Research Report

Historical Offender Reentry Literature: Statistics, Reentry, and Recidivism

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Prepared for

THE HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON STATE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

BUREAU OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
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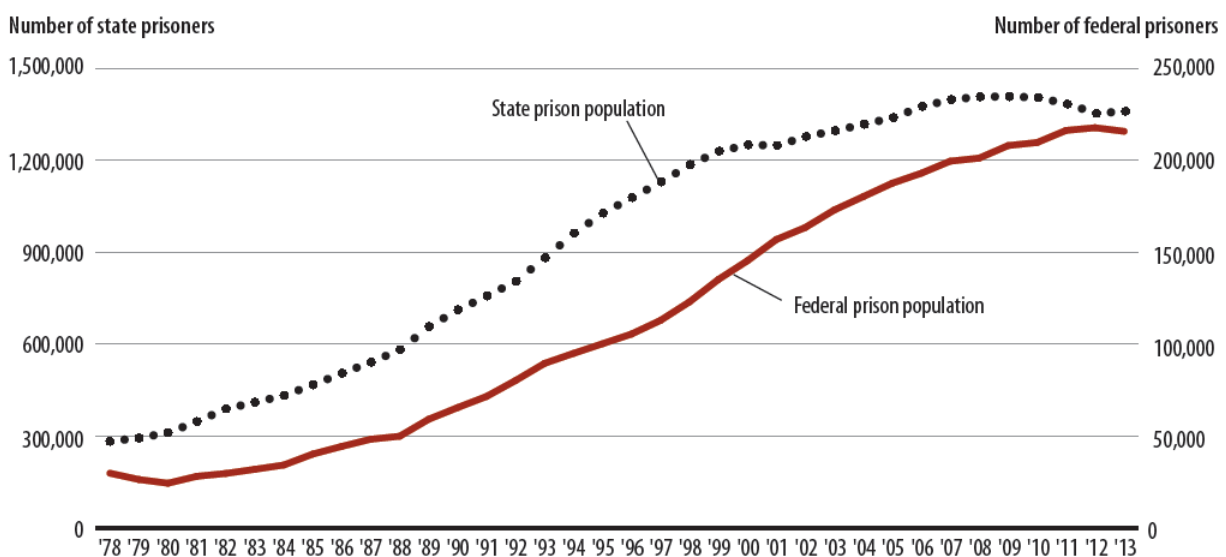
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INCARCERATION, RELEASE, AND RECIDIVISM

Approximately 95% of the prison population today will be released at some point in the future (Carson & Golinelli, 2013). Most of those released from prison enter some form of community supervision such as traditional parole or a reentry program. So, the size of the prison population has a large impact on the number of offenders who enter community supervision.

On December 31, 2013, the United States held an estimated 1,574,700 persons in state and federal prisons, an increase of approximately 4,300 prisoners (0.3%) from 2012 (Carson, 2014). This was the first increase reported since the peak of 1,615,500 prisoners in 2009. Although state prisons had jurisdiction over an estimated 6,300 more prisoners at yearend 2013 than at yearend 2012, the increase in prisoners was partially offset by the first decrease (down 1,900 or 0.9%) in inmates under the jurisdiction of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) since 1980 (Figure 1). After 9 years of average annual growth of more than 2%, the BOP population decreased almost 1% in 2013. The number of prisoners sentenced to more than a year in state or federal prison increased by 5,400 persons from yearend 2012 to yearend 2013. Female prisoners sentenced to more than a year in state or federal prison grew by almost 3% (2,800 inmates) between 2012 and 2013, while male prisoners increased 0.2% (2,500).

The prison population in 28 states increased from yearend 2012 to 2013. Inmates sentenced for violent offenses comprised 54% of the state prison population in 2012, the most recent year for which data were available. The female prison population increased in 36 states, including Texas, California, Florida, and New York (the states with the largest number of prisoners). Some states with smaller prison populations saw increases greater than 10% in female prisoners: Arkansas (up 26%), Vermont (up 21%), and New Hampshire (up 15%). In comparison, male prisoners increased in 28 states from yearend 2012 to 2013. Arkansas observed a double-digit growth in male prisoners [(up 17%) Carson, 2014].

FIGURE 1
Total state and federal prison populations, 1978–2013

Note: Counts based on all prisoners under the jurisdiction of state and federal correctional authorities.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Program, 1978–2013.
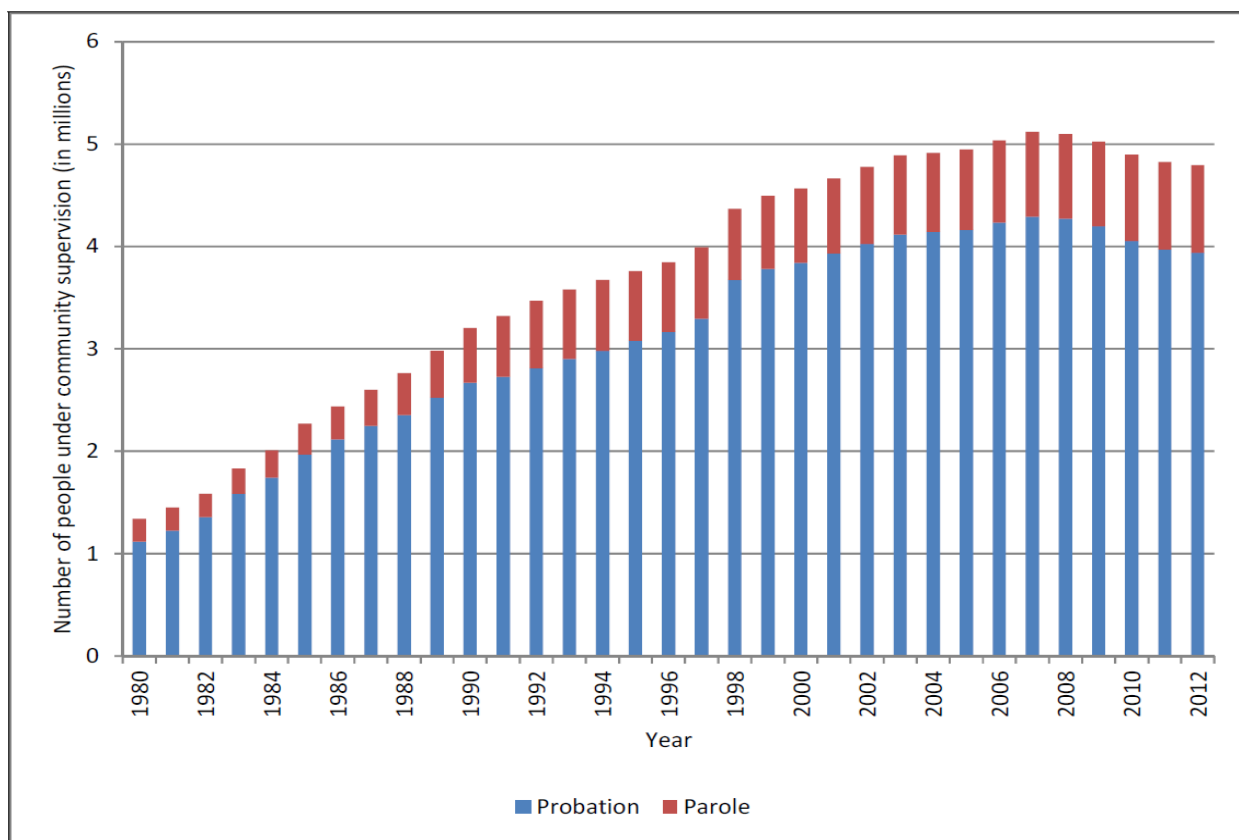
COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

Offenders are released into the community through a variety of different mechanisms. Some offenders serve their sentence on probation in the community rather than in prison. Others serve most of their sentences in correctional facilities but are then released on parole to finish their sentences in their communities under supervision. There also are offenders who serve their entire sentences in correctional facilities and are released unconditionally into the community.

Figure 2 shows the number of offenders who were supervised in the community, either through probation or through parole, during the period from 1980 to 2012 (the most recent data available online). Between 1980 and 2012, parolees accounted for, on average, 16.1% of the overall population under community supervision. The growing state prison population has resulted in a concomitant growth in the overall population of offenders under community supervision (Carson & Golinelli, 2013).

Figure 2. Number of Offenders Under Community Supervision, 1980-2012

Number of offenders in millions

Source: The 1980-2011 numbers of probationers and parolees were taken from *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (online)*, Table 6.1.2011. The 2012 number of probationers and parolees was taken from U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2012*.

However, the growth rate of individuals under community supervision is less than the growth rate of individuals in correctional facilities. This is likely due to the fact that a growing number of offenders are being released directly into the community without any form of supervision. Figure 2 shows that the number of offenders under community supervision increased by approximately

258% from 1980 to 2012; this contrasts with the overall prison population, which grew by approximately 344% during this period.

The relationship between prison and parole populations is important to considering reentry programs. Offenders serving their sentences in prison have generally committed more serious crimes than offenders who serve their sentences in jail or on probation. The prison population typically includes individuals sentenced to more than a year of incarceration. The transition from a structured prison environment to living with less imposed structure in the community can be difficult for parolees, especially if they experienced prolonged incarceration and have personal deficits, such as inadequate living arrangements and education, limited job skills, and mental health issues (Petersilia, 2004). These deficits are associated with criminal behavior (Akers & Sellers, 2008; Benda, 2005; Marsh, 2006).

The most recent recidivism (re-incarceration) study posted on the Arkansas Department of Correction's (ADC, 2013) website indicated that 43.2% of offenders released in 2010 were re-incarcerated within three years. Over the 3-year follow-up period, the recidivism rate increased from 9.2% during the first six months to 43.2%. Offenders released on parole had a recidivism rate of 43.8% over the 3-year study period (2010-13), whereas those who had completed their sentence had a recidivism rate of 22.5%. Parole violators with new sentences within the 3-year follow-up accounted for 27.4% of the recidivists, while parolees with technical violations accounted for 15.3% (Compton et al., 2013).
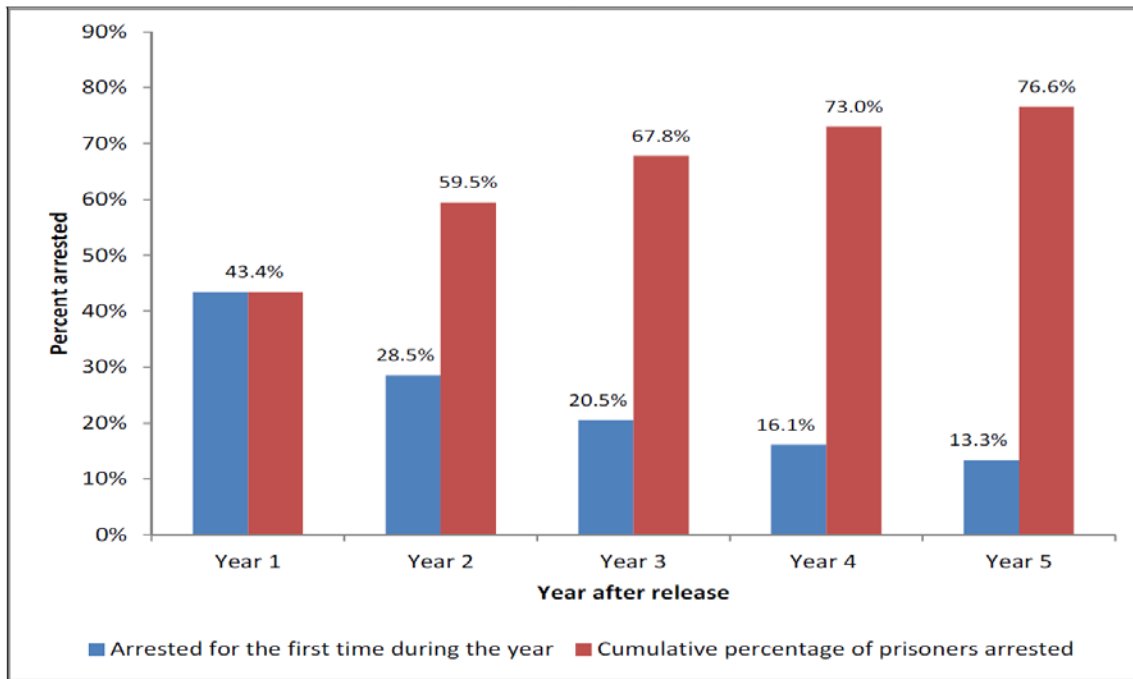
The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has estimated that nearly three quarters of all released prisoners will be rearrested within five years of their release and about six in 10 will be reconvicted (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). This BJS study examined the recidivism rates for 404,638 prisoners released in 30 states for five years after their release from prison in 2005. It is considered to be the most comprehensive recidivism study to date, and it found that 43.4% of released inmates had been rearrested by the end of their first year in the community. As shown in Figure 3, the proportion of released inmates who were arrested for the first time over the course of five years diminished with each additional year.

In descending order, Figure 4 shows that at the end of five years after release from prison 82.1% of property offenders had been rearrested, compared to 76.9% of drug offenders, 73.6% of public order offenders, and 71.3% of violent offenders in the BJS study (Durose et al., 2014).

Figure 4 indicates that the longitudinal pattern of reoffending is the same for all four types of offenses. The majority of re-arrests occurred within the first year of release irrespective of type of offense, and there was a slower increase in arrests after that period.

Finally, Figure 5 displays the well-established fact that one of the strongest predictors of recidivism is number of prior crimes or arrests (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). It clearly shows an inverse relationship between prior arrests before incarceration and percentage of released offenders rearrested at different time intervals over the five years studied by the BJS (Durose et al., 2014).

Figure 3. Proportion of Released Prisoners Arrested for the First Time at the End of the Year and Cumulative Percentage of Released Prisoners Rearrested

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010.*

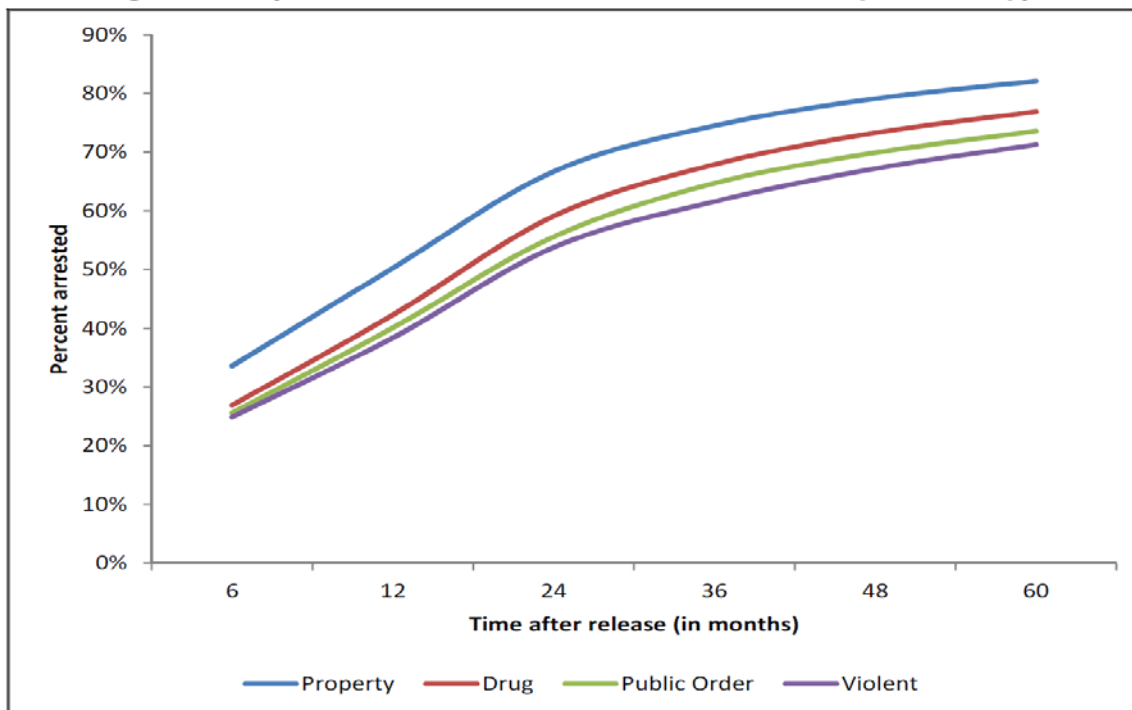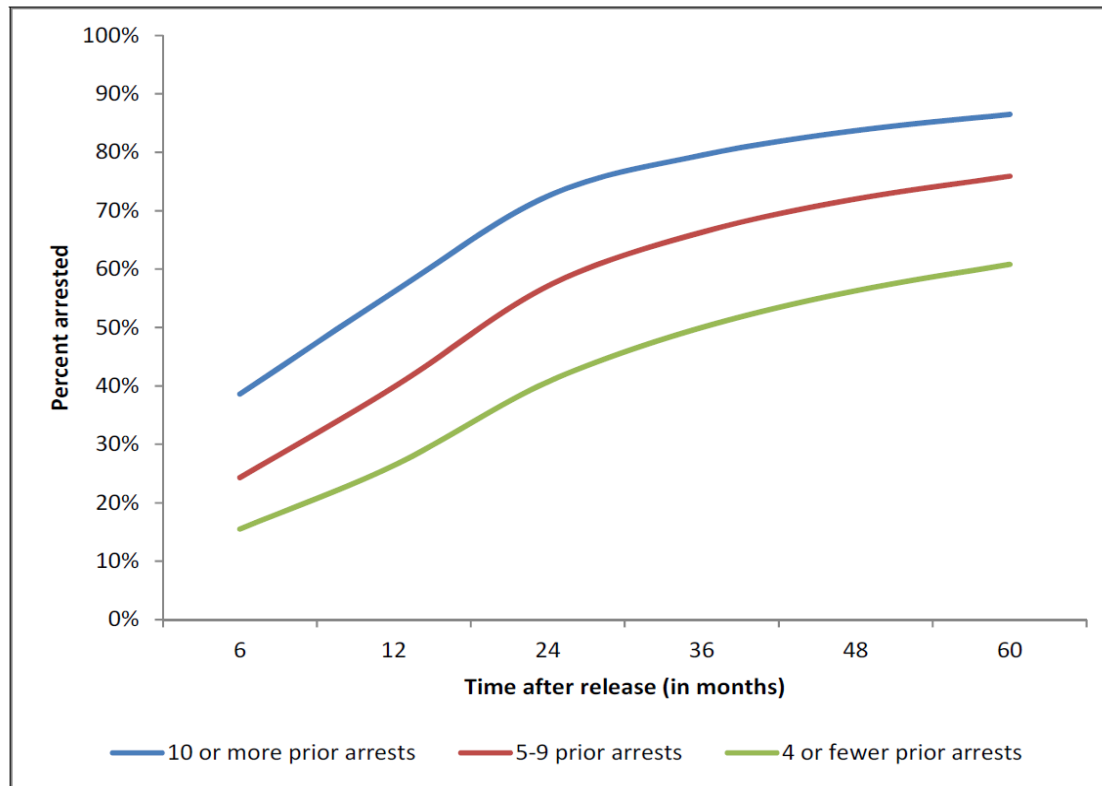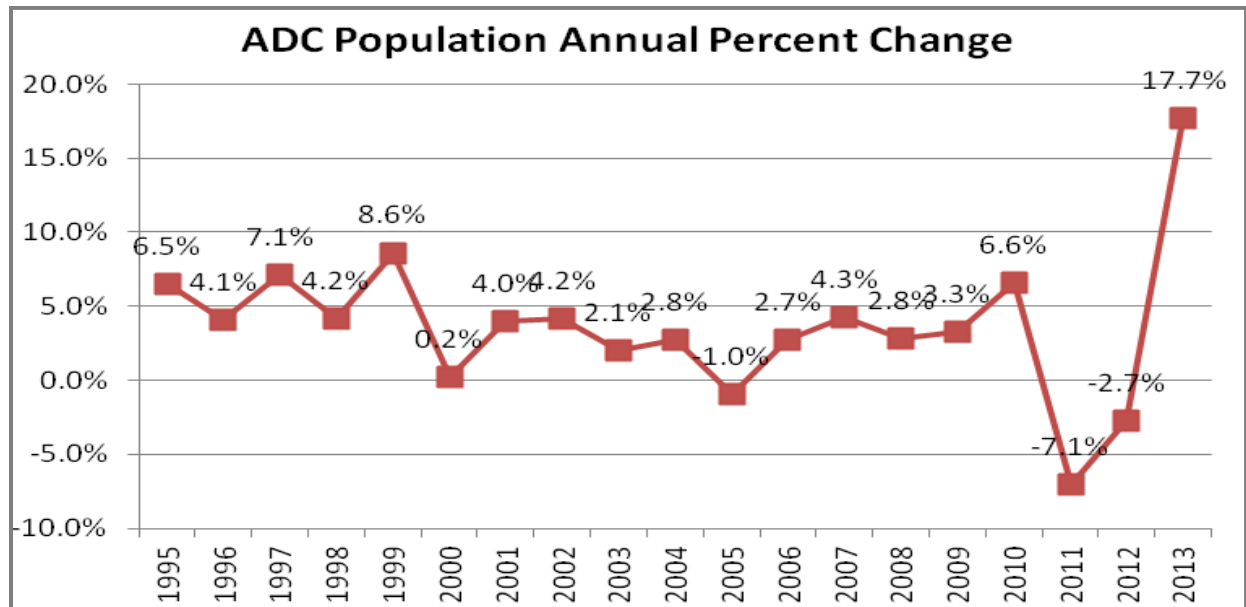## Figure 4. Proportion of Released Prisoners Rearrested, by Offense Type

Figure 5. Proportion of Released Prisoners Rearrested, by Criminal History

ARKANSAS PRISON, PAROLE, AND PROBATION POPULATIONS

In 2013, the Arkansas prison population increased 17.7% (Figure 6), which is 105.8% greater than the second largest increase (1999) for the previous 15 years (Arkansas Community Correction Fact Sheet, July, 2014). By contrast, the United States experienced a decrease of 2.2% in the national prison population in 2013, the 4th year of declining population. In 2013, the parole violator admissions to the Arkansas Department of Correction (DOC) increased 133% for men and 260.9% for women, while the new commitments increased 13.7% for men and 46.7% for females.

The prison admissions increased 47% for males and 73.2% for females in 2013. Prison admissions totaled 9,219, a 49.6 increase – 57.3 were new commitments and 40.4% were parole violators.

Parole admissions decreased 1.9% in 2013. According to the Arkansas Community Correction (ACC) Fact Sheet (July, 2014. p. 3), "The total active parole population fell 5.3%, primarily due to the large increase in the number of parolees returned to prison." ACC also reports, "Probation admissions fell 3.5% in 2013, the second consecutive year of decline and the lowest level since 2010. The probation population fell by 2.7% as a whole during the year. Parole revocations increased 76.8%, which is the highest rate recorded in Arkansas history. Felony probation revocations increased 20%. The average supervision time was 59.8 months for parolees and 47.5 months of probationers."

Figure 6. Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC) Annual Percent Change

Source: Arkansas Community Correction Fact Sheet (July, 2014)

REENTRY PROGRAMS

Many studies have indicated that reentry initiatives that combine job training and employment with counseling and housing assistance can reduce recidivism rates (Aos, Miller & Drake 2006; Latessa, Listwan, & Koetzle, 2014; Ndrecka, 2014). Research also shows that the addition of other community services can further reduce recidivism, including substance abuse and mental health treatment, family services, and spiritual counseling (Johnson & Larson, 2003; Kesten et al., 2012; Ndrecka, 2014;). Offenders reentering the community often have substance abuse and mental health issues, limited education and marketable skills, and inadequate living arrangements and support networks (Petersilia, 2003, 2004; Ndrecka, 2014). Many also have personality deficits such as antisocial attitudes, low self-control, limited empathy, inadequate problem solving, and interpersonal problems and risky peer associations (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Benda, 2003).

Offender reentry includes all the activities and programming conducted to prepare offenders to return to the community as law-abiding citizens. Reentry programs are typically divided into three phases: programs that prepare offenders to reenter society while they are in prison, programs that connect ex-offenders with services immediately after they are released from prison, and programs that provide long-term support and supervision for ex-offenders as they settle into communities permanently. Offender reentry programs vary widely in range, scope, and methodology. The best-designed programs, according to research, span all three phases (Harding & Morenoff, 2014).

A Government Accountability Office report (2001) also suggests that post-release planning should begin as early as possible. Such planning should include helping the offender to develop the skills and knowledge base necessary to find a job or to pursue further education, including General Equivalency Degree (GED) classes, vocational training, and college courses.

Research indicates that it is critical to establish linkages between offenders and the community as they approach their "transfer eligibility" (or release) date. Employment skills and opportunities and education have been identified by many studies as two of the most important contributing factors to the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society established (Ndrecka, 2014; Petersilla, 2004; Sherman et al., 1998; Taxman, Byrne, & Young, 2002).

EFFECTIVENESS OF REENTRY PROGRAMS: WHAT WORKS?

Compared with other social science issues, there has been a relative lack of rigorously designed studies on offender reentry programs. In recent years, there has been increasing research attention on this issue, providing enough data for the first meta-analyses of offender reentry studies. Some of these studies adhered closely to the "what works" paradigm created by University of Maryland researchers for a National Institute of Justice report to Congress (Sherman et al., 1998). The "what works" paradigm identifies programs that are effective by creating a scoring system to evaluate studies based on whether they provide rigorous evidence concerning the effect the program had on certain outcome measures. The "what works" paradigm essentially focuses on whether studies have accomplished the following:

- controlled for variables in their analysis that may have been the underlying cause of any observed connection between the program being studied and the outcome measures being analyzed;
- determined whether there are measurement errors resulting from problems with the study, including such things as participants being lost over time or low response rates to interview requests; and
- calculated the statistical power of the analysis to detect the program's effects on outcome measures. Included in this category are things such as sample size and the base rate of crime in the community (Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

The "what works" model uses these core criteria to place studies into five distinct categories, with category 5 being the most scientifically rigorous, and thus considered most effective, studies. The model then uses these criteria to identify programs that, based on the evidence considered, have been proven to work, programs that are promising, and programs that do not work. The National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC), in collaboration with the Urban Institute (UI), developed the What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse). The Clearinghouse provides access to research on the effectiveness of a variety of reentry programs and practices (The Council of State Governments, 2014a).

In order for a study to be included in the Clearinghouse, it must evaluate whether a particular program, practice, or policy improves reentry outcomes for returning prisoners and the effect of the intervention on at least one of a number of relevant outcomes (e.g., recidivism, substance use, housing, employment, and mental health). If these criteria are met, then the study must also satisfy the following minimum set of standards in terms of methodological rigor:

- The study must employ either random assignment or quasi-experimental methods with matched groups or statistical controls for differences between groups.
- The sample size must be at least 30 individuals in both the treatment and comparison groups.
- The study must have either been conducted by an independent researcher or published in a peer-reviewed journal.

FRAMEWORK FOR REENTRY PROGRAMS

Any comprehensive, effective reentry program for offenders has to be based on an ecological perspective that crime and recidivism result from the convergence of several interrelated forces (Agnew, 2005; Siegal, 2011). Nearly 650,000 people are released from America's prisons each year. They return to their communities needing housing and jobs, but their opportunities are hampered by both personal and environmental deficits. Frequently, they return to the poorest neighborhoods, where they often have precarious family relationships and social support networks, and are exposed to criminal peer associations (Akers & Sellers, 2008).

Most parolees have not completed high school and lack job skills (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011). Approximately three quarters of them have a history of substance abuse, and more than one third have a physical or mental disability (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008). In addition, many offenders have personality deficits that make accomplishments in education and employment challenging, such as low impulse control, aggressiveness, limited social skills, and antisocial attitudes (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Taken together, these observations concerning the interaction between underlying influences on crime and recidivism indicate that reentry programs need to be comprised of coordinated interventions that address several different needs. In many cases, these multifaceted services need to be delivered more or less simultaneously because of the interrelated nature of the deficits. An example of providing a coordinated approach to address interacting influences on crime and recidivism is discussed in the next section on employment.

EMPLOYMENT

The conventional wisdom is that post-release employment is one of the most important interventions for an ex-offender to successfully transition back into the community (Latessa, 2012). Benefits of employment include contributing to financial support of families, enhanced self-esteem and general mental health, and engaging in productive relationships. Employment also has important societal benefits, including reduced strain on social service resources, contributions to the tax base, and safer, more stable communities (The Council of State Governments, 2013).

While there is some evidence to suggest that people released from prison that hold jobs in the community are less likely to return to crime (Visher, Debus, Yahner, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1993), research does not support the proposition that simply placing an individual in a job is a silver bullet for reducing criminal behaviors. What various studies do indicate is that to reduce criminal behaviors and recidivism, service providers must address various personal deficits -- often referred to as criminogenic factors -- many of which are barriers to succeeding in the workplace (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Latessa, 2012). For example, a major deficit that must be overcome by many parolees is lack of motivation to work (Bushway, 2003).

Emerging research does indicate that clearly defined and well implemented multifaceted reentry programs do reduced crime and recidivism (Fletcher, 2007; Missouri Department of Corrections, 2014)). Research also indicates that the greater the number of criminogenic needs addressed through interventions, the more impact the interventions will have on lowering the likelihood of recidivism (The Council of State Governments, 2013). There is also evidence that the number of treatment hours an individual receives influences the effectiveness of the intervention. Higher-risk individuals require more program hours than lower-risk individuals (Bourgon & Armstrong, 2005).

Research shows that social learning approaches and cognitive behavioral therapies are generally effective in meeting a range of these needs, regardless of the type of crime committed. Prosocial modeling and skills development, teaching problem-solving skills, and

cognitive restructuring have all been shown to be effective and reflect this approach (Dowden & Andrews, 2004; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2007; Milkman & Wanberg, 2007). Cognitive restructuring is a psychological technique that consists of identifying and then disputing irrational or maladaptive thoughts (Beck, 1995; Beck et al., 1979).

SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

According to The Council of State Governments Clearinghouse (2014b), another major barrier to employment, and contributor to reoffending, is substance abuse. Generally, research indicates that substance abuse treatment can help reduce recidivism and substance abuse, and increase employment, especially if the treatment is provided in a therapeutic community setting. There were 16 studies in the Clearinghouse that evaluated the effectiveness of substance abuse treatment, and most indicated that program participation had a positive effect on both recidivism and substance abuse.

A recent meta-analysis of 74 drug treatment programs found an overall average effect of these programs was approximately a 15% to 17% reduction in recidivism and drug relapse (Mitchell, Wilson, & MacKenzie, 2012). The effectiveness of such programs, however, varied by program type. Therapeutic communities had relatively consistent but modest reductions in recidivism and drug relapse. Counseling programs, on average, reduced recidivism but not drug relapse, whereas narcotic maintenance programs had sizeable reductions in drug relapse but not recidivism.

EDUCATION

Despite the increasing demands for education and vocational skills in a competitive global economy, many offenders being released from prison have low levels of educational attainment and few if any marketable skills. To prepare offenders for the workforce after they leave prison, many reentry programs offer education opportunities, including basic education (ABE), high school or GED classes, college or post secondary courses, and vocational training. Research included in the Clearinghouse show that post-secondary education had a strong effect on reducing recidivism, while there was a more modest effect for ABE programs. The few studies that met the Clearinghouse research standards indicated that GED recipients were less likely to reoffend. However, that Clearinghouse issued a cautionary note that the studies are too few to confidently report that the findings are reliable. The findings on the impact of vocational training on recidivism were mixed, and suggested that the quality of the program may be an important factor in achieving reductions reoffending.

MENTAL HEALTH

A significant number of prisoners have problems with mental illness, and these problems may co-occur with a substance abuse or a physical health problem (The Council of State Governments, 2014d). Research on the effectiveness of mental health treatment suggests that these programs can help reduce recidivism. The Clearinghouse includes four studies that evaluated programs that offered a continuity of care approach, and all four found significant reductions in recidivism amongst participants. Evaluations of three "curriculum-based" cognitive treatment program indicated that recidivism can be reduced among persons with a diagnosed mental illness.

For example, a program that provided 70 weeks of classes (including a phase that incorporates a cognitive-behavioral approach) that focused on problem solving, goal setting, managing stress and fear, and improving cognitive skills, was found to have a positive effect on recidivism (Landenberger & Lipsey, 2008).

HOUSING

Obtaining housing after release from prison is often complicated with several difficulties, including scarcity of affordable and available housing, legal barriers, discrimination against former inmates, and strict eligibility requirements for federally subsidized housing (The Council of State Governments, 2014e). According to the Clearinghouse review, the evidence on the impact of housing on recidivism is mixed. The more methodologically rigorous studies indicate that the quality of programs associated with housing is associated with the impact on recidivism – recidivism is reduced by higher quality. Moreover, housing seems to be more positively related to recidivism reduction for higher risk offenders.

MENTORING IN A REENTRY PROGRAM FOR ADULTS

In light of the barriers facing persons being released from prison, the U. S. Department of Labor developed a community and faith-based initiative known as Ready4Work (Fletcher, 2007). Ready4Work was designed to address the needs of the growing ex-prisoner population and to test the capacity of community and faith-based organizations to meet those needs. Services consisted of employment-readiness training, job placement and intensive case management, including referrals for housing, health care, drug treatment, and other needed programs. Ready4Work also involved a unique mentoring component—including one-to-one and group mentoring—in the belief that mentors can help ease ex-prisoners' reentry by providing both practical and emotional support.

The Ready4Work program served adult former prisoners in 11 cities around the country (Fletcher, 2007). The lead agencies at six of the sites were faith-based organizations; at three of the other sites, the lead agencies were secular nonprofits. Operations in the remaining two cities were headed up by a mayor's office and a for-profit entity. The program excluded offenders whose most recent offense was violent or sexual. Together, the sites enrolled approximately 4,500 formerly incarcerated individuals – all were voluntary participants. Half of all participants had extensive criminal histories at the time of their enrollment, with a record of five or more arrests. A majority had spent more than two years in prison, and almost 25 percent had spent five or more years behind bars. Once individuals entered the program, they were eligible for services for up to one year. The cost per participant/per year of service was approximately $4,500.

Mentoring works through the development of a trusting relationship between the offender and mentor who provides consistent, nonjudgmental support and guidance, and teaches life lessons as needed. Findings from the evaluation of Ready4Work suggest that mentoring can have real benefits in strengthening outcomes in the context of a multifaceted reentry program. Across the 11 sites, about half of the participants in the reentry program became involved in mentoring. Those participants fared better, in terms of program retention and employment, than those who did not participate in the mentoring program.

For example, Ready4Work participants who met with a mentor spent significantly more time in the program than did those who chose not to be mentored. Those mentored were twice as likely to find jobs, and to remained employed, as their counterparts (Fletcher, 2007). At the one-year post-release mark, mentored Ready4Work participants, regardless of whether they attained employment, were 39% less likely to recidivate those who were not mentored.

The Department of Labor research report (Fletcher, 2007, p. 2) concluded:

> "These results are based on comparing participants who chose to meet with a mentor against those who did not meet with a mentor. Participants, however, were not randomly assigned to meet with a mentor—it was a voluntary component of the program. It is possible

that whatever motivated them to take advantage of mentoring may also have motivated them to remain active in the program longer and to try harder to find and retain employment. It is also possible that variances in program quality and structure were sometimes factors in whether or not participants engaged in the mentoring component. Because the evaluation did not include a control group these results are not definitive; however, the results are extremely promising. They suggest that as participants make a transition back into their communities after a period of incarceration, mentoring may play an important role in keeping them involved in the program, employed and less likely to recidivate."

CONCLUSIONS ON REENTRY LITERATURE

As noted by the Department of Labor report (Fletcher, 2007), it is important to highlight that mentoring alone is not enough. People newly released from prison have many needs (e.g., housing, employment) that must be addressed very quickly, and more or less simultaneously, so that they do not develop into insurmountable barriers to successful reentry. Virtually all of the participants in Ready4Work received case management and employment services, including soft-skills training and job placement assistance. In addition, some participants took advantage of other wraparound services, such as GED classes or alcohol and drug counseling. The importance of such services is well-established. While dependable and supportive mentoring relationships can be a crucial component of a reentry initiative, those relationships are a complement to—not a substitute for—these necessary reentry services.

DISTINGUISHING EARN YOUR RELEASE PROGRAM AND PATHWAY TO FREEDOM INITIATIVE

The Pathway to Freedom (no date) program currently operating at the former boot camp facility in Wrightsville, Arkansas is different from the Pay for Performance (or Earn Your Release) program proposed by Nick Robbins (2014) in his presentation to the Arkansas Senate and House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee on August 19, 2014. The primary differences between these two programs are the central faith-based approach of the Pathway to Freedom program, and the differential lengths of the programs.

In response to an inquiry from the BLR on September 3, 2014, Nick Robbins replied via e-mail that the framework for teaching the core principles would be decided by the agency applying for funding from his Earn Your Release program initiative. The framework might be faith-based, or it may be an alternative, such as the commonly used cognitive-behavioral perspective (Landenberger & Lipsey, 2007; Milkman & Wanberg, 2007). He indicated that the required criteria for service-providers in his program would be that they incorporate reentry classes, case management, and mentoring. The same core principles and program components are incorporated in the Pathway to Freedom (no date) Initiative, which is entirely faith-based.

According to Nick Robbins' (2014) presentation, and an extended follow-up interview by the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR), participants would enter his program 18 months prior to their TE (Transfer eligibility) date. They would receive mentoring and individually tailored classes for 6 months while in prison. Successful completing of this first phase of his program would trigger a 1-year early release, and for the first 6 months after release, participants would continue to receive mentioning and classes.

In contrast, the current Pathway to Freedom Initiative involves 18 months while incarcerated at the J. A. Hawkins Unit for Males in Wrightsville, Arkansas (200 men capacity). It also continues for one year after release from prison, although Scott McLean, Director, indicated that the majority of graduates have remained involved in the program as mentors.

EARN YOUR RELEASE (NICK ROBBINS PRESENTATION AUGUST 19, 2014)

In his presentation, Pay for Performance, Nick Robbins proposed a statewide reentry program comprised of pre-release and post-release services provided by agencies that are funded by a $10,000,000 grant administered by an intermediary agency/person. The intermediary would report to a board comprised of these following: Department of Correction Representative, Arkansas Community Corrections Representative, Judicial Representative, Reentry Organizational Representative, and Educational Representative.

The intermediary would be responsible for marketing the Earn Your Release program, and raising awareness of the needs of persons released from prison among community groups and agencies. The intermediary would educate service providers about how to apply for funding through yearly Reentry Conferences and Webinars.

The intermediary also would be responsible for collecting data from each agency receiving funding from the Earn Your Release program to be submitted to the Oversight Board. This intermediary will process funding payments at a rate of 50% upon acceptance. Then 25% will be paid out following their quarterly reports to show they are hitting their target goals stated in their proposal.

According to Nick Robbins, the grant would provide services for 2778 offenders each year, at a cost of $3,600 per offender. He proposes that offenders who enter his Earn Your Release program would be required to have at least 18 months left on their sentence. His voluntary program would provide offenders the opportunity to receive a 6-month pre-release programming, consisting of mentoring/coaching, personalized case management, pre-release reentry classes. Classes, for example, would cover core principles, such as integrity and assuming responsibility, job preparation, managing finances, and substance abuse and mental health education if needed. Upon successful completion of the pre-release program, participants would receive a one-year early release from prison to enter a 6-month post-release phase of his program. During the post-release phase, mentoring would continue and housing, employment and social services assistance would be provided. If an offender does not complete the 6-month post-release phase of the program, the conditional early release is rescinded.

The Arkansas Parole Board would approve applicants for the Earn Your Release program, and this Board would set the one-year early release date, contingent upon completion of the program. Applicants for funding would include agencies, faith-based groups, and units of the government. They will be required to have a partnership agreement with either the Arkansas Department of Correction or Community Correction

COST SAVINGS OF EARN YOUR RELEASE

According to Nick Robbins, his one-year early release provision would save tax-payers the average inmate cost per year minus his estimate per offender for the Earn Your Release program. Subtracting $3,600 per offender he estimates for his program from the $22,969 average inmate cost reported by ADC in their 2013 final report (Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014) indicates a savings of $19,369.

Using Mr. Robbins estimate of serving 2,778 offenders in his program, the saving to the state would be $53,807,082, assuming as he did that everyone satisfactorily completes all phases of his program. The breakdown of the $3,600 per offenders would be: 1) $200 for materials, 2) $2,800 for 56 staff with a case load of 50 offenders, and 3) $600 reentry assistance.

PATHWAY TO FREEDOM PROGRAM

The Pathway to Freedom reentry program being operated at the J. A. Hawkins Unit for Males in Wrightsville, Arkansas was originally known as the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) Johnson & Larson, 2003). The IFI was officially launched in April, 1997, as a faith-based prison reentry program through a contract with the Texas Department of Correction. According to its evaluators (Johnson & Larson, 2003), it represented the first full-scale attempt to offer comprehensive programming emphasizing education, work, life skills, values restructuring, and one-on-one mentoring in an environment where religious instruction permeates all aspects of the program.

In 2006, the ADC contracted with IFI to begin a program at the Tucker Unit, in Tucker, AR. On July 11, 2011, Prison Fellowship – the nation's largest prison outreach organization–announced that it was phasing out the InnerChange Initiative programs in Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri due to the financial downtown in this nation. The three programs ceased operation on September 23, 2011. However, through donations from churches and businesses across the state, Scott McLean, Executive Director, and his staff have been able to continue the IFI program, now known as Pathway to Freedom. The ADC contributes to the program by providing the 200-bed J. A. Hawkins Unit. All other funding for this program comes from donations.

Pathway to Freedom is a faith-based program that teaches six core principles: 1) integrity, 2) responsibility, 3) community, 4) productivity, 5) affirmation, and 6) restoration. Earn Your Release also focuses on these principles without emphasizing the faith basis.

Pathway to Freedom seeks to address the transformation of offenders' lives through a 30-month program, consisting of 18 months of voluntary residence in the J. A. Hawkins Unit in Wrightsville, and 12 months of aftercare services in the community. To be eligible for the Pathway to Freedom program, inmates can have no uncompleted sexual offender treatment, and they must have minimum or medium custody level, have class 1 or 2 offenses, functional literacy, and at least 18 months left to serve in the Arkansas Department of Correction.

The first phase (12 months) of the residential program, in the J. A. Hawkins Unit, focuses on the following classes:

Men's Issues	Behavior Issues	Personal Development	
Every Man's Battle	Substance Abuse Education	Boundaries	Character Development
	Anger Management	Parenting	Christian World View
	Corrective Thinking Process	Victim Impact	Computer Training

A second phase (6 months) of the residential program involves mentoring, financial management, action plans, life skills, job preparedness, resume workshops, mock interviewing, and entrepreneurship. This latter phase is more specifically aimed at the transitioning into the community. The final phase (12 months) of the program is the reentry aftercare, consisting of mentoring, church/prosocial groups, and assistance with housing, employment, and counseling/social services. Scott McLean reported that most program graduates continue their affiliation as mentors and volunteers.

Scott McLean, Executive Director, reported that they have 6 full-time staff, whereas they need at least 9 staff. He estimated the cost of the Pathway to Freedom program to be $2,400 per offender. There are 200 beds at the J. A. Hawkins Unit, and his program graduates and enters approximately 40 male offenders every quarter.

RECIDIVISM STUDY OF FAITH-BASED REENTRY PROGRAM

A systematic evaluation of the faith-based InnerChange Freedom Initiative in Texas was conducted by Johnson and Larson (2003). This study tracked the two-year post-release recidivism rates for those prisoners that entered the program from April of 1997 through January of 1997, and were released from prison prior to September 1, 2002. In addition, this report summarizes the results of an intensive onsite, multi-year field study of IFI, including in-depth interviews with IFI staff and participants.

To allow for a two-year tracking period, IFI participants included in the current study are those who have had the potential to be out of prison for at least two years by September 1, 2002. . A total of 177 participants met these requirements, and they formed the basis of the IFI study group. A comparison group was selected from the records of offenders released from prison during the evaluation period that met program selection criteria but did not enter the program. The comparison group was matched with IFI participants based on race, age, offense type, and salient factor risk score. A total of 1,754 inmates were identified as the main comparison group for this study.

Anchored in biblical teaching, life-skills education, and group accountability, the IFI was a three-phase program involving offenders in 16 to 24 months of in-prison programs and 6 to 12 months of aftercare following release from prison. In this correctional experiment, IFI was responsible for implementing, administering, and funding programs, and the Department of Correction was responsible for housing and security matters.

The IFI participants in this study include 75 prisoners who completed all phases of the program, 51 who were paroled early, 24 who voluntarily quit the program, 19 who were removed for disciplinary reasons, 7 who were removed at the request of the staff, and 1 who was removed for serious medical problems. IFI participants were compared to a matched group of 1,754 offenders who met the IFI selection criteria but did not participate in the program.

Regarding recidivism, 17.3% of the IFI program graduates and 35% of the matched comparison group were rearrested during the two-year post-release study period. A graduate is someone who completes not only the in-prison phases of the IFI program, but also the aftercare phase in which the participant must hold a job and be an active church member for three consecutive months following release from prison. Using another measure of recidivism, 8% of the IFI program graduates and 20.3% of the matched comparison group were incarcerated during the two-year post-release period.

Considering all IFI participants, including those who did not graduate, 36.2% of the IFI participants and 35% of the comparison group were arrested during the two-year follow-up period. Mentoring did have a statistically significant positive impact on reducing recidivism.

Recidivism was related to lack of accountability to mentors and church congregations, decision to be isolated from beneficial aspects of the program, and a tendency to not accept personal responsibility for poor decision-making.

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