

**From Prison to Home:  
The Effect of Incarceration and Reentry on  
Children, Families and Communities**

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**Incarceration, Reentry and Social Capital:  
Social Networks in the Balance**

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### **Abstract**

Reentry may be thought of as a community-level process when it occurs in high concentrations. The concepts of social capital and collective efficacy have been used to explain the production and maintenance of disadvantage and its consequences. This paper considers the implications of reentry for social capital and collective efficacy, through its impact on families and other neighborhood collectives and institutions, in neighborhoods that experience concentrated levels of reentry. We show how reentry may affect social capital and collective efficacy either positively or negatively, depending upon how ex-offenders, family members, and neighbors react to reentry problems as they arise. The ramifications of these effects for children are also described. We conclude with a description of approaches to supporting the reentry process that promise to strengthen social capital and collective efficacy.

Estimates of the number of individuals scheduled for release this year from state and federal prisons hover around 600,000 (Travis, Solomon and Waul 2001). While current concern about the transition of offenders from prison to the community focuses on preventing recidivism, an equally important consideration is the process of reuniting released prisoners with their families and, in particular, with their children.

A 1993 survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that 2/3 of incarcerated women and more than 1/2 of incarcerated men are parents of children under the age of 18. This means that approximately 1.5 million children have an incarcerated parent (Bloom 1993; Johnston 1995). Studies show that while some children benefit from the incarceration of a parent, most also experience some degree of harm. Effects include both emotional and behavioral problems and losses of human and social capital. As a result, the collateral consequences of incarceration are particularly great for children (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999).

Due to the spatial concentration of incarceration, certain neighborhoods are impacted more than others by the removal and return of offenders. This means that children are affected not only by incarceration in their own homes but also by incarceration in the community-at-large. As Case and Katz (1991) note, in some neighborhoods children "...are more likely to know someone involved in the criminal justice system than to know someone who is employed in a profession such as law or medicine" (cited in Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999). Consequently, even those children who do not experience the direct incarceration of a parent, still experience the collateral consequences of incarceration.

The current focus on individuals and their propensity towards recidivism overlooks the cumulative impact of incarceration and reentry when it is clustered in concentrated areas. Recently, (Rose and Clear 1998) we theorized that the aggregate impact of incarceration and reentry would destabilize neighborhoods by increasing levels of disorganization. Working from a social disorganization theory framework, we argued that coercive mobility (the dual processes of incarceration and reentry) disrupts the social networks which are the basis of informal social control. Therefore, in our view, concentrated coercive mobility damages neighborhoods because it diminishes available levels of social capital and collective efficacy.

Here, we explore the aggregate impact of offender reentry on community levels of social capital and the effect this has on children living in these areas. Because the impact of incarceration is complex, simultaneously touching individual offenders, their families and the neighborhoods in which they live, it follows that the impact of reentry will be similarly complex. Neighborhoods which sustain heightened levels of incarceration will be the same areas that undergo elevated levels of reentry. The implications of this are unclear. Will these communities be disadvantaged further by the subsequent reductions in human and social capital that result from the incumbent recidivism and increase in residential mobility associated with ex-offenders returning home? Or, will they benefit from the opportunity to strengthen social networks made possible by reentry? For children living in these areas the answer is crucial.

To address these questions, we rely on the concepts of social capital and collective efficacy. Drawing upon recent research from a series of focus group and individual interviews in two high incarceration neighborhoods in Florida, (Rose, Clear and Ryder 2000) we consider the relationship between reentry and social capital and the relationship between reentry and collective efficacy. Then, we discuss the unique ways in which reentry is expected to impact children living in high incarceration neighborhoods. We conclude with policy recommendations, and a review of sample programs intended to offset some of the collateral consequences of reentry for community stability in general and for children in particular.

## **Neighborhoods, Social Capital and Collective Efficacy**

Individualistic public policies that focus solely on offenders overlook the importance of neighborhoods. Local areas are important to consider when we think about the impact of incarceration and reentry because they provide the environments that contextualize the lives of offenders and non-offenders alike. As such, they provide opportunities and constraints to both normative and non-normative behavior.

The neighborhood as a unit of analysis is nothing new to researchers interested in the spatial concentration of crime. The broken windows thesis (Wilson and Kelling 1982), for instance, puts forth the idea that major crime occurs in areas characterized by signs of disorder because

these send the signal that resident apathy has resulted in low levels of social control. Similarly, social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942) centers on the idea that some communities experience more crime than others because of qualities of the neighborhood rather than qualities of the individuals who live there. From this perspective, characteristics such as aggregate poverty, joblessness, single parent families and others, are thought to impact community structure by reducing the capacity of informal social control so that crime flourishes.

Merging social disorganization and systemic theories, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) highlight the importance of networks and associational ties for social control. Private, parochial and public control, they argue, are the byproduct of these networks within the family, within the community and between the community and the broader society. Thus, in their view, neighborhood safety is achieved by effective networks working at all three levels.

### *Social Capital*

Recently, theorists have been exploring the concept of social capital and its relationship to neighborhood-levels of crime and disorder. Although there seems to be consensus that social capital contributes to the quality-of-life of a neighborhood, researchers have had a difficult time defining it. For instance, Coleman (1990) first defined social capital as a form of social organization that, “makes possible the achievement of certain ends,” (p. 302). Subsequently, Portes (1998, p. 6) has defined social capital more in terms of the benefits secured by membership in social networks and Putnam (1993) has defined it as the “features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 36). Social capital then, is *a byproduct of social relationships that provides the capacity for collective understanding and action*. Social capital is important for neighborhoods because it is the resource residents need to realize their collective goals: reduced crime, increased supervision of children, the accumulation of new resources, etc.

In an attempt to clarify social capital and to assess its importance to social policy, Forrest and Kearns (2001) identify eight domains of social capital. Social capital, they argue, is composed of the following: *empowerment* (when residents feel they have a voice, are involved in processes that affect them and can take action to initiate change); *participation* (in social and community activities so local events are well attended); *associational activity and common purposes* (cooperation which results in the formation of formal and informal groups to further collective interests); *supporting networks and reciprocity* (individual and organizational cooperation to support mutual and one-sided gain and an expectation that help is available if needed); *collective norms and values; trust* (both between co-residents and between residents and local organizations); *safety* (resulting in no restrictions of public space due to fear); and *belonging* (where people feel connected to each other, their home area and feel they belong to the place and its people) (p. 2140).

A growing body of research demonstrates the importance of social capital as a factor in various community processes including crime. Although, Coleman thought of social capital as a factor in the structural environment of neighborhood, as Sampson, Morenoff and Earls (1999) note, social capital often has been conceptualized and measured as an individual level phenomenon (p. 634). It is important to differentiate between structural- and individual-level affects because they are distinct processes. Individuals and the collectives in which they are embedded each can have varying amounts of social capital. While the level of social capital in the environment influences considerably the amount of individual-level social capital (and vice versa) they need not be the same. For instance, one can imagine an individual living in a neighborhood rich in social capital who, because of relative social isolation, has comparatively low levels of social capital personally. Alternatively, an individual with abundant social capital might reside in an area with few such reserves. In the former case, the individual benefits from the community's potential for collective action even if he does not contribute anything; in the latter he is less capable of making a significant change in the community even though he has the personal resources, because the collective supplies of capital are missing. Thus, regardless of their individual level of social capital, individuals are influenced by the community-level social capital in which they live.

For children, the link between individual- and community- levels of social capital is important. The lives of children are centered more on the neighborhood than are the lives of adults because their families, their friends, their schools, etc. are in one area. While this is true for some adults, particularly those living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, many adults are influenced by multiple contexts because they live in one environment, work in second, and socialize in yet a third. Furthermore, because children are in the process of acquiring all their skills and resources, deficits in one area are likely to contribute to deficits in another area. Research has shown social capital to be important for children, particularly in the area of educational attainment. Thus, social capital influences levels of human capital.

### *Collective Efficacy*

Morenoff, Sampson and Raudenbush (2001) recently argued that neither social capital nor strong ties reduce crime. Rather, they emphasize the importance of collective efficacy in community social control. Collective efficacy is defined as *the combination of trust and cohesion with shared expectations for control* (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997). Social capital, in this view, is the resource potential or capacity for action produced by personal and organizational networks, whereas collective efficacy is the process of activating or converting social ties to achieve desired outcomes (Sampson, Morenoff and Earls 1999). The distinction between social capital and collective efficacy is important because it enables us to differentiate between the conditions that produce social networks (and social organization) and the conditions that produce the actualization of those networks. In other words, it enables us to differentiate between the potential for action and the realization of action.

Recent research shows that collective efficacy reduces crime. For instance, Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) find not only that collective efficacy reduces rates of violent crime, but that it mediates some of the effects neighborhood disadvantage and residential instability have on crime. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) also find that collective efficacy and violent crime are reciprocally, negatively related. Morenoff, Sampson and Raudenbush (2001) find local organizations, voluntary associations and social ties promote collective efficacy that, in turn, directly reduces homicide variations across neighborhoods in Chicago. (For a complete description of the research on collective efficacy see Sampson 2001.)

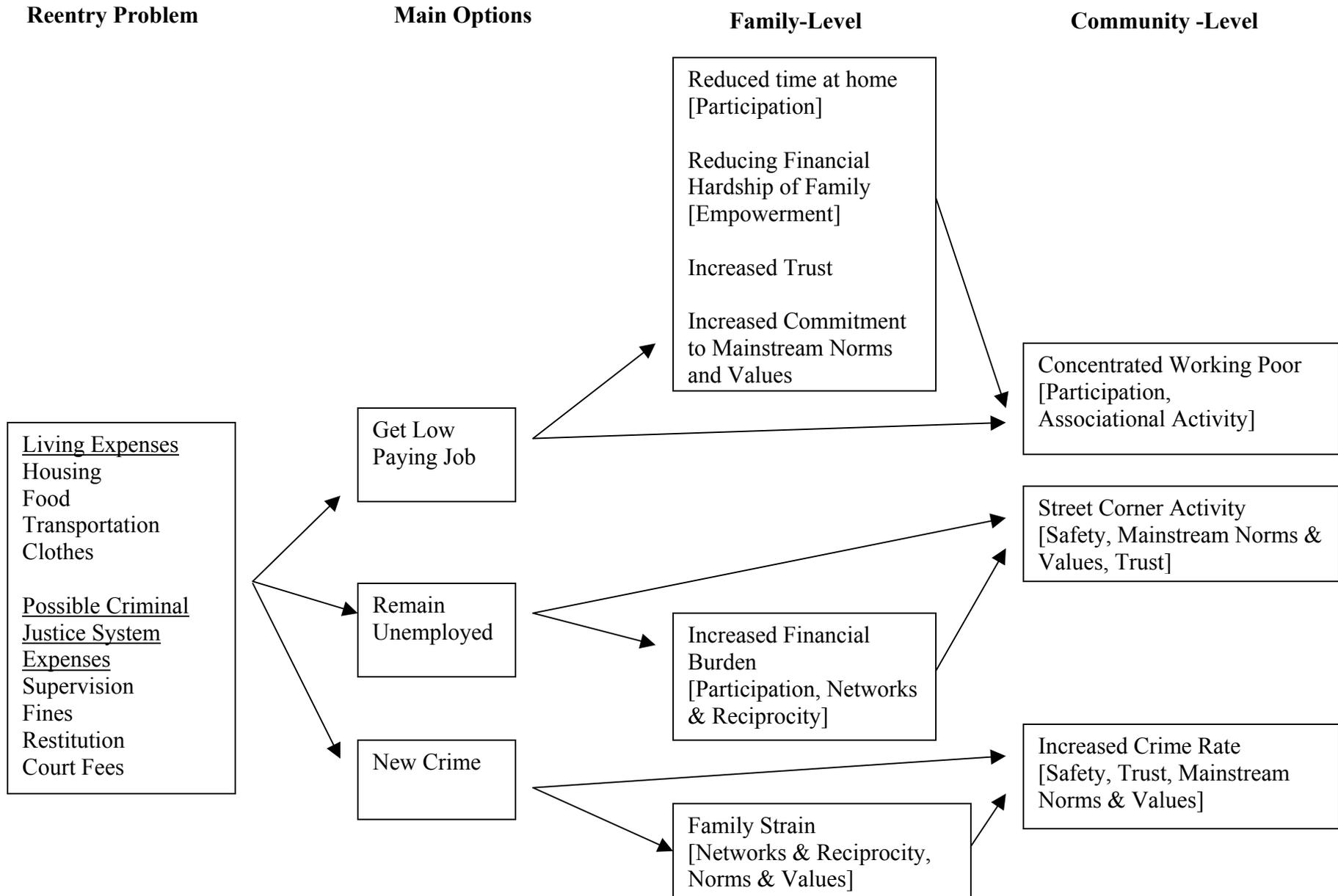
## **Social Capital, Collective Efficacy and Reentry**

There is growing evidence that one aggregate effect of coercive mobility is increased crime. Two recent studies find that incarceration increases crime at the neighborhood-level (Rose, Clear, Waring and Scully 2000; Lynch, Sabol, Planty and Shelley 2001). Rose et al. (2000) also find that reentry increases crime. While the linkage between incarceration, reentry and crime is unclear, it is likely that the intervening mechanism is the disruption of networks, including weakened families and other institutions in the community (Rose, Clear, Waring, Scully 2000; Lynch, Sabol, Planty and Shelley 2001). However, the truth is we know very little about how reentry impacts social capital and collective efficacy. Partly this is because these resources have only begun to be the object of scholarly attention and partly it is because considering (incarceration and) reentry as a neighborhood phenomenon is relatively new. In the following two sections we draw from our study in two high incarceration neighborhoods in Florida to consider the relationship between reentry and social capital and the relationship between reentry and collective efficacy. In doing so, we extrapolate from what we know about social capital and collective efficacy generally, and from what we know about how these resources and process of incarceration and reentry impact neighborhoods and children in general.

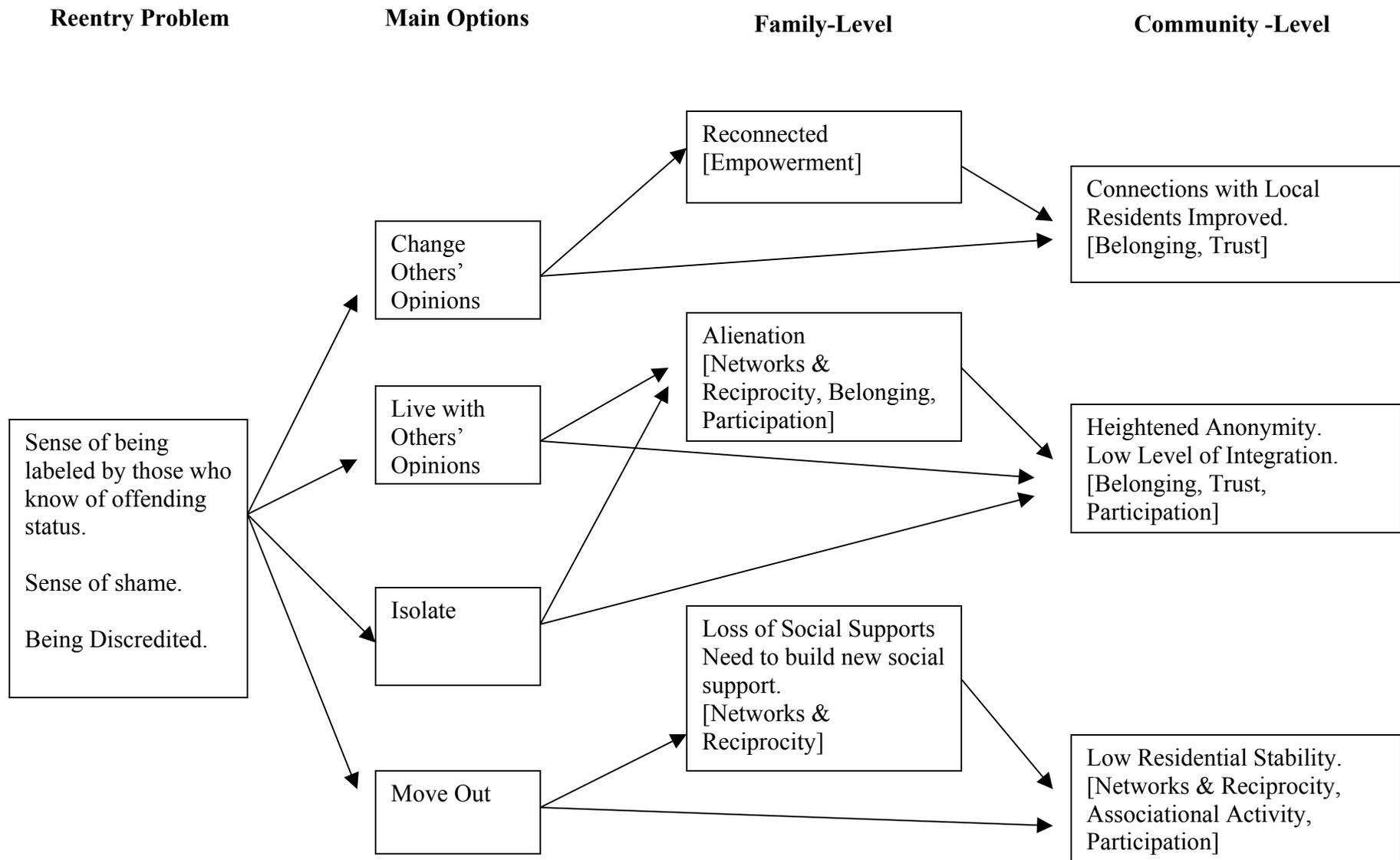
### *Reentry and Social Capital*

In a recent report (Rose, Clear and Ryder 2000) we identified some of the ways residents living in areas characterized by high concentrations of coercive mobility thought they, their families and their communities were affected by the processes of incarceration and reentry. Through thematic content analysis we identified four domains that characterize these effects: financial, stigma, identity and relationships. Here we summarize how reentry influences these domains and then extend our earlier work by focusing on how these domains, in turn, impact social capital using Forrest and Kearns' (2001) components of social capital as a framework. (See Rose, Clear and Ryder 2000 for a review of the data and methods and for an extended discussion of the findings.) Figures 1-4 show these effects.

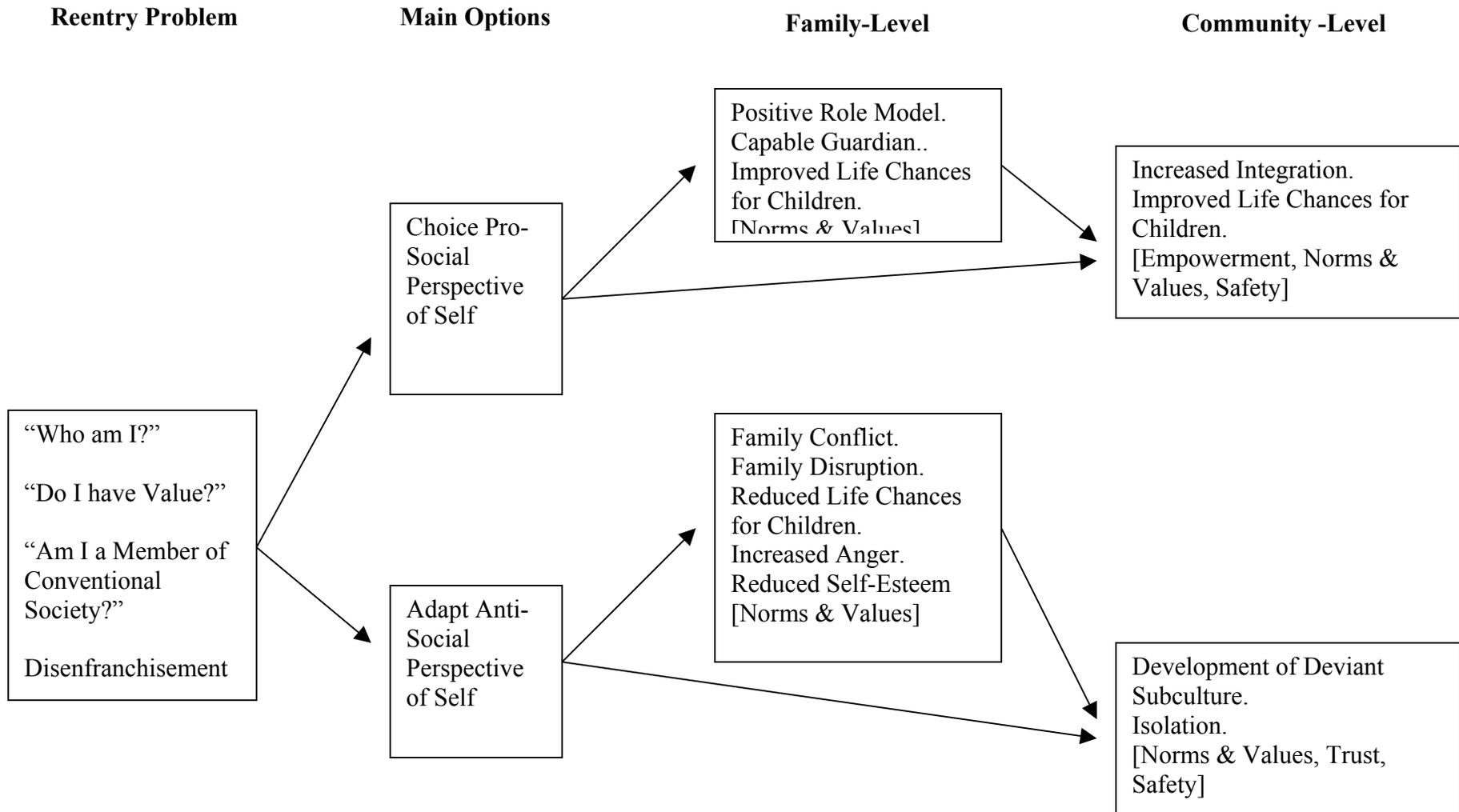
**Figure 1: Social Capital and the Financial Effects of Reentry**



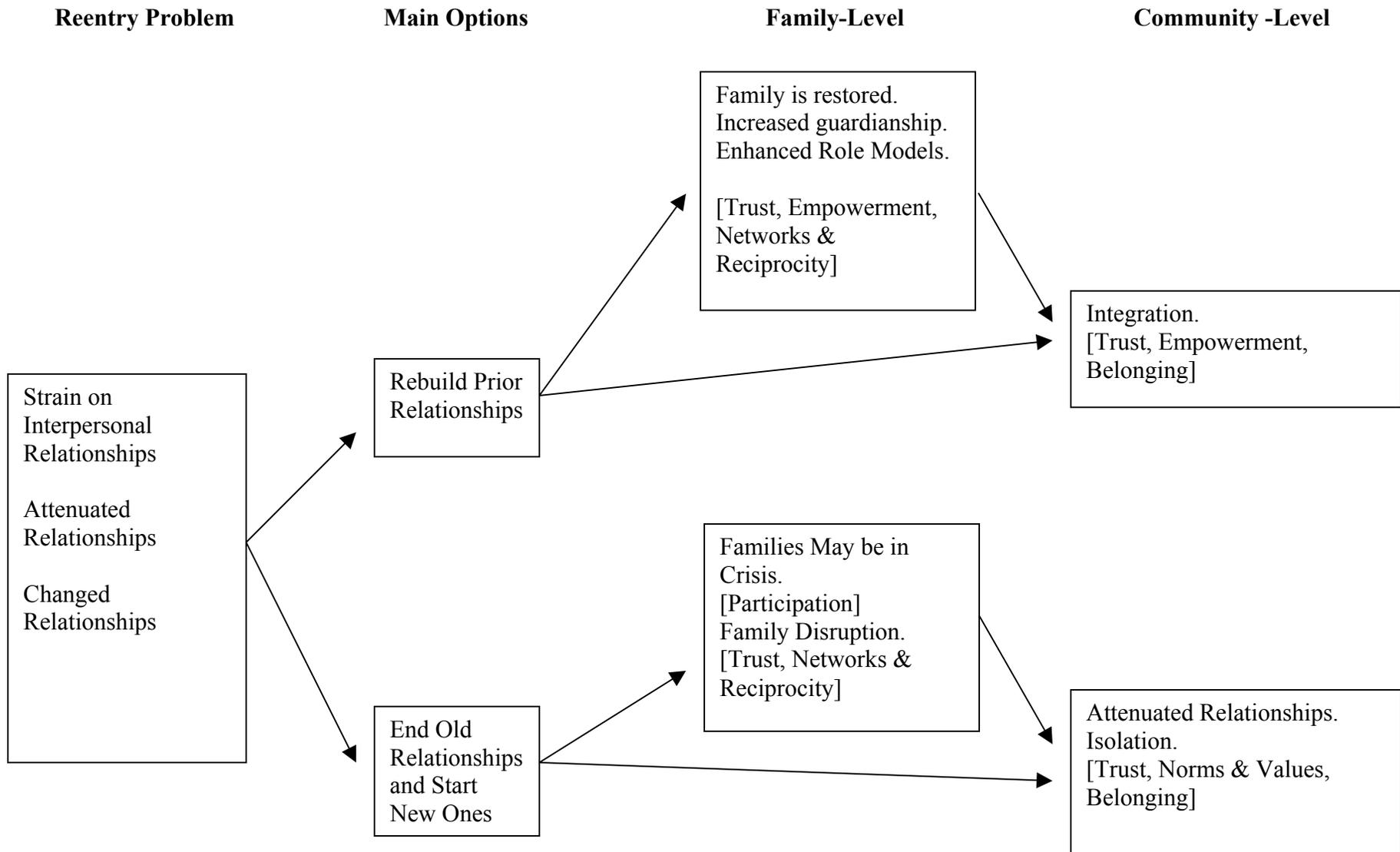
**Figure 2: Social Capital and the Stigma Effects of Reentry**



**Figure 3: Social Capital and the Identity Effects of Reentry**



**Figure 4: Social Capital and the Relationship Effects of Reentry**



### *Reentry Problem: Finances (Figure 1)*

By far the most important effect of coercive mobility is financial. Ex-offenders return to the community with limited financial resources but many financial needs. Not only do they need the fundamental means for survival (food and shelter) they regularly need money for new clothes, transportation and, frequently, for criminal justice costs too. Upon their return to the community, these individuals have three financial choices: find a job, remain unemployed, return to crime. Jobs available to ex-offenders tend to be low-paying and highly unstable. Ex-offenders we interviewed who had found jobs spoke of being offered too few hours, meaning they did not qualify for benefits, thus requiring they hold more than one job. Most, however, unable to find employment, opted for unemployment. Unemployed individuals typically relied upon their families for financial support. As a result, families experienced additional financial strains. Financial hardship reduces the level of civic participation and also may undermine the ability for successful association activity and common purpose. It also can reduce the ability of neighborhood residents to provide assistance to their neighbors, thus reducing the capacity for supporting networks and reciprocity.

One byproduct of large-scale unemployment experienced by high incarceration neighborhoods is the increase in men congregating on street corners, oftentimes near, or in front of, local stores. This has two effects. First, shop owners report fewer legitimate customers willing to shop. Second, the appearance of disorder means customers from outside the neighborhood are reluctant to frequent stores within the neighborhood and outside investors do not see these neighborhoods as places to establish businesses. Fewer employers mean fewer jobs for ex-offenders and residents alike. Duneier (1999) shows the importance of work for building self-esteem and for keeping individuals tied to mainstream norms and values. Thus, at the community-level, aggregate unemployment may be impeding the development of collective norms and values.

Finally, ex-offenders may return to crime to resolve their financial needs. In the aggregate this reduces community safety. To the extent it makes residents fearful, it also reduces community-level trust.

### *Reentry Problem: Stigma (Figure 2)*

Offenders in transition report a sense of being stigmatized by their communities and fellow residents. Their families report similar feelings. They sense that they are labeled as “bad” or otherwise flawed by those living near them. Dealing with stigma offers four possibilities. Those who feel stigmatized may: (1) actively try to change the others’ opinions, (2) go on about their business, heedless of these opinions, (3) isolate from others who judge them, or (4) move to a new community and start over.

Effectively changing the opinions of others has positive implications for social capital. When neighbors form an improved opinion, as our respondents reported they are ready to do if the person's behavior warrants this change, it promotes a renewed sense of reconnectedness within the family and between the family and the community. This would enhance both belonging and empowerment domains of social capital, as both residents and ex-offenders learn they can influence one another's beliefs and mutually share a sense of connection. It also would enhance a sense of trust among members of the community.

The other options for dealing with stigma have less positive implications for social capital. Either ignoring one's neighbors in daily business or isolating from them promotes a sense of alienation. Our respondents reported that those who are stigmatized avoid contact with others, stop participating in social functions such as church services, and look upon their neighbors with distrust and foreboding. This would undermine a feeling of belonging both for ex-offenders and for residents; each of whom is trying to cope by withdrawing from community life. As residents withdraw further from each other participation in community activities diminishes (Skogan 1990), crime increases and trust erodes.

Finally, ex-offenders have the option of moving to a new neighborhood entirely. Indeed, while some ex-offenders reported their success was due to the help they received from family members when they moved back to the old neighborhood, some attributed their success to their decision to move to a new environment altogether. Family members discussed moving as a strategy they sometimes employed in anticipation of a loved one's return from prison as a way of enhancing the likelihood of successful reentry. Moving has its downside however. It can be expensive and it means people are farther from social supports. Consequently, supporting networks and reciprocity are negatively impacted by moving. New residents diminish, at least temporarily, the ability of communities to establish associational activity and common purpose.

### *Reentry Problem: Identity (Figure 3)*

Incarceration impacts how both offenders and their families feel about themselves. It also effects how residents in high incarceration neighborhoods perceive themselves and the communities in which they live. Our respondents reported that ex-offenders often make a positive change in their self-perceptions and sometimes, residents believed, these changes could not have happened without the individual serving a prison sentence. Positive changes in offenders have the potential to improve social capital in a few ways. Maruna (2001) has shown that when ex-offenders try to succeed, they rebuild a sense of their "personal narrative," and adopt a revised version of their life story, one which reinterprets life events and personal priorities in potentially pro-social ways. Ex-prisoners who want to "make good" are thus a considerably positive potential resource for communities. They can serve as positive role models, enthusiastic social participants (if newly so) and advocates for conventional values in a

setting where such a voice may not typically be heard. Likewise, men who reenter their communities are untapped potential resources for voluntary participation in civic organizations, economic participation in local priorities, and other types of social network supports. Our study shows that residents concur: ex-offenders can make a positive contribution to the neighborhood if they have changed and can communicate that change to others (particularly to children). Moreover, the presence of a larger number of pro-social adults increases collective norms and values. One outcome of diminished empowerment stems from lowered levels of voting. Studies of disenfranchisement (Human Rights Watch and The Sentencing Project 1998) resulting from felony convictions have found that upwards of 2 million African American males cannot participate in electoral politics as a consequence of felony convictions. This is perilous to the sense of empowerment in certain neighborhoods where, perhaps, a significant number of males cannot vote.

While members of high incarceration neighborhoods frequently call for more crime control in their communities, there also are mixed feelings about the relationship between residents and the police and the criminal justice system in general. Reentry exacerbates these feelings as ex-offenders are returned to communities where residents have little say in the process. Other research (Clear and Rose 1999) demonstrates that when people who know someone who has been to prison have a low assessment of formal social control they also are likely to have a low assessment of informal social control. Yet, the opposite relationship is true for those who do not know someone who has been to prison. Thus, alienation produced by the criminal justice system can result in lessened safety.

Finally, the identities of residents of the community-at-large are impacted by high levels of coercive mobility because they, and others outside the community, identify them as coming from a “bad” neighborhood. Our respondents reported this translated into residents withdrawing from mainstream society, feeling their options were limited and life chances diminished. For children, this reduced their stake in conforming to collective norms and values. The knowledge that others thought less of them because of where they lived also meant residents were inclined to believe government officials did not care about them or their neighborhoods and that persistent racism was the true cause of conditions found in the neighborhood. In addition, residents in high incarceration neighborhoods report that as their neighborhood develops a reputation as a place for returning offenders to reside, other “undesirable” people (such as the homeless) migrate there as well. The consequence of high levels of ex-offenders and other transients is diminished feelings of safety in the neighborhood. Finally, while many residents took pride in their neighborhood, others expressed a desire to leave, indicating a low level of belonging.

### *Reentry Problem: Relationships (Figure 4)*

By first removing people from the neighborhood, incarceration interferes with local social networks by disrupting marriages, families, and friendships. For instance, women often are incarcerated too far from families for frequent visits by their children. Furthermore, some women report not wanting to feel close to their children because they fear being relocated to a facility even farther away (O'Brien 2001). Reentry also can impact supporting networks and reciprocity negatively. Upon reentry, ex-offenders are faced with the task of piecing together their lives. While often this entails finding shelter, obtaining employment, and other necessities, it also is a period when individuals need to repair relationships with family members. O'Brien (2001) finds this is particularly important for women whose mothers may have looked after their children while the women were incarcerated. This can be a difficult task, especially for individuals who may have victimized family and friends (Rose, Clear and Ryder 2000). Sometimes, upon reentry, individuals may find their families have moved or are not welcoming to them (Fleisher and Decker 2001). Women who became independent in their husband's absence may not welcome returning to their former role in the household (Fishman 1983).

Our research shows that, while family and friends may be glad to be reunited with those who have been gone, the social networks suffer another strain: trying to figure out how to reincorporate into the relationship ex-offenders who themselves are relearning how to be "husbands" and "fathers." This is true particularly when a spouse has moved on to another relationship but the returning ex-offender wants to be reunited with his children.

At the micro level, severed ties make it difficult for individual ex-offenders to reenter community life. Without social networks in place ex-offenders have little social support to draw upon during the transition process. Often, however, ties to former friends and gang networks are easily reestablished (Fleisher and Decker 2001) increasing opportunities for re-offending. At the macro level, communities characterized by multiply severed ties produce lower levels of collective efficacy.

Reentry poses ex-offenders and their families with a challenge: whether or not to rebuild the relationship. Rebuilding the relationship means relations can be restored, resulting in enhanced levels of trust and empowerment, both within the family and within the community-at-large. Choosing not to rebuild, however, impacts levels of trust, norms and values and an overall sense of belonging.

As a result of reentry, then, networks and reciprocity are negatively influenced. While many residents reported they would offer assistance to their fellow church members who might be experiencing the incarceration of a loved one (a supportive action), many also said that ex-offenders would have to prove their worthiness before assistance (and interaction) would be offered.

Research is lacking on the way these potential positive and negative impacts pan out in practice. More to the point, there is almost no basis for saying with confidence how the potential negative impacts might be suppressed and the positive ones augmented. The presence of ample supplies of social capital in the neighborhood does not guarantee that residents will benefit. In fact, Sampson, Morenoff and Earls (1999) point out that social capital can be used for negative as well as positive outcomes (p. 636). The “networks, norms and trust” at the heart of Putnam’s (1993) definition of social capital, for instance, can either foster or inhibit criminal activity. To the extent that returning ex-offenders maintain ties with former “colleagues” pockets of social capital may be enhanced or maintained, but in ways that do not benefit the community. Indeed, Fleisher and Decker (2001) make this point when say it is unrealistic to expect ex-offenders to sever ties to gangs because forgoing social capital investments increases their social isolation and reduces the amount of social support available to them (p. 71).

In sum, reentry in high incarceration neighborhoods is an important factor in social capital. Many assume that children benefit from the removal of a criminal (perhaps violent) parent from the home (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999; Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza 2001). It follows that these children would not benefit from the return of their parent. Yet, children feel the loss of their parent and typically want that person home (Fishman 1983). More contact with families during incarceration predicts lower recidivism (Johnson, Selber and Lauderdale 2001) but little is known how the reunion impacts the family.

The way reentry affects the components of social capital translates into effects upon children. The sense of “empowerment” felt by children who live in a particular place is influenced, for example, by the way they perceive adults dealing with their sense of power. Likewise, feelings of “belonging” are influenced by the degree to which local institutions are perceived as inviting of participation and involvement. Adults who disdain participation, as those who are disenfranchised or those who feel stigma might be expected to do, will not model civic participation nor feelings of membership in the community. The manner in which ex-offenders return to their communities is also important. Those who fail to reconnect pro-socially with their social networks (especially their families) represent a missed opportunity for adult supervision of children and adolescents. In missing this opportunity to strengthen family units, they leave these units weakened as sources of social capital for the children who live within them. For children, the process of adult reentry from prison is an opportunity for reinvigoration of the family unit that may, when missed, evidence itself more by what does not happen than what does.

### *Reentry and Collective Efficacy*

In a direct test of the relationship between incarceration and collective efficacy Lynch et al. (2001) find that incarceration decreases participation in voluntary associations and decreases feelings of community solidarity. While they also find that incarceration marginally increases

participation in informal social control (the willingness to intervene in neighborhood burglaries and rowdy teens) the positive effects of incarceration are much smaller than are the negative ones. Lynch et al. (2001) interpret their findings to mean that incarceration weakens the organizational life of the community at the same time that it “taints” the area for those who remain. Thus, in their opinion, “Coercion may solve one problem in the short term but create others in the longer term, “ (p. 30).

While the impact of reentry on collective efficacy has yet to be determined, we can speculate by contemplating how reentry would impact its component parts: shared expectations for informal social control and social cohesion and trust. Recently, Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) measured shared expectations for informal social control by asking residents how likely they thought it would be that their neighbors would take action if children were skipping school and hanging out on the corner; spray painting graffiti on a local building; showing disrespect to an adult; if a fight broke out in front of their house; and if the fire station closest to their home was threatened with budget cuts (p. 620). In addition, they measured social cohesion and trust by asking respondents how strongly they agreed that: people in their neighborhood were willing to help neighbors; the neighborhood is close-knit; people in the neighborhood can be trusted; if people got along or if neighborhoods shared the same values (p. 620).

Reentry might be expected to impact each of the components for both dimension of collective efficacy. Ethnographers of poor neighborhoods have repeatedly described how the absence of men (and male role models) has played a role in unsupervised adolescents, especially boys and young men (Kotlowitz 1991). Much as Skogan (1990) found that crime encourages citizens to withdraw, our research found that families of prisoners also withdraw. This paints a picture of spiraling effects of crime and criminal justice, working together to produce a community increasingly more isolated and less engaged in one another's lives. Collective efficacy is clearly damaged by crime, but it may also be damaged by high concentrations of ex-offenders who are inclined to isolate and join families that share that view.

Furthermore, Sampson, Morenoff and Earls (1999) recently called for a renewed focus on the role of residential stability in contributing to collective efficacy because of its impact on social networks. In their study, Sampson et al. (1999) find that unstable neighborhoods (where the percentage of residents living in the neighborhood for the past five years and the percentage of homeowners are both low) have lower levels of two measures of collective efficacy: reciprocated exchange networks (measured as the frequency with which neighbors exchange on issues such as doing favors, watching each other's property having neighborhood parties, visiting each other and asking neighbors for advice) and intergenerational closure (measured as adults knowing their children's friends, parents knowing each other and children looking up to adults as role models.)

While Sampson et al. (1999) do not consider sources of residential stability, it is reasonable that in certain neighborhoods, incarceration and reentry both decrease community stability in direct and indirect ways. First, in high incarceration neighborhoods, the process of incarceration and reentry creates an environment where a significant portion of residents are constantly in flux. In some neighborhoods as many as 15% of residents are incarcerated in every year (CASES 2000). When we combine this with the numbers who are released annually, we can see how coercive mobility would decrease the number of residents who have lived in the same house for the past five years (the measure used by Sampson et al. 1999). Upon release, ex-offenders continue their pattern of residential instability, frequently relying upon local shelters for lodging (Fleisher and Decker 2001).

Coercive mobility, however, also would increase the likelihood that family members and other residents will move too. Studies show that children frequently move due to the incarceration of one of their parents. This is particularly true for children whose mothers are incarcerated (O'Brien 2001; Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza 2001). In addition to being separated from parents, sometimes siblings are separated from each other (Marcus-Mendoza 2001). Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999) report incarcerated mothers are at risk of terminating their parental rights entirely because they believe it is the best thing to do for their children. In our study, we report family members often moved due to financial hardship resulting from the incarceration of a loved one (reducing the number of homeowners). Families often also considered moving as a strategy to help relatives with reentry by moving to new areas without the old "bad" influences. Furthermore, residents without incarcerated family members contemplated moving to escape a neighborhood they viewed either as deteriorating or as limited in its ability to provide opportunities for them and their children. In high incarceration neighborhoods, incarceration and reentry are factors that produce high rates of residential mobility.

## **Children**

Sampson, Morenoff and Earls (1999) examined the impact of collective efficacy on three aspects of neighborhood social organization they believe impact the lives of children: intergenerational closure, reciprocal exchange and expectations for the informal social control and mutual support of children. Intergenerational closure is important, they argue, because when adults and children in a neighborhood are linked there are more opportunities for social control. Sampson et al. argue that the importance of intergenerational closure lies in the ability of parents to know the parents or relatives of their children's friends. It is also important for other community adults to know adults related to children in the neighborhood (p.635). The second dimension, reciprocated exchange, refers to the amount of knowledge or information shared by adults in the neighborhood with respect to childbearing (p. 635). The third dimension is expectations for the informal social control and mutual support of children. This bears on the

expectations that adults will intervene to control the behavior of neighborhood children. It rests on the assumption of shared values among neighbors (p. 635). They find that residential stability and concentrated affluence are more important than poverty and racial/ethnic composition for predicting intergenerational closure and reciprocal exchange. Concentrated disadvantage, however, is positively associated with lowered expectations for shared child control.

There exists a body of evidence, now, that removing offenders from communities in order to impose prison sentences affects intergenerational closure and reciprocal exchange. Places where lots of parents are incarcerated are places where many children are raised by stand-in relatives or by the remaining parent. This is an incidence of intergenerational impairment, and it limits strategically the sources and strength of reciprocal exchange for those who have inherited the increased responsibility for managing children. It does not necessarily follow that informal social control will suffer, but sources of social control are certainly spread more thinly.

The question, then, is what happens when the adult who has been missing (in prison) returns? Much of the answer depends upon the person who returns to this unit. There are functions this person is positioned to perform—parental, economic, and interpersonal—that are critical for the effective functioning of the unit. Ex-offenders who fail to fulfill these new challenges do not merely leave the children in the same disadvantaged position as before, but they usually exacerbate the difficulties by becoming an additional demand upon the already diminished resources of that unit. Thus, other adults in the household will find their contribution to child social control and reciprocal exchange diluted by the need to attend to a new dimension in the form of a returning ex-prisoner. For instance, a mother who is the sole source of support for her household will be providing monetary support not just to the children, but also to an unemployed ex-offender, should this happen. Time will be demanded for attention to reestablishing this relationship, and this time will inevitably have to be stolen from that available to the children.

Here, again, the reentry is an opportunity. Just as these increased demands are conceivable outcomes of reentry, so are increased resources. A returning adult can fill in a gap in the generational relationships in a family unit, can take on responsibilities of reciprocal exchange with regard to children in the neighborhood. Much depends on how the reentry proceeds, because just as there is no reason to suggest reentry will damage these important collective capacities, there is equally no reason to say they will be augmented. And there is plenty of reason to suspect that negative consequences will occur more easily than positive ones, if only because of inertia.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

It would seem from the above discussion that reentry has a predominantly negative impact on the quality of life in communities hardest hit by incarceration. This seems true, particularly when viewed in light of the fact that these same neighborhoods are overwhelmingly disadvantaged in other ways as well. Reentry of ex-offenders into the community creates an environment where people become increasingly isolated from each other and from the broader society and where social relationships are increasingly taxed.

This need not be. Reentry is a time, if managed correctly, when networks can be enhanced, collective capacities augmented, and reentering residents helped to improve the locations where they live rather than further drain them. For example, a community center that would provide mentoring for children and their returning adult role model could help orient the contribution of these returning adults to greater associational activity and strengthened social norms. Helping ex-offenders obtain the right to vote and supporting their efforts to become full participants in their communities (by, for example, obtaining loans and buying homes) would increase the sense of empowerment and promote a greater sense of belonging. Systemic family counseling that has as its aim the creation of more effective social units inevitably increases social capital by strengthening social networks. A comprehensive, community-level program for supporting reentry was recently proposed by Rose Clear and Ryder (2001) as a way of addressing community-level impacts of incarceration, and it contains several components that target these dynamics of the community's social capital and collective efficacy.

Recognizing the importance of family ties there have been a few prison-based programs designed to promote parent-child relationships. Sesame Street Project provided a special playroom adjacent to the prison visiting room to provide a more child-friendly atmosphere in the hope of creating visits conducive to strengthening the child-parent relationship (Fishman 1983). The Osborne Association conducts in-prison parenting classes that are designed to foster ties between inmates and their children (Cattat and Rose 2002). The Texas Department of Corrections has developed a Family Support Program that is a community-based rehabilitation effort for offenders, their families, children and communities (Johnson, Selber and Lauderdale 2001). This program works at multiple levels to increase the level of social support available in the community. They provide individual and group counseling for offenders and their families but the program also works to enhance the community service network by developing an advocacy and referral approach with families, developing a database of community services and monitoring the responsiveness of agencies.

Fleisher and Decker (2001) call for a comprehensive approach to reintegration ex-offenders into the community that operates both at the individual- and the community-level. They call for helping inmates to plan for difficult reunions with family members, long-term drug and alcohol treatment and other social services offered in a community-based setting, community-based

parole officers, and efforts to develop ties between community and larger society to integrate people into the dominant society. Bursik and Grasmick (1993) also call for strategies to improve the relationship between community and larger society. These strategies mirror the local policies Forrest and Kearns (2001) suggest to increase the level of neighborhood social capital.

A comprehensive approach to reentry that emphasizes fostering social capital and collective efficacy requires a recognition that reentry is not just about individuals coming home; it is also about the homes and communities to which they return. This could not be more important for any other group than it is for children since neighborhood is the place where people are socialized into the wider society (Forrest and Kearns 2001). Children growing up in high incarceration neighborhoods characterized by diminished social capital grow up in an environment which fosters low levels of civic participation, trust, safety and belonging. In addition, because they are exposed to environments with attenuated networks, they lose the benefit of employment connections, etc. The cycle continues: diminished social capital and collective efficacy produce high levels of incarceration and reentry, which form the basis for even less of these important community resources.

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