are significant factors regarding the probability of engagement within the system criminal justice system, they must be an integral part of any reentry efforts.

Durrance and Williams (2003) argue that the social and cultural context that offending takes place in must be a part of treatment and reintegration efforts. The belief

that empowering offenders to better deal with the social problems and challenges occurring in their daily lives, through improving problem-solving, social skills, and coping techniques, and in particular, increasing “awareness of the way in which life experiences such as racism and cultural difference impact upon beliefs and feelings” (p.213). Maruna (2000) postulates that program interventions should be constructed to provide empowerment, confidence-building, training, and networking can increase probability of desistance. Additionally, providing a safe forum in which offenders can speak about issues of race and racism, identity, needs, self- development, and receive support for engaging in an analysis of themselves would be a new experience for many (Durrance and Williams 2003). Reentry programs must be appropriate to the cultural and gendered needs of the populations they serve (Zatz and Rodríguez 2006; Richie 2001). I find hope and innovation in the approach called for by Durrance and Williams (2003) wherein programming connects with real, lived experience (with mentors who have similar experiences) and it provides opportunities to work through “how offenders have come to where they are today and how they can move forward...realizing that they do have power and choices, and most importantly, that what they do has an impact on others, especially victims” (p.222). This empowerment approach is predicated on the work of Paulo Freire (1970) which theorizes that making changes to one’s behavior is built upon understanding the varied influences on that behavior and developing insight about how the social structure impacts one’s own human agency. Further, these programs can be utilized to improve coping strategies, develop a positive self-image, and provide a sense of hope for the future (Richie 2001).

Re-situating Formerly Incarcerated Persons as Community Resources, Not Burdens

One of the challenges of working with individuals and families, who are in need, is when the person in need becomes reduced to “the problem.” This occurs in hospitals where an individual, who has a name, a life story, and a medical need, is condensed down to their medical diagnosis or situation (ex. the “breast cancer” in room 4 and “gunshot” in room 5). Social service providers, public officials, everyday citizens, and academics who are concerned about reentry must guard against decreasing the humanity of the incarcerated and those who were formerly incarcerated, if they sincerely desire to create a system of reentry that will reduce recidivism rates, assist previously incarcerated individuals in their recovery, reconciliation, and reintegration. Developing social connections beyond their families, through attendance and involvement with faith communities, volunteering, and civic activities provide a path to increased commitment to the larger community and can assist in reintegration (Delgado 2012).

Instead of looking at former prisoners as costing the community, some argue that ex-offenders are a unique resource and, if given the opportunity, can be beneficial for the overall community (Delgado 2012; Blessing et al. 2008; Barton 2006; Burnett and Maruna 2006). The prospect of formerly incarcerated persons providing services and “giving back” to the community is a way to combat the constant barrage of negative media images of “once a con, always a con.” Local enterprises that focus their hiring and employee development on former prisoners can alter the mindset of members of the general public.

Those who have been through “the system” and reentry have insight and experiences that would add to the evaluative knowledge of how reentry is working and what needs to be developed, altered, or expanded (Morani et al 2011). In addition, formerly incarcerated persons who engage in civic leadership can help transform the milieu of the community regarding its response to youth who are at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system and serve as examples of what can happen when the community fosters opportunities, rather than the construction of barriers. The growth in “convict criminology” is a positive one and considering these unique voices in the field of criminology would be beneficial (See Nixon et al 2012 and Gideon 2010). Being a part of the process not only makes practical sense, it carries symbolic weight by showing respect for formerly incarcerated persons who have done what society has asked of them –serve your time, show remorse, change your ways and become a good citizen. This then needs to be followed up with society holding up their part of the social contract – truly allowing a second chance. How can we call the system a correctional one if the punishment is infinite?

For those currently in the correctional pipeline, reentry programs may hold some promise of assistance, however, at a macro-level, reentry should not be and cannot be the foundation upon which we attempt to re-construct criminal justice policies and programming. Diversion programs must be instituted and expanded at every level of the system. States and localities should provide incarcerated persons with educational and job training assistance during incarceration and provide direct referral and job-broker” assistance immediately following release if we truly desire to stop folks from “churning”

in and out of the system. Long-range thinking, political grit, and unfettered redemptive perspectives will be necessary to make reentry programs deserve their name.

Finally, it needs to be understood that reentry is not a panacea for the laws and correctional policies that have created mass incarceration, governmental funding constraints, and the persistent structural inequalities of American society. Reentry cannot make up for economic stratification, falling wages, segregation, racism, lack of affordable housing, unequal educational funding and quality, numerous social pressures on the family, and the violence, isolation, and despair experiences by residents of many communities. Reentry, on its best day, is a stop-gap measure that is more coping strategy than solution. Structural inequalities must be confronted and our challenge will be to develop coherent strategies at a national level to reduce poverty, ensure living-wages, provide equal educational opportunities regardless of zip code, and fight discrimination at every level.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR REENTRY
SERVICE PROVIDERS

The purpose of this interview is to discuss with you, in detail, your thoughts and opinions concerning the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons in your community. Your identity and the confidentiality of your answers will be safeguarded. Please let me know if you need to stop or would like to stop at any time. If you would prefer not to answer a question, just let me know.

Roles of Reentry Providers

How long have you been in this job/role?

Tell me about your work with formerly incarcerated persons in this community.

For instance, walk me through your work yesterday.

Tell me about a particularly difficult problem you recently dealt with.

Tell me about a former prisoner who did not encounter difficulties reentering this community.

Outlook on Reentry and Providing Services

What are your main sources of referrals for your reentry clients?

- DOC, other law enforcement agencies, other reentry providers, faith community, self-referrals
- Are formerly incarcerated persons aware of services available to them?
- How do they learn of these services? Any attempt to connect with them prior to release from prison?

What selection criteria does your organization have for selecting appropriate clients for your services?

What provisions are made for certain populations of formerly incarcerated persons? the young, those with mental illness, substance abuse, sex offenders, racial/ethnic groups. Are any policy initiatives currently in place or being planned to address the current challenges to providing services to formerly incarcerated persons?

- probe for transitional housing initiatives, affordable housing construction, policy changes regarding employment or housing restrictions for sex offenders, public housing construction?

What are the main sources of funding for your organization? Is continued funding attached to evaluation and efficacy of services?

Tell me about any new services or programs for formerly incarcerated persons that are in the planning and development stages

Regarding outcomes, what proportion of your clients successfully complete your program?

- define what success means for each program, length of each program
- proportion of formerly incarcerated persons who drop-out of your program?

What are the main difficulties in delivering reentry services to formerly incarcerated persons?

- Lack of funding, limited numbers/qualifications of staff, political obstacles, resistance of the community, “not in my backyard,”
- Availability/comprehensiveness of substance abuse treatment
- Continuity of substance abuse treatment from that in prison to that available upon release
- Continuity of mental health treatment/medication management from prison to that available upon release

Can you think of any unique challenges that formerly incarcerated persons encounter in this particular city?

- Probe regarding three distinct neighborhoods of the city separated by social class and race

In your opinion, what is integral to a former prisoner reentering successfully to this community?

- Probe for certain services, training, mindset of former prisoner, family support

Cooperative Reentry Strategies

What other organizations or specific persons does your organization work with to aid formerly incarcerated persons in this community?

- specific reentry providers, community activists, employers?

Give me an example of how the various agencies and government work together in setting policies and creating services for formerly incarcerated persons in this city?

- nature of the relationships between agencies, service providers, and government officials (cooperative or divisive).
- frequency of contact
- how is information shared between various groups working with formerly incarcerated persons?

Give me an example of collaboration between your organization and another group or government agency.

Tell me about the obstacles to cooperative partnerships between these various groups?

Give me an example of a missed opportunity to form a good partnership to benefit formerly incarcerated persons.

What are some opportunities for improving the collaboration and cooperation between these groups regarding the reentry environment?

In your view, what is the role of government officials in the reentry process for formerly incarcerated persons? Have there been any instances where you believe services to formerly incarcerated persons were blocked or restricted unnecessarily?

In your opinion, what priority does the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons have in the current administration of city government? State government? Why do you believe that is the case?

Solutions:

What, in your opinion, needs to change regarding services, allocation of resources, or policies regarding reentry?

- specific examples of what is not working, what is underfunded, overfunded, what services are not offered.

How would you define a successful reentry for a former prisoner?

THANKS AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of this interview is to discuss with you, in detail, your thoughts and opinions concerning the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons in your community. Your identity and the confidentiality of your answers will be safeguarded. Please let me know if you need to stop or would like to stop at any time. If you would prefer not to answer a question, just let me know.

Roles of Stakeholders

How long have you been in this job/role?

Tell me about your work with this community. For instance, walk me through your work yesterday, as it related to formerly incarcerated persons.

Tell me about a particularly difficult problem you recently dealt with.

Tell me about a former prisoner who wasn't a problem.

Is the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons as an important aspect of your job?

Describe how.

Have you received specific training or information to assist you in your role in the reentry process?

Describe the training.

- who provided this training or information?
- voluntary or mandatory participation

Outlook on Reentry and Obstacles to Reintegration

What, in your experience, have been the main obstacles to a former prisoner reentering society in this city?

- Probe regarding housing, employment, legal restrictions for employment and housing for particular offenders, education and skill sets of formerly incarcerated persons, family conflicts/personal stressors, coping skills of formerly incarcerated persons.

Are any policy initiatives currently in place or being planned to address these barriers?

- probe for transitional housing initiatives, affordable housing construction, policy chances regarding employment or housing restrictions for sex offenders, public housing construction?

Can you think of any unique challenges that formerly incarcerated persons encounter in this particular city?

- Probe regarding three distinct neighborhoods of the city separated by social class and race

Cooperative Reentry Strategies

How significant are the numbers of formerly incarcerated persons returning to or moving into your community? Are the numbers large enough to be an area of concern for you and your agency/organization?

What organizations or specific persons are you aware of that work with formerly incarcerated persons in this community?

- specific reentry providers, community activists, employers?

Are you aware of any organizations or individuals beginning reentry services prior to release from prison or only after release?

Tell me about the work that these persons or organizations do with formerly incarcerated persons?

What do you think of it?

Give me an example of about how the various agencies and government work together in setting policies and creating services for formerly incarcerated persons in this city?

- nature of the relationships between agencies, service providers, and government officials (cooperative or divisive).
- frequency of contact

Give me an example of how information is shared between various groups working with formerly incarcerated persons?

Tell me about the hindrances to cooperative partnerships between these various groups?

Can you think of any solutions to improving the partnerships between these groups regarding the reentry environment?

What do you see as the role of the general public regarding the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons?

- Do members of the general public attend meetings where policies affecting formerly incarcerated persons are discussed? Specific examples of times where a positive response has been made from the public regarding formerly incarcerated persons? Specific examples of negative response from the public?

In your view, what is the role of government officials in the reentry process for formerly incarcerated persons?

In your opinion, what priority does the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons have in the current administration of city government? State government? Why do you believe that is the case?

Solutions:

What, in your opinion, needs to change regarding services, allocation of resources, or policies regarding reentry?

- specific examples of what is not working, what is underfunded, overfunded, what services are not offered.

How would you define a successful reentry for a former prisoner?

THANKS AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EMPLOYERS OF
FORMERLY INCARCERATED PERSONS

The purpose of this interview is to discuss with you, in detail, your thoughts and opinions concerning the reentry of former prisoners in your community. Your identity and the confidentiality of your answers will be safeguarded. Please let me know if you need to stop or would like to stop at any time. If you would prefer not to answer a question, just let me know.

Roles of Reentry Providers

How long have you been in this job/role?

Tell me about how your work connects with former prisoners in this community.

What were the circumstances that led to your company hiring employees from work release or former prisoners?

(Philosophy behind the decision or economic decision)

Who began the practice?

How was it received by other employees? Upper management?

When did this begin?

How many former prisoners have been hired so far?

How many currently are employed by your company?

Outlook on Reentry and Providing Services

What are your main sources of referrals for your work release interviewees and employees?

- DOC, parole, other law enforcement agencies, reentry providers, faith community, word of mouth?

What selection criteria does your organization have for selecting appropriate work release employees for your business?

What are the benefits of hiring former prisoners?

- Tax incentives, etc?

What are the complications or “down sides?”

Tell me about a particularly difficult problem you recently dealt with regarding the hiring or employment of former prisoners?

Regarding outcomes, what proportion of your work release employee’s stay employed for 1 month? 6 months? Longer?

What are the main difficulties in hiring former prisoners?

Can you think of any unique challenges that former prisoners encounter in this particular city?

- Probe regarding three distinct neighborhoods of the city separated by social class and race

In your opinion, what is integral to a former prisoner reentering successfully to this community?

- Probe for certain services, training, mindset of former prisoner, family support

Cooperative Reentry Strategies

What other organizations or specific persons does your organization work with that impact former prisoners in this community?

- specific reentry providers, community activists, employers?

Give me an example of collaboration between your organization and another group or government agency.

Tell me about the obstacles to cooperative partnerships between these various groups?

Give me an example of a missed opportunity to form a good partnership to benefit former prisoners.

What are some opportunities for improving the collaboration and cooperation between these groups regarding the reentry environment?

In your view, what is the role of government officials in the reentry process for former prisoners?

In your opinion, what priority does the reentry of former prisoners have in the current administration of city government? State government? Why do you believe that is the case?

Solutions:

Can you think of any changes that need to be made that would benefit both employers and former prisoners reentering society?

How would you define a successful reentry for a former prisoner?

THANKS AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FORMERLY
INCARCERATED PERSONS

Before we begin, I want to thank you again for agreeing to this interview. The purpose of this interview is to hear about how your life has been since your release from prison. I am interested in your thoughts and opinions concerning your reentry from prison to this community. I am interested in your feelings and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. Your identity and the confidentiality of your answers will be safeguarded. Please let me know if you need to stop or would like to stop at any time. If you would prefer not to answer a question, just let me know.

Background Information:

How did you come to live in this community after your release from prison? Are you originally from this community? Do you have family living here?

While you were in prison, did you participate in any programs designed to help you prepare for life after prison? Please tell me about them.

Probe for GED, ESL, substance abuse treatment, job readiness, life skills, anger management, mental health counseling, release planning.

Can you tell me what getting out of prison was like for you in your first few weeks out?

Probe for specific incidents and interactions with others, as well as feelings (anxious, fear, excitement, etc.), plans for where they were going to live/with whom.

Did you feel prepared for getting out of prison? If so, what helped you feel prepared? If not, what was missing for you?

Probe for services, programs, contacts made with prison ministries, suggestions from other prisoners for reentry organizations, family contacts, etc.?

Were you aware of any organizations or programs that assist former prisoners? How did you learn about them?

Have you been able to support yourself since you were released?

If so, when did that happen and how?

If not, who do you rely upon for help?

What do you think your biggest needs were when you were released? What are they now?

Probe for housing, food, employment, identification, counseling services, transportation, medication, etc.

If interviewee has been to prison more than once:

What are the two most important/influential reasons you went back to prison on your most recent sentence?

Have services for reentry gotten better, are worse, or no change, since your first prison term?

Can you tell me a bit about your relationship with your parole officer?

Probe for relationship status: assistance or adversarial

Is your parole officer a resource for you in finding the services and assistance you need? Why do you think this is the case/or not?

Have any organizations helped you adjust to this community? Can you tell me about the services or assistance that you have received from them? How long have you been participating in those services?

Probe for: employment services

Drug/alcohol treatment

Anger Management treatment

Housing Assistance

Probe for how many places lived in since release

Transportation

Family conflict resolution services

Help w/ "the basics" of food, shelter, clothing, paperwork/I.D., toiletries, etc.

Are these services a parole requirement or did you seek them out yourself?

What have you found to be helpful? Why do you think that is? What was not helpful? Why do you think it was not helpful?

Has there been one person or organization that helped you the most to adjust to life after prison? Please tell me about them. Can you tell me specifically and in detail how they have helped you?

Has anyone had a negative influence on you since your release from prison?

Social Contacts:

Do you consider the neighborhood you are living in a safe one?

Do you have family and friends that you can spend time with and not worry about getting in trouble?

Social Interactions: participation in faith based activities: church, mosque, synagogue, etc.? Social club? Sports activities (recreational league, YMCA, etc.) or reentry group? How many hours per week do you participate in these activities?

Employment/Adjustment:

What job did you have before you went to prison?

What happened when you went to find a job?

Probe for concrete, specific experiences, stigma, and rejection?

Has your search been successful? If so, how long have you had this job?

Tell me about your job search since leaving prison.

Probe for details regarding where they applied, use of networking, concrete experiences with employers.

Has it been more or less difficult than you imagined? (How long did it take/is it taking?)

Was there any job that you wanted, but because you had a conviction you were not able to get that job? If this happened, how did you know that was the reason? What did you do?

Are there other times that you feel judged or labeled because you have a “background?”

Tell me about a particularly difficult problem you recently dealt with.

Can you think of any unique challenges that former prisoners encounter in this particular city?

Do you think being in prison has changed your life in any way? If so, in what ways? (What was lost/gained?)

Solutions:

In your view, what do you think the government (local, state, and/or federal) should be doing to assist formerly incarcerated people re-entering society.

What, in your opinion, needs to change regarding services, allocation of resources, or policies regarding reentry?

What advice would you give politicians, law enforcement, and decision-makers regarding services and assistance for formerly incarcerated people? Any improvements you would suggest?

Probe regarding half-way houses, transitional housing, opportunities to stay connected with family, employment, etc.

In your opinion, what is most important for a formerly incarcerated person to have a successful reentry in this community?

Probe for certain services, training, mindset of former prisoner, family support.

What advice would you give to formerly incarcerated people, like yourself, regarding reentering society?

What are your plans or goals for the future? Fears?

How would you define a successful reentry for a formerly incarcerated person?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

THANKS AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

APPENDIX E
DESCRIPTIONS OF PAROLEES

#1: Gonzalo is a 28 year old, Mexican-American man who is originally from Westview and most of his family still lives there. He has an 8th grade education, as he did not finish his freshman year of high school. He was an active gang member at the time of his incarceration and had previous contact with the justice system as a juvenile, but had never been incarcerated before. He briefly had a job as a forklift operator before being laid off and had been unemployed for a year prior to his incarceration. He was incarcerated at age 18 for 10 years. Gonzalo had been released from prison for two months when interviewed and was on electronic home monitoring. Upon release, he moved in with his sister and her young children. He considered moving to another place upon release, because he is a former gang member and is fearful for his life. With all of the complications of finding a place acceptable to parole though, he went with his family and is trying to save money to get his own place somewhere else. He has a 10 year old son with his former girlfriend. He currently has no visitation rights and has a conflictual relationship with his son's mother. He was not in a relationship at the time of the interview. He is no longer affiliated with a gang and was hired for a job as a forklift operator the day before he was interviewed. He was very thankful for the opportunity to tell his story and thanked me several times for interviewing him, saying, "Thanks for letting me speak up."

#2: Marcus is a 38 year old African-American man who grew up in the inner-city and moved to Westview over 15 years ago to be closer to his job. He graduated from High School and had completed one year of college before he could no longer afford to attend. He described his imprisonment as stemming from his drug dealing and eventual drug use, "It was just a spur of the moment thing, doing the wrong thing, wanting to be with the in crowd. The money looked good at the time. I eventually ended up getting into it and started getting high and stuff like that. It just tripled down the wrong road. Distribution, use and everything." He was a first time offender and served two years and two months in prison. Marcus had been released for two months at the time of his interview and was living with his fiancé, with whom he has a 9 year old son, and her 2 children that he considers his own. Before his arrest, he had worked full-time at a warehouse for six years, but was unemployed at the time of our interview.

#3: Jose` is a 26 year old, Mexican-American man who is originally from a southwest suburb. He paroled to Westview to the home of a family friend and is currently dating the sister of his housemate. He has no children. Jose` dropped out of high school at age 17 and earned his GED several years later. He was on probation for a prior case and was dealing drugs at the time of his arrest. He served 2 years in prison and had been released for 6 months at the time of his interview. He is currently employed at a lawn care service owned by a friend.

#4: Jayell is a 20 year old African-American who is from another western suburb. He has a twin brother and two other siblings and a large extended family. Jayell has a High School diploma and did not have a job prior to incarceration. He has a history of drug use and was incarcerated twice before this latest imprisonment, the first time when he was 17. He paroled to a transitional home in Westview operated by Second Chance Outreach

because his mother lives in Section 8 housing and he was not allowed to live with her and his Grandmother's house was filled with other family members. His father lives in a far western state and he wants to go live with him. Jayell was in prison for 5 months and then sent to the prison boot camp for 4 months. He received addiction treatment services during part of the time he was incarcerated for latest offense. He is not in a current relationship and has no children. Jayell had been released for 3 weeks at the time of his interview, was on electronic home monitoring and unemployed.

#5: Andrew is a 35 years old, White man who has lived in Westview since he was 21 and his mother lives there. He has been employed since graduating High School and was one semester short of obtaining a Bachelor's Degree when he was arrested. His sister committed suicide when he was 14 and he was the one who found her body. His father and that side of the family live in the South and are very wealthy, but he has had no assistance or contact with father since he was small, as his father never paid child support. His brother lives in the area and they have very little contact. Andrew has a history of alcohol and drug use and explained that, "I developed a taste for alcohol when I was in college and it just spiraled as it does with some people. I never intended on it happening. I never intended to become the black sheep of my family." He had been incarcerated before and most recently served 2 years for burglary, although he explained that it was because he wrote a bad check for \$25.00 to obtain cash for drugs. A few months before his release he found out that his mother has terminal cancer and he moved back to her home in Westview to help care for her. He lived with her for 4 months, but decided he had to get his own place because the stress of seeing her dying in front of him slowly every day was "too much to deal with." He sees his mother every day, but has his own apartment. He had been released for over 7 months at the time of our interview and had taken two of the required courses to become a certified alcohol and drug counselor (CADC) so far. He is not in a relationship and has no children. He is currently working part-time, intermittent hours for a landscape company owned by a friend.

#6: John is a 26 year old African-American man who has lived in Westview all of his life. His father's side of the family all live in the Westview area. His mother lives in another state. He paroled to his Grandmother's house and his brother lives there, as well. John was kicked out of High School for fighting his sophomore year and only completed the 9th grade. He has been in a relationship with his girlfriend for seven years, but was incarcerated for half of that time. He has no children. John was first sent to prison at age 19 with a 3 year sentence for shooting at someone. He has been incarcerated for a parole violation and his latest imprisonment was for 13 months for theft. John has never had a legal job; he has only sold drugs for his income. He had been released for 3 months prior to his interview and was unemployed.

#7: DeShawn is a 22 year old African-American man who was born and raised in Westview.

He paroled to his parents' home and his two younger sisters live there as well. His brother and extended relatives also live in Westview. DeShawn graduated from High School and was in college studying physical therapy at the time of his arrest. He had been dealing drugs for several years to pay for college after he lost his job. His cousin, who was dealing drugs with him, was the informant to police. His father, brother and several uncles have all been to prison as well. He was incarcerated for one year and had been released for over 3 months at the time of his interview. He has previous work experience in retail and warehouse work but was unemployed at the time of our interview.

#8: Willie is a 20 year old African-American man who was born and raised in Westview. He has a large, extended family all living in Westview. Willie dropped out of High School and earned his GED several years later. He attended a college in the inner-city and is certified to teach music and dance. He has been incarcerated four times in total and served one year for his latest offense. He paroled to his mother's home upon release but several months later he moved into his own place with his girlfriend and her two children. Willie and his girlfriend have been in a relationship for two years but were not in a relationship when their 9 year old daughter was conceived. He had been released for 8 months at the time of his interview. He is still gang affiliated and his family is largely gang affiliated. Willie is currently employed at his former employer as a drummer for recording studio.

#9: Tony is a 35 year old African-American man who is originally from Westview. He stated that he "ran in the streets" since the age of 11 and was affiliated with a gang in a large city from age 11 into his twenties. He dropped out of High School and has had no further education. Tony has been incarcerated four times in total, beginning at age 18 and again at age 21 for intent to murder. Most recently, he was admitted and released the same day because of time served awaiting sentencing for theft. He currently lives with his girlfriend, their 4 year old daughter, and his girlfriend's mothers. Tony has 2 year old son in another state that he has never seen because he was born while Tony was in prison and he currently can't leave the state because of home confinement. Prior to his latest incarceration, he was cleaning out houses in between tenants and was paid in cash "under the table." He had been released for 4 months at the time of his interview and was unemployed.

#10: Manny is a 37 year old Mexican-American who was born and raised in Westview. Both of his parents are deceased and he has six brothers, two in Westview and three live out of state. He dropped out of High School during his sophomore year. Manny currently lives with his girlfriend, their young son and his girlfriend's mother. He has a daughter with his former girlfriend, who lives in Westview and he has regular contact with his daughter. He has been to prison twice for DUI and has served time in city and county jail's for repeatedly driving without a license. His latest incarceration was for driving without a license and he served 8 months. Manny had been released for 3 months at the time of his interview. Prior to his incarceration, he worked for cash at an "under the

table” job paying houses. He would like to complete his GED and become a diesel mechanic but was unemployed at the time of our interview.

#11: Chris is a 23 year old African-American man who originally is from Westview. He dropped out of High School but earned his GED shortly thereafter and was attending community college when he was arrested. Before his incarceration, he was living on his own in a neighboring suburb. He paroled to his mother’s home in Westview. Chris has 2 young children of the same age with different mothers. His current girlfriend is the mother of his son and he sees his daughter regularly, as she lives with her mother in Westview. Chris was working full-time at a retail store when arrested, but was also selling drugs at the time. He had been released for 5 weeks at the time of his interview and was unemployed.

#12: James is a 33 year old African-American man who grew up in several suburbs and was living in the metropolitan area at the time of his arrest. He dropped out of High School in his junior year while living in the northwest suburbs and earned his GED several years later. He has four siblings and two live in the state. He paroled to his mother’s apartment in Westview where his sister and her teen son are also living while his sister recovers from a stroke. James has been incarcerated twice; the first time was 10 years ago. For his latest offense, he was able to be admitted and released the same day. He stated that he has had a drug addiction for 10 years and was homeless and unemployed for over 6 years. He has bounced between shelters, homes of family members and the streets for the past 10 years. He was not in an intimate relationship at the time and has no children. James had been released for over 5 months at the time of his interview and was unemployed.

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