



The Dimensions, Pathways, and Consequences of Youth Reentry

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research for safer communities

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

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Finally, we wish to thank the authors of the five papers commissioned for the Roundtable, the participants who ensured that the discussion of the papers was lively and informative, and the observers who, we hope, will help with the dissemination of the many critical insights raised during the meeting.

This report distills the many observations and lessons learned during the two-day meeting of the Youth Reentry Roundtable and draws heavily on the insights articulated in the five papers commissioned for the Roundtable and by the participants at the Roundtable. The Youth Reentry Roundtable papers, along with a modified version of this report as an introductory article, are available in their entirety through Sage Publications' special issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (January 2004, vol. 2, no. 1), a policy-oriented peer-review journal. The papers are listed below, along with information for contacting the publisher. One-page summaries of the authors' papers and a summary of the meeting are provided in an appendix to this report.

The full set of papers resulting from the Youth Reentry Roundtable can be found in a special issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (January 2004, vol. 2, no. 1), available directly from Sage Publications (www.sagepub.com, 800-818-7243).

Youth Development and Reentry

by Daniel P. Mears and Jeremy Travis

Reentry of Young Offenders from the Justice System: A Developmental Perspective

by Laurence Steinberg, He Len Chung, and Michelle Little

An Empirical Portrait of the Youth Reentry Population

by Howard N. Snyder

Youth Perspectives on the Experience of Reentry

by Mercer Sullivan

Adolescent and Teenage Offenders Confronting the Challenges and Opportunities of Reentry

by David M. Altschuler and Rachel Brash

Interventions and Services Offered to Former Juvenile Offenders Re-entering Their Communities: An Analysis of Program Effectiveness

by Margaret B. Spencer and Cheryl Jones-Walker

The Reentry Roundtable Series

One of the most profound challenges facing American society is the reintegration of more than 700,000 individuals—including 200,000 juveniles and young adults age 24 and under—who leave state and federal adult prisons and juvenile correctional facilities and return home each year. The four-fold increase in incarceration rates over the past 25 years has had far-reaching consequences. One and a half million children have a parent in prison. Four million citizens have lost their right to vote. Prisoners leave correctional facilities with little preparation for life on the outside, no assistance with reintegration, and a high likelihood of return to prison for new crimes or parole violations. Of particular concern is the impact of this damaging cycle of removal and return of large numbers of juveniles and young adults. At the time of their arrest and incarceration, they typically are undergoing rapid physical, mental, and emotional changes. The reality of reentry creates specific challenges for these young people, their families, and the community at large.

The meeting that provided the impetus for this report—*The Youth Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry: Youth Development and the Impacts of Incarceration and Reentry*—is the sixth in a series of roundtables initiated by the Urban Institute’s Justice Policy Center as part of a policy research initiative to advance understanding of prisoner reentry. The Reentry Roundtable series, which is co-chaired by Jeremy Travis, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute, and Dr. Joan Petersilia, professor at the University of California, Irvine, has resulted in the following meetings:

- For the first Reentry Roundtable, the Urban Institute invited academics, practitioners, service providers, and community leaders to Washington, D.C. to examine sentencing and public safety issues from health, substance abuse, labor market, racial,

community, family, and gender perspectives (October 2000).

- The second Roundtable was held in New York City and explored the impact of state policies on returning prisoners, families, and communities and discussed the Urban Institute’s Returning Home research study (March 2001).
- The third—*Prisoner Reentry and the Institutions of Civil Society: Barriers and Bridges to Successful Integration* (March 2002)—focused on the role of society’s civil institutions in facilitating the reintegration of former prisoners.
- The fourth—*Public Health Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry: Addressing the Health Needs and Risks of Returning Prisoners and Their Families* (December 2002)—examined the health needs and risks of returning prisoners.
- The fifth—*Employment Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry: Understanding the Nexus between Prisoner Reentry and Work* (May 2003)—described the opportunities for improving employment prospects of returning prisoners.

Little is known about the impact of current incarceration policies or the ingredients of successful transitions to community life for juveniles and young adults. The aim of the Youth Reentry Roundtable was to generate a national discussion about the unique challenges involved in reintegrating young people back into their families and communities, and to offer policymakers a critical opportunity to develop effective programs and policies for improving the impacts of the reentry process.

Preface

Approximately 200,000 juveniles and young adults age 24 and under leave secure juvenile correctional facilities or state and federal prisons and return home each year—a process that we call youth reentry.

The unprecedented growth in incarceration means that communities across the country increasingly must confront the challenges of integrating ever-growing numbers of young people who have been in adult prisons or prison-like settings operated by the juvenile justice system. Because young people in their teens and early twenties undergo considerable physical, mental, and emotional changes, the process and experience of youth reentry may fundamentally differ from what adults face. Such differences may be compounded by new and changing social expectations as they transition from adolescence to adulthood and from middle school to high school. Throughout, youth may face numerous obstacles, including family dysfunction, poverty, drug abuse, and inadequate education, treatment, and services, all of which may not only contribute to criminal behavior but also to their success during reentry in avoiding crime and becoming a contributing member of society.

In recognition of the critical importance of this issue, the Urban Institute convened, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the California Endowment, a special meeting of the Reentry Roundtable, *The Youth Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry: Youth Development and the Impacts of Incarceration and Reentry*, held May 28–29, 2003, in San Francisco, California. The goal of the two-day meeting was to generate a national discussion about the unique challenges involved in reintegrating young people back into their families and communities, and to offer policymakers a critical opportunity to improve outcomes.

Five papers were commissioned for the meeting, each of which tackled a different topic.

The first, by Laurence Steinberg, He Len Chung, and Michelle Little (Temple University), described dimensions of youth development and their relevance for reentry. The second, by Howard Snyder (National Center for Juvenile Justice), provided an empirical portrait of youth reentry, describing the scope and magnitude of this problem. The third, by Mercer Sullivan (Rutgers University), depicted how youth who are released from secure confinement experience the process of reentry. The fourth, by David Altschuler and Rachel Brash (Johns Hopkins University), detailed the many challenges to ensuring successful youth reentry. And the last, by Margaret Spencer and Cheryl Jones-Walker (University of Pennsylvania), summarized the programming and developmental needs of youth during reentry, identifying dimensions of best practices and racial/ethnic, cultural, and gender considerations of effective programs.

These papers have been published by Sage Publications in a special issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (January 2004, vol. 2, no. 1), a policy-oriented peer-review journal, copies of which can be obtained directly from Sage (www.sagepub.com, 800-818-7243).

In this report, we describe youth reentry and its policy relevance to communities nationwide. Drawing liberally from the insights and comments of the authors and participants in the Youth Reentry Roundtable, we identify critical facts about youth reentry, including the specific programming and policy challenges that must be addressed. We then provide recommendations for next steps in research and practice, and call for the following:

- A reorientation of the juvenile and criminal justice systems to focus on reintegration of young offenders into society,
- Creation of reentry programs that reflect a youth development perspective and that address the unique role of race/ethnicity and gender,

- Inclusion of communities and family networks in reentry initiatives, and
- Development of a national agenda for public education and research.

The report's appendices provide a listing of the Roundtable authors and participants, a brief description of each paper, and a summary of each of the paper presentations and the ensuing discussions.

If effective youth reentry practices are to become a reality, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers will need clear guidance about how to think about and develop interventions that are appropriate to the needs of youth and the capacities of families and communities. It is our hope that this report serves to highlight the unique importance of youth reentry and what can be done to ensure the successful transition of young people back into their families and communities so that they can become contributing members of society.

Introduction

The tough-on-crime policies of the last decade have contributed to a dramatic increase in the incarceration of young people, and thus an equally dramatic increase in the number transitioning back into communities, schools, and families. Yet much remains unknown about this population and how best to ensure that young people released from prison will become contributing members of society. Fortunately, and as we describe in this report, there are promising directions for programs, policies, and research that address this critical policy issue.

America currently faces the daunting task of reintegrating approximately 200,000 juveniles and young adults ages 24 and under who leave secure juvenile correctional facilities or state and federal prisons and return home each year—a process that we call youth reentry.¹ The unprecedented growth in incarceration means that communities across the country increasingly must confront the challenges of integrating ever-growing numbers of young people who have been in adult prisons or prison-like settings operated by the juvenile justice system. Few of them will receive high quality treatment or programming while in custody. Many have physical, mental health, and substance abuse problems. Many have children. Yet most have never graduated from high school, held a job, or lived independently. And many are returning to communities where poverty, unemployment, homelessness, drug addiction, and crime are endemic.

The magnitude of the youth reentry problem and the challenges associated with it raise profound policy issues. Young people reentering society after periods of incarceration frequently have difficulty making successful transitions and avoiding lives of crime. We know, for example, that up to two-thirds of youth will be rearrested and up to one-third will be reincarcerated within a few years after release (Krisberg, Austin, and Steele 1991; Krisberg and Howell 1998; Bureau

of Data and Research 1999). Some youth will succeed, of course, completing high school and possibly going on to college, finding work and housing, developing healthy peer and family relationships, and achieving other milestones typically associated with becoming a healthy adult—but many will not.

Unfortunately, even a cursory glance at the research literature and the policy landscape reveals just how little is known about the transition of young people from prisons to communities or how best to increase the likelihood that the transitions are successful. The issue clearly concerns many state governments, and has helped prompt the Federal government to provide over \$31 million for the *Young Offender Initiative* (U.S. Department of Labor 2003) and \$100 million for the *Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative* (Office of Justice Programs 2002). Nonetheless, the foundation for systematically understanding and addressing the challenges of youth reentry remains largely undeveloped.

The new level of policy interest indicates that a unique opportunity exists to address an important policy issue that clearly has many ramifications both for young people and society. The goal of the Urban Institute's Youth Reentry Roundtable was to bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders to help foster new ways of thinking about youth reentry that will contribute to informed research and policymaking.

The Roundtable took as a central premise that the reentry experience may differ in important ways between young people and adults. For this reason, the Urban Institute commissioned five papers to focus on different dimensions of youth reentry, with a particular emphasis on youth development. Given this emphasis, we purposely viewed youth reentry as including juveniles, legally defined, and young adults, since youth development does not stop simply because an individual's legal status changes. This approach also ensured that

potential similarities and differences between younger and older released prisoners could be better highlighted. The Roundtable provided an opportunity for people with diverse experiences and knowledge to comment on the papers and raise critical and potentially overlooked or neglected issues.

Our goals here are to synthesize some of the insights of the authors and Roundtable participants; to draw attention to the range of issues bearing on youth reentry; to orient researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to these issues; and to encourage those interested in youth reentry to read the published articles, which are available in a special issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (January 2004, vol. 2, no. 1) published by Sage Publications.

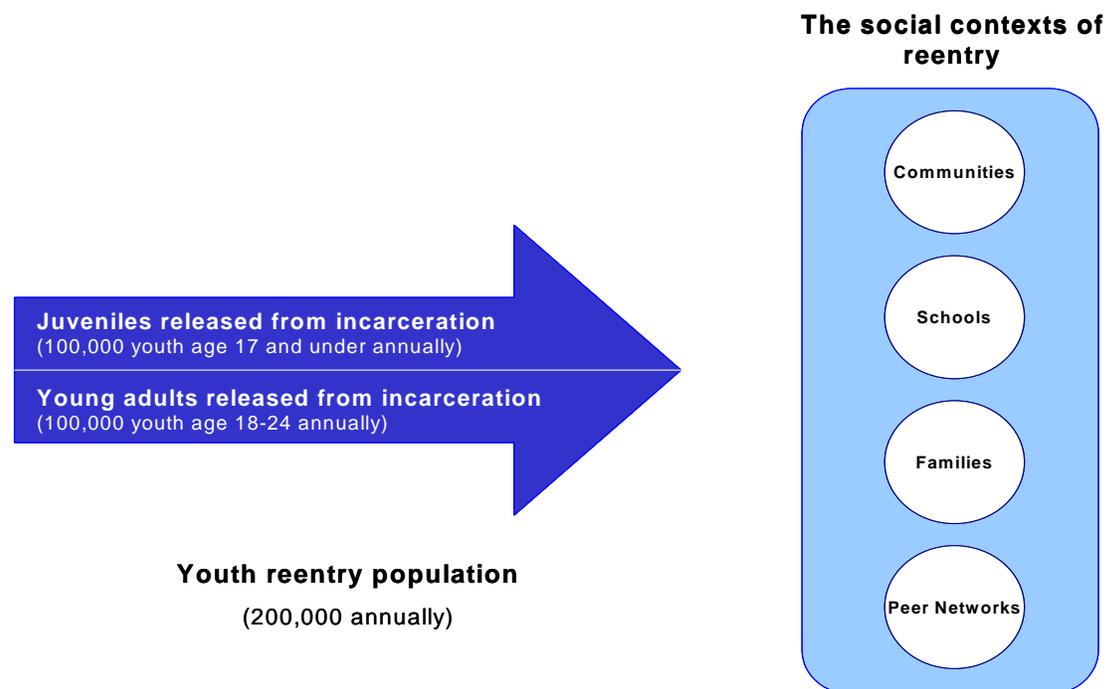
We begin first by defining youth reentry and the scope of this problem, and then describe the implications of a youth development perspective for understanding and examining youth reentry. Next, we focus on the experience of youth reentry, challenges to successful reintegration of

youth into communities, and strategies for improving youth reentry in ways that address the diverse and unique developmental needs of young people. We then close by sketching several policy and research recommendations.

Defining the Scope of the Problem

Reentry refers to the process and experience of reentering society after a term of incarceration. Understandably, much attention has been focused on this critical policy issue. Yet most discussions to date have focused on adults, even though young people age 10 to 24 constitute close to one-third of all individuals who will experience reentry each year. Currently, for example, approximately 200,000 of the 700,000 individuals released from state or federal prisons, or equivalent custodial facilities in the juvenile justice system, are age 24 and under.² (This estimate excludes youth in pre-trial and pre-sentencing detention and releases from jails.)

Figure 1. The Youth Reentry Population



The Roundtable proceeded on the premise that the process and experience of reentry may differ among young people and adults, and that the psychological development associated with the transition from adolescence to adulthood is a fundamental reason for this difference. This premise in turn led to the recognition that the boundary typically drawn between juvenile and criminal justice systems obscures the fact that individuals do not, from a developmental perspective, suddenly become adults simply because they reach a certain age or are processed in the criminal justice system.

For this reason, the Roundtable focused on young people age 10 to 24 who were incarcerated as a result of adjudication in juvenile court or conviction in criminal court and released before age 25 (see Figure 1).³ We excluded from consideration young offenders held in juvenile detention centers or adult jails pending court proceedings. By using this age range, we could better identify and discuss many of the challenges associated with successfully transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, and how these may be relevant for understanding youth reentry and improving outcomes associated with reentry.

The Roundtable also recognized that the existence of two distinct justice systems creates unique reentry pathways. For example, some young people enter the juvenile justice system as legal juveniles (i.e., under state law, they are viewed as “juveniles”) and then exit still as juveniles or, depending on their age, as young adults; some of the youth who enter the juvenile justice system may leave from the criminal justice system. Similarly, some young people may begin their sentence in the criminal justice system even though they under state law they are considered juveniles, and may leave either still as legal juveniles or as young adults. In many states, for instance, youth incarcerated in the juvenile justice system as legal juveniles can be held until age 20 or 21. Similarly, many laws exist that allow legal “juveniles” to be transferred to criminal courts.⁴

At least seven distinct youth reentry populations exist, depending on the age and legal status of young people at the time of their incarceration and release. For the sake of convenience, we will refer to legal “juveniles” as individuals who are age 17 and younger, and “adults” as individuals age 18 and older. In reality, state justice systems define the age of legal jurisdiction differently. For example, in some states the juvenile justice system handles all offenders age 17 or younger, while in others handles only offenders age 16 or younger. The legal definition typically concerns the age of an individual *at the time of their offense*. It does not preclude, however, the possibility of the juvenile justice system incarcerating youth who are juveniles up to and through legal “adulthood,” nor does it preclude the possibility that the criminal justice system may handle cases involving legal juveniles. The seven youth reentry populations include the following, which are summarized in figure 2:

- Pathway 1: Some youth may be incarcerated as *juveniles* (i.e., age 17 or younger) in the juvenile justice system, then released while still legally *juveniles* (i.e., while still age 17 or younger). This is the population that most of us likely think of when we think of the reentry of adolescent offenders.
- Pathway 2: Some youth may be incarcerated in the juvenile justice system as legal *juveniles*, but are then released from this same system as young *adults* (i.e., age 18 or older). This can happen because in many states, youth who are incarcerated in the juvenile justice system can be held until age 21.
- Pathway 3a: Some *juveniles* may begin their confinement in the juvenile justice system, but then be transferred, still as legal juveniles, into the criminal justice system to complete their term of incarceration. We call this custodial transfer to distinguish it from court transfer, which we discuss below. Blended sentencing laws that try to bridge the juvenile and criminal justice systems create the possibility for this situation

(Mears, 2000). After custodial transfer, these youth then may be released from the criminal system while still age 17 or younger (i.e., as *juveniles*). The chances of this happening would seem to be relatively small (especially if youth are transferred when they are closer to the age of legal adulthood), but we have few good empirical studies to determine with precision the true prevalence of this population.

- Pathway 3b: This reentry pathway, which is a variation of the one above (custodial transfer), is experienced by youth transferred from custody in the juvenile justice system to custody in the criminal system and who then are released as young *adults* (i.e., age 18 or older). Among young people transferred to the criminal justice system in this way, release as a legal adult rather than as a legal juvenile would appear to be the most likely reentry pathway. Prior to the transfer, for example, youth may well have been incarcerated for one to two years and likely will complete another one to two years in adult prisons. Again, though, empirical estimates of the size of this population currently are lacking.
- Pathway 4a: This pathway involves the incarceration of *juveniles* in adult prisons through transfer statutes (sometimes called certification or waiver statutes). These laws allow juveniles to be tried in criminal courts and, if convicted, directly placed in adult prisons. (We thus refer to this pathway as a court transfer rather than, as with pathways 3a and b, a custodial transfer.) Under such laws, individuals might be 17 or younger when incarcerated in adult prisons, and released while still 17 or younger (i.e., as *juveniles*).
- Pathway 4b: This pathway is an extension of the one immediately above: Youth transferred to criminal courts and then to adult prisons while still *juveniles* (i.e., age 17 or younger) may be released as young *adults* (i.e., age 18 or older). Among youth transferred to adult prisons via transfer statutes, this pathway would seem to be the

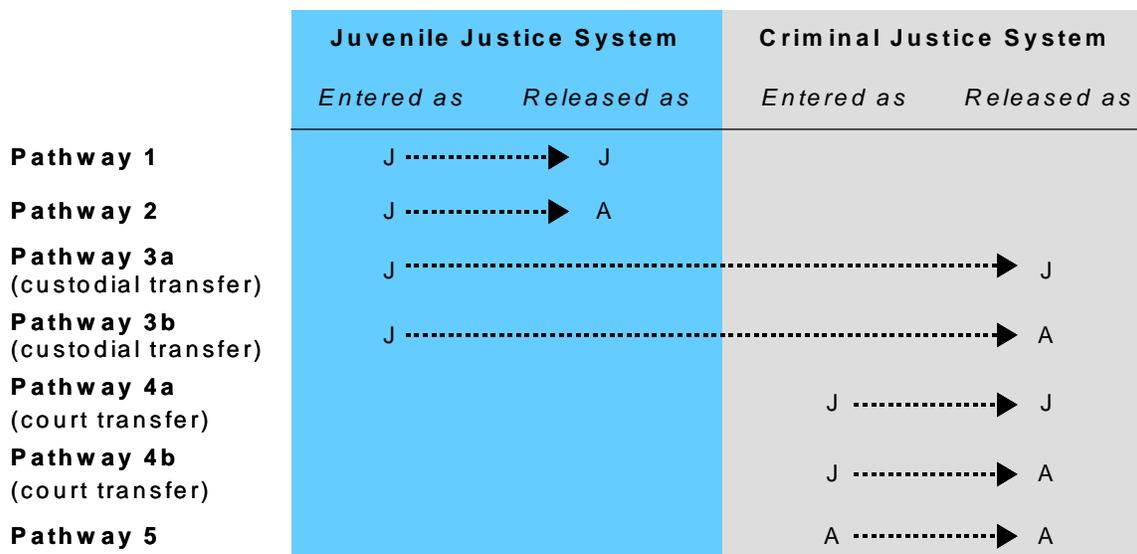
most common, since transfer laws typically apply to older juveniles (e.g., those who are age 15, 16, or 17).

- Pathway 5: The final pathway is perhaps the simplest: Young *adults* (i.e., individuals ages 18 or older) may be incarcerated in and released from the criminal justice system (still as *adults*). One might be tempted to think that this population is quite different from that of the young people who experience reentry through the other pathways. It bears remembering, though, that many youth who are incarcerated as adults at age 18 may be released by age 20 or 21, while many juvenile offenders, such as those described in the second pathway above, may be incarcerated in the juvenile justice system at age 14 or 15 and may not be released from this same system until they, too, are age 20 or 21.

We should reiterate a critical fact: both nationally and at state and local levels, we currently lack reliable estimates of the numbers of young people who experience the reentry pathways identified above. The difficulty in arriving at such estimates arises from the diversity of state laws defining who is a “juvenile” and “adult” and the equally diverse mechanisms for incarcerating youth in the criminal justice system. We know that roughly 100,000 youth currently are held in juvenile residential facilities, and over 450,000 young adults age 18 to 24 are incarcerated in adult prisons (Sickmund 2002; Harrison and Karberg 2003). But these estimates provide no foothold for estimating how many youth will experience each of the different reentry pathways. They cannot tell us, for example, the percentage of the 450,000 young adults incarcerated in adult prisons who were below age 18 when they were incarcerated, or were transferred from the juvenile justice system, either from a juvenile correctional facility or through any of the many different types of waiver mechanisms available in most states (Mears 2003).

Discussions of youth reentry are complicated for several additional reasons.

Figure 2. Two Justice Systems, Diverse Youth Reentry Pathways



J = juveniles (legally determined)
 A = adults (legally determined)

Young people, especially those incarcerated in the juvenile justice system, typically serve less than one year in prison. However, as Snyder (2004) points out, they may have repeated placements that collectively add up to one or more years; indeed, many youth released from the juvenile justice system will have been incarcerated for approximately one-third of their adolescent years. By contrast, in the criminal justice system, incarcerated offenders typically serve at least one year.

Other factors may come into play as well. Some researchers argue, for example, that the concept of time may differ greatly for young people. From this perspective, incarceration for several months may be experienced as an eternity for some youth, while for adults it may be experienced as a relatively short period of time. Similarly, youth may be less inclined or able to fully appreciate the consequences of their actions, to think, for example, about the long-term impacts of decisions they make (Feld 1999). Incarceration and reentry experiences

may vary for young people because of the different developmental milestones they have reached compared to adults, including differences in education, mental health, substance abuse, family context, employment experiences and employability, and experience with living independently. Such differences may be even more pronounced when we compare the very young (e.g., youth age 10 to 14) with older youth populations (e.g., youth age 15 to 24) and adults, or when we focus on racial/ethnic minorities, who typically are overrepresented in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Minority youth may, for example, confront distinct types of discrimination compared to adults and the experience of discrimination may affect them differently.

Each paper presented at the Roundtable and published in *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (January 2004, vol. 2, no. 1) expands on these and other dimensions that collectively constitute “youth reentry.” The unifying emphasis in all of the papers is the role and importance of

psychological development in the reentry process. Taken together, they provide an overarching framework, which we discuss below, for understanding the reentry of young people, the critical research questions that remain unaddressed, and the directions that programs and policies should take to improve reentry outcomes.

Youth Development and Reentry

The transition from prisoner to productive citizen is difficult for adults (Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001), but the challenges may be even greater for young people. We know, for example, that the cognitive capacity, maturity, and psychosocial context of youth, especially those who come in contact with the justice system, can differ considerably from those of adults (Grisso and Schwartz 2000). As Laurence Steinberg and his colleagues (2004) note in their paper, adolescents (and young people generally) must typically achieve a threshold level of psychosocial development to successfully assume adult roles (e.g., worker, spouse, parent). Clearly, a youth's level of development may affect their experiences of incarceration, and the incarcerative experience in turn may affect the youth's development. Both in turn may affect the ability of youth to benefit from treatment during and after confinement, as well as their ability to overcome the social stigma and barriers confronting ex-prisoners and members of stereotyped groups, and, ultimately, their ability to succeed in life.

One powerful example of this point arose during a presentation at the Roundtable. A 20-year-old recently released from his latest term of confinement at the California Youth Authority was asked what the most difficult challenge was that he faced during reentry. The young man thought reflectively for a moment and said, "It's the way people look at you." He described how people, especially the police, assumed that he was the same person that he'd been before, and that he was not to be trusted. He also

emphasized that he struggled to find work, support his family, get into school, and avoid the influence of the drug dealers and criminals in his community. For others to stigmatize him and assume he would fail only made overcoming these challenges seem even more difficult. Juxtaposed against these challenges was the striking fact that this youth had spent a substantial portion of his adolescent years behind bars, had no employment history to speak of, and had never lived independently.

Developmental psychology suggests that when young people transition into adulthood, they require assistance in learning how, among other things, to live independently, find employment and housing, and develop intimate relationships. This perspective explains in part why schools place considerable emphasis on providing career, mental health, and peer counseling, and structuring curriculums so as to help young people develop basic life skills (e.g., managing finances, using computers). The experience of the youth above suggests that similar supports likely would be needed for young people released from custody, and that the need for such supports might be considerably greater, especially among very young offenders. Indeed, as one Roundtable participant emphasized, many youth released from custody are not at an age-appropriate level of education, come from high crime communities, have mental health or substance abuse problems or both, and lack many of the kinds of supports typically needed to transition successfully into adulthood.

Steinberg et al. describe in detail why the transition to adulthood is so critical, and what is needed to make the transition a successful one. They emphasize that for youth to successfully transition from dependency into adulthood requires "psychosocial maturity." This in turn entails development along three domains and, for each domain, completion of specific tasks: (1) mastery and competence (e.g., developing skills that permit successful participation in the work force and independent living); (2)

interpersonal relationships and social functioning (e.g., interacting appropriately with others, behaving responsibly toward the larger community); and (3) self-definition and self-governance (e.g., developing a positive sense of self-worth and an ability to set and achieve personal goals). More generally, Steinberg et al. note, successful psychosocial development requires the involvement of supportive adults and opportunities to develop autonomy and specific competencies, including establishment of prosocial relationships.

Several Roundtable authors emphasized that the contexts that provide opportunities for development vary considerably, and can include families, peers, schools, work environments, and, for young offenders, prisons. Spencer and Jones-Walker highlighted that these contexts may interact with one another, differ according to the gender of the young person, and vary depending on the racial/ethnic, cultural, and economic characteristics that define specific communities. In these communities, the process of identity formation and psychosocial development may follow different pathways. They may also be affected by coping mechanisms that have developed to understand and address concentrated social disadvantage, bias, and discrimination.

Altschuler and Brash made the further observation that “normal” (i.e., typical or average) developmental mastery may differ for incarcerated young offender populations, many of whom may lag behind their peers by several years. Developmental psychologists, they noted, generally identify three age groupings: early adolescence (ages 11–14); middle adolescence (ages 15–17); and late adolescence (age 18 to early 20s). Physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development varies across these groups. As importantly, the contexts for development vary by age as do the challenges youth face. Altschuler and Brash emphasized, for example, that families are especially important to youth in early adolescence, and so a 14-year old who is released from custody to an unstable family

setting may be especially prone to fail. Peers become especially important during mid-adolescence, yet the experience of incarceration may inhibit exposure to prosocial peers. And youth released from custody during late adolescence typically will be expected and want to become independent. Many, however, will not have had sufficient education or work experience to make this transition successfully.

As a group, the authors agreed that psychological development is critical to understanding and improving the reentry process. This observation need not lead to the conclusion that society should ignore the crimes committed by young people. It highlights, however, that if society wants them to succeed—to have, as Steinberg et al. term it, “healthy turning point opportunities”—they likely will need many supports.

The Experience of Youth Reentry

To develop programs and policies that are likely to improve reentry outcomes, we need a solid theoretical and empirical foundation. Unfortunately, we know little about the reentry process among young people released from juvenile or adult incarceration. Few empirical studies of a quantitative or qualitative nature document this process. Fewer still provide explanations for specific reentry experiences and trajectories.

How, then, can we improve youth reentry if we know little to nothing about how youth experience reentry? The Roundtable provided some critical insights to help foster research to answer this question.

One Roundtable participant observed that schools typically provide young people with structured environments and supports (e.g., mental health and career counseling), and they do so precisely because such supports help students perform better. This approach recognizes the considerable and diverse needs among young people for different kinds of

assistance. Yet, as Mercer Sullivan (2004) points out, young people who are incarcerated and then released back into the community have an even broader range of needs, and come from and return to environments that offer few supportive networks. Their developmental needs are often greater, and the resources available to support their development are typically meager.

Sullivan's analysis draws on interviews with young people released from prison to identify several dimensions along which youth reentry may be both structured and experienced, including: prior criminal involvement and lifestyles, education, mental health, continuity and change in social relationships, and reentry into different kinds of communities. Employment, family structure, and income, and other such factors may also be relevant, as the other papers attest. These dimensions suggest the complexity of reentry and the need for policies that address that complexity.

When young people reenter society, they bring with them a host of background characteristics and experiences that may affect their success, though not always in obvious or direct ways. Sullivan describes, for example, several youth, some with extensive criminal records and some without. A typical approach to understanding youth reentry might be to predict recidivism by examining the prior records of a cohort of released young people. What Sullivan documents in his case studies are the limitations of this approach, which can obscure important variation in whether and how certain factors, such as criminal records, lead to certain outcomes, such as crime.

For example, among two youth with similar records of prior offending, Sullivan shows that the pathways to their continued involvement in crime differ. For one youth, the term of incarceration enhanced his reputation and thus motivation to engage in crime. For the other, incarceration had been traumatic and led to drug use aimed at reducing the emotional

consequences of that trauma, which inevitably led to more criminal activity.

Sullivan shows as well that seemingly obvious correlations may not be so obvious in particular cases. We typically think that youth with histories of relatively little criminal activity will be less at risk of future criminal behavior. Sullivan's analysis suggests, though, that other factors may influence how a youth's prior record affects their future behavior. One youth he observed illustrated this possibility: the youth did not have an extensive record of offending, but he also had little social or family support, economic opportunities, or trust of others. Without these resources, the youth appeared more likely to continue or even increase his criminal activity, despite the fact that his relatively minor record of previous offending suggested a low probability that he would recidivate. (The possibility that certain factors interact with others to contribute to recidivism should not come as a particular surprise. Even so, relatively little research has examined this issue or how dimensions of youth development might interact with known correlates of crime.)

Such experiences only begin to scratch the surface of youth reentry. Sullivan emphasizes that released youth typically are years behind in their education and have extensive histories of school disruption and disciplinary problems. When they reenter communities, schools typically are reluctant to accept them and may take steps to remove them for relatively minor infractions (Mears and Aron 2003). For older youth, the prospects for employment or further education are greatly diminished. Sullivan also observes that many youth who have been incarcerated have difficulty maintaining family ties. And many of them are parents of children, and have financial and emotional responsibilities for which they are largely unprepared.

Similarly, as Snyder (2004) notes, many of these young people have mental disorders, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia, as well as learning disabilities,

that frequently have gone undiagnosed and untreated (Mears and Aron 2003). Although there is disagreement about whether these disorders contribute to criminal behavior (Mears 2001), they clearly can reduce the chances that young people will successfully transition into healthy and stable relationships and employment, or continue their education.

Sullivan's (2004) and Spencer and Jones-Walker's (2004) papers emphasize that reentry is strongly influenced by the communities to which young people return. Most youth, for example, come from and return to communities of concentrated disadvantage, where crime is widespread and opportunities for education and employment are limited. These youth typically have known disadvantage their entire lives and few have graduated from high school or had gainful employment. Stigma and racism may be facts of life for these youth and the communities where they live. Community conditions, including the prevailing cultural views among residents, may also affect reentry. Young female offenders may, for example, be held to different standards than young male offenders. As the authors illustrate, these and other factors can combine to create radically different reentry pathways for diverse populations of young people.

From these observations, it is clear that developing a greater understanding of and empirical knowledge about some of the experiences of youth reentry can be challenging. It is not, however, impossible. Indeed, the dimensions sketched by the Roundtable authors provide an initial platform that we hope will stimulate research on this issue.

The Challenges of Youth Reentry

Before identifying effective strategies for improving youth reentry, it is helpful to understand the challenges that must be overcome. Strategies can then be tailored to address these challenges, including those that are specific to individual youth and to the families,

communities, and justice and social service systems to which young people return.

As the preceding discussion highlighted, the experience of reentry may itself constitute a challenge. If a youth finds it difficult, for example, to become reintegrated into family or peer networks, that in turn may impede his or her ability or motivation to succeed in school. Likewise, the mental health, educational status, and maturity of returning young offenders may dramatically affect their transitions back into schools or their success in applying for employment. In each instance, how youth perceive themselves (e.g., do they view themselves as empowered to make choices or as having realistic opportunities to succeed in life?), and how that perception is colored by community contexts (e.g., are resources available to assist youth, and are youth expected to succeed?), may influence the probability that they will overcome the many barriers to successful reentry (Spencer and Jones-Walker 2004).

One of the most prominent challenges to successful reentry is the lack of systematic aftercare services across multiple agencies and institutions, which can be critical for reducing crime and improving youth outcomes (Altschuler and Armstrong 1994; Wiebush, McNulty, and Le 2000). As mentioned earlier, up to two-thirds of released youth will be rearrested and between one-quarter and one-third will return to prison. This cycle of removal and return of large numbers of young people is increasingly concentrated in communities already experiencing enormous disadvantage.

One reason for this situation is, according to Altschuler and Brash, a continuing emphasis on "get tough" approaches to crime. The punitive crime policies of the 1980s and 1990s, they note, led to a greater reliance on incarceration, lengthier sentences, and less attention to rehabilitative or reintegrative programming. They are quick to point out that punishment is an important part of the justice system. But they

stress that without a consistent and sustained emphasis on what happens to youth while they are incarcerated and then released, including programming that encourages the creation of and access to opportunities to succeed, a cycle of failure is highly likely.

Beyond this general observation, Altschuler and Brash identify many specific challenges that confront young people during the reentry process (see also Altschuler 1998; Altschuler and Armstrong 2001). The seven domains along which these challenges occur include: (1) family and living arrangements; (2) peer groups and friends; (3) mental, behavioral, and physical health; (4) substance abuse; (5) education and schooling; (6) vocational training and employment; and (7) leisure, recreation, and avocational interests.

Reentry may be positively or negatively affected, depending on how each domain is manifest. For example, some youth may return to supportive families. But others may be precluded from doing so if they have committed drug offenses and their parents live in public housing (Riley 2003). In either case, a return to a family may not always be desirable. As Snyder (2004) points out, over half of all committed juvenile offenders have at least one family member who served a jail or prison sentence.

Peer influence, the second domain, clearly is a central aspect of adolescence and early adulthood, and can factor considerably into the success young people have during reentry. The influence may, of course, be positive or negative, depending on the types of peers with whom released offenders associate. Association with delinquent peers can increase the likelihood of further criminal activity, whereas association with prosocial peers reduces that likelihood (Howell 2003).

Incarcerated youth typically are more likely to have some type of mental illness (e.g., attention deficit hyperactive disorder, mood and anxiety disorders) than are youth in the general population (Mears 2001). During reentry, youth

with disorders thus must confront not only the typical challenges associated with transitioning back into society, but must do so while, as Altschuler and Brash emphasize, struggling with the symptoms associated with these disorders. A youth's mental disorder frequently will go undiagnosed and untreated, resulting in an even more diminished chance of successfully participating in schools, work, or other prosocial activities. Similarly, as Mercer Sullivan (2004) attests, drug abuse is common among released offenders, and if left untreated can further diminish the chances of successful reentry.

Although education, Altschuler and Brash's fifth domain, remains a central conduit to gainful employment and the transition to adulthood, few young offenders graduate from high school and even fewer go on to college. Indeed, because many youth have learning disabilities and the justice system is ill-equipped to take the disabilities into account when providing educational and vocational services, few even achieve a high school degree. By some estimates, up to 12 percent of incarcerated juvenile offenders are mentally retarded and upwards of 36 percent suffer from some type of learning disability (Mears and Aron 2003). Transitions back into school, or into some type of employment, therefore constitute significant challenges, especially since schools typically do not embrace teaching young people with histories of offending.

Leisure time and recreational pursuits may appear, at first glance, to be odd challenges to include in a discussion of reentry. Yet Altschuler and Brash make the telling point that most young offenders have little experience with prosocial forms of entertainment, and thus may be more likely to resort to drugs, crime, and other anti-social behaviors. Snyder highlights the fact that upon release, juveniles on average have spent one-third of their adolescent years incarcerated, and therefore have had little chance to learn how to recreate in an appropriate or constructive manner.

The other Roundtable authors emphasized still other challenges. In their paper, for example, Steinberg et al. (2004) stress that released youth typically lack the psychosocial maturity necessary to develop autonomy and the skills necessary to obtain jobs and have meaningful relationships. Snyder documents that young ex-offenders have multiple risk factors that if unaddressed place them at greater risk of failure.⁵ Sullivan (2004) describes the variety of reentry experiences among these young offenders, and how these experiences—shaped by many different community contexts—contribute to a dismal prospect for success. And, Spencer and Jones-Walker emphasize the conspicuous absence of well-grounded, empirically based reentry strategies across both juvenile and criminal justice systems, and the relative inattention to how race/ethnicity and gender shape the reentry process.

Underlying all of these diverse challenges lies a fundamentally different one: in recent years, society has erected barriers to civic participation that hinder a returning prisoner's ability to become reintegrated and engaged in their community (Travis 2002). As but one example, four million citizens, including tens of thousands of youth incarcerated in the criminal justice system, have lost their right to vote due to a felony conviction. Other legislative initiatives have resulted in limited access to housing, jobs, welfare benefits, child support, parental rights, and student loans. These collateral sanctions pose significant barriers to successful reintegration into society.

Strategies for Improving Youth Reentry

Despite the critical importance of effective strategies for improving youth reentry, relatively little systematic empirical attention has been given to this issue (Griffin 1999; Altschuler, Armstrong, and MacKenzie 1999; McCord et al., 2001; Gies 2003). As Howell (2003, 144) emphasized in a recent review: “Evaluations of

aftercare programs have been sparse.” Nonetheless, a number of promising practices and general guiding principles have emerged.

One of the most promising reentry initiatives is the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP). This reentry model includes an emphasis on pre-release planning and services; structured, short-term transitional programming; and structured, longer-term reintegrative activities that balance supervision, treatment, and services (Altschuler and Armstrong 1994; Wiebush et al. 2000).

The IAP is premised on the notion of “overarching case management” that spans the entire justice system, and consists of five components:

- Assessment, classification, and selection of high-risk youth;
- Individual case planning incorporating a family and community perspective;
- A mix of surveillance and services;
- A balance of incentives and graduated sanctions coupled with the imposition of realistic, enforceable conditions; and
- Service brokerage with community resources and links with social networks (Altschuler and Armstrong 1994).

The IAP also consists of five guiding principles for structuring the different components. These include

- Preparing youth for progressively increased responsibility and freedom in the community;
- Facilitating youth-community interaction and involvement;
- Working with both the offender and targeted community support systems (e.g., families, peers, schools, employers) on qualities needed for constructive interaction and the youth's successful community adjustment;

- Developing new resources and supports where needed; and
- Monitoring and testing the youth and the community on their ability to deal with each other productively (Altschuler and Armstrong 1994).

Although few empirical tests of the IAP have been conducted to date, a primary strength of the IAP is its reliance on theory and research about principles of effective intervention (Howell 2003). As Spencer and Jones-Walker (2004) emphasize, for example, recent meta-analyses emphasize the importance of relying on accurate risk and needs assessments; cognitive-behavioral interventions; customizing services to address the specific needs of each offender and that take account of each offender's strengths, limitations, and learning style; comprehensive treatment and services that address all risk and needs, and continuity of these services after release from custody; and community involvement and resources (Griffin 1999; Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Lipsey et al. 2000; Butts and Mears 2001; Gies 2003; Howell 2003). In addition to these general principles, many of the Roundtable authors pointed to the critical importance of reentry strategies that increase the psychosocial maturity, competencies, and resilience of youth so that they can successfully overcome diverse sets of challenges and go on to obtain employment, education, and close relationships with others.

The strategic role of communities is a prominent theme emerging from recent research and has been a foundation for new efforts to combat crime. For example, "community justice" initiatives—including community crime prevention, community policing, community prosecution, and community courts—have become increasingly common (Karp and Clear 2000). These efforts all include attempts to understand criminal behavior as something that occurs within and to communities, and as a social problem best addressed by tapping into the problem-solving capacities and resources of these communities. From this perspective,

relationships between community leaders, residents, and local government, justice, and social service agencies are critical to developing effective strategies for addressing crime.

As applied to youth reentry, communities constitute a central resource for assisting youth to successfully reenter society. The reason is two-fold: communities are most directly affected by the success or failure of released youth; and communities have resources they can leverage, such as informal support systems, that can supplement those available through various government agencies. Moreover, communities are best situated to place pressure on the law enforcement, justice, educational, mental health, and social service systems to coordinate their efforts in combating crime and improving youth outcomes. Indeed, many states have emphasized intra- and inter-agency collaboration because of community pressure to address the gaps and redundancies in services that emerge from inadequate cooperation among these different systems (National Criminal Justice Association 1997; Rivers and Anwyl 2000).

Some Roundtable authors also emphasized the idea that restorative justice may provide a more effective approach to conceptualizing how best to plan not only reentry services but all justice-related efforts. This view of justice, which emphasizes the notion that responses to crimes should focus on repairing the harm done to victims, communities, and offenders as well (i.e., restoring individuals and communities to their original state to the extent possible), has garnered increasing interest among practitioners and policymakers. This interest is bolstered by some research suggesting that restorative justice can effectively help youth understand the consequences of their actions and reduce their criminal behavior (Bazemore and Umbreit 1995).

Policy and Research Recommendations

The recommendations for policy and research that emerged from the Roundtable covered a wide spectrum. Here, we touch briefly on some of the more prominent ones raised by the Roundtable authors and practitioners. The recommendations fall into several general categories, including efforts that focus on reorienting the juvenile and criminal justice systems, reentry programs and policies, communities and families, and a national agenda for public education and research. Each of the authors makes a compelling case in their respective papers for these and other specific recommendations.

(a) Reorient the juvenile and criminal justice systems to focus on reintegration of young offenders into society.

It is critical that the justice systems adopt the goal of ensuring the successful reintegration of young offenders who have been incarcerated. Every year, about 200,000 juveniles and young adults are released from custody. This experience will profoundly affect their life prospects, mostly for the worse. Many Roundtable members urged the juvenile and criminal justice systems to take greater responsibility for mitigating the effects of incarceration and promoting successful reintegration.

This reorientation would require that reentry planning and services become a core part of the delivery of justice. These efforts should span the justice system, beginning as soon as a young person is incarcerated, and continuing after he or she returns home. This expansion of the mission of the justice system should build upon the work of the Intensive Aftercare Program that provides a theoretical model for how reentry strategies might be configured to meet the particular needs and capacities of local communities.

To carry out this new mission, the justice agencies would be required to develop intra- and inter-agency data capacities that allow for the sharing of relevant information about youth, including assessments and services received, as well as documentation of service needs. The human infrastructure of the justice systems would also require realignment. Staff would have to be retrained about the importance of reentry and the diverse needs of young offenders, and given the tools to assist with reentry planning. Job descriptions would be rewritten to reflect the importance of reconnecting young people with families, schools, work, and positive peer groups.

This new mission would necessarily require rethinking of the measures of success for a justice agency. Return to custody would still be an important measure, but other performance indicators would be added, such as post-release school attendance, program participation, and maintenance of positive family and peer group connections.

(b) Reentry programs should reflect a youth development perspective and should address the unique role of race/ethnicity and gender.

Young people, whether housed in juvenile or adult facilities, are undergoing the process of psychosocial development that is critical to defining their pathways from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. The question faced by the justice system is whether this development will be a healthy one that helps them transition successfully into adulthood, or an unhealthy one that results in further antisocial behavior. Furthermore, in seeking ways to promote positive youth development, the justice system should recognize that young people will not respond to programs as if they were adults. The legal definitions of “juvenile” and “adult” have no meaning from a youth development perspective.

A first step in applying this perspective to the design of reentry programs is to create a “disruption index” that measures, for each young person, the disruptions that have occurred by virtue of his or her incarceration as well as those resulting from prior life experiences. These disruptions could be in their connections to family, to school, to work, or to peers. A disruption index, or any such index based on validated and consistently implemented assessment instruments, can ensure that each youth’s particular developmental needs are identified.

The goal of programming during confinement and reentry should be to provide, to the extent feasible, experiences and activities that promote positive development, recognizing that different youth are at different stages of development. Programs should focus on developing capabilities that are associated with successful transitions to adulthood, such as life skills, education, and vocational and educational training. They also should build on the resilience and strengths unique to each youth.

This effort to tailor programs to the unique circumstances of each young person should also take into account the age, race/ethnicity, and gender of released youth, and the distinctive racial, ethnic, and cultural dimensions of the communities to which they will return. It also should take account of any mental health or substance abuse disorders or disabilities that might impede a successful transition to the community.

One key strategy in promoting positive youth development is to engage, early in the incarceration period, community groups, family members, and service providers that can begin to build the positive connections that will support the young person following release. These strategies should focus on providing a continuum of care, and must be consistently implemented and, where appropriate, sustained for at least six months to a year, a time when the risk of recidivism and return to prison is highest.

(c) Successful reentry depends on building a supportive community and family network.

Just as the justice systems must embrace the mission of successful reentry for young people, so, too, community coalitions must be created to promote their reintegration. At the community level, multiple stakeholder groups must be involved, including schools, health and mental health providers, housing and employment services, law enforcement and other justice agencies, faith-based organizations, and the business community. Because these entities are not all linked to the justice system, coordination is required so that every young person coming out of confinement has a supportive network in place. As mentioned above, this network preferably would engage the young person long before release. Families are a critical component of this community response, and should be given additional support as they are called upon to support the returning young person.

Building this community collaboration would by itself require a mobilization of community resources. This effort should produce clear delineation of functions, resources, and responsibilities to promote successful reintegration of the community’s young people following their confinement. In essence, the optimal initiative would reflect a strong community commitment to successful reentry, a commitment that would be paralleled by a commitment of different justice agencies.

(d) Create a national agenda for public education and research.

These efforts will succeed or fail, in large measure, according to the level of public support for youth reentry initiatives. Generating public support will require a sustained effort to overcome the negative stereotypes of young people and criminal activity. Research documenting the harmful social consequences of failed youth development attributable to the justice system would assist in building the

policy argument for more attention to youth reentry.

At the same time, evaluations of efforts of correctional agencies to mitigate the disruptions of development of the youth in their custody would support the development of evidence-based practices. These evaluations should include the creation of performance indicators and identify specific ways in which the organization of corrections and justice initiatives can improve reentry outcomes while minimizing negative impacts on communities. More generally, research is needed that can foster community and family engagement in the reentry process and ways of capitalizing on or creating new community and family resources to facilitate successful transitions of released youth.

No list of recommendations from such a rich discussion can be complete, and this one is not. The clear consensus at the Roundtable was that creative thinking is needed to address the growing challenge of youth reentry (see Appendix C). Our hope is that this list, along with other ideas proffered by the authors in the special issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (January 2004, vol. 2, no. 1), can help stimulate researchers and policymakers to move reentry efforts into new and productive directions.

Conclusion

The Youth Reentry Roundtable brought together some of the best thinking that researchers and practitioners could bring to bear to help stimulate a national discussion about youth reentry. As the papers commissioned for the Roundtable indicate, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Despite the lack of solid empirical research directly addressing this topic, considerable guidance on how best to improve youth reentry comes from many diverse fields, including work on youth development, juvenile and criminal justice, and evaluations of a range of individual and community-focused

interventions. The next critical steps will be to develop a national research and policy agenda that can generate a coherent and actionable youth reentry strategy for communities across the country.

Notes

¹ Several sources provide estimates of the numbers of young people—defined here as individuals ages 24 and under—released from correctional facilities each year, including state and federal jails and prisons and juvenile residential facilities, and excluding youth held in pre-adjudication or pre-disposition detention. Howard Snyder's (2004) paper discusses how to estimate the number of youth released from juvenile residential facilities each year (see also Butts and Adams 2001), as well as juveniles under age 18 released from adult prisons. Snyder estimates that 100,000 juvenile offenders are released annually from juvenile or adult custodial facilities. Travis and Visher (forthcoming) provide a similar discussion about estimating numbers of young adults, ages 18–24, released from state and federal jails and prisons. They estimate that annually about 100,000 young adults experience reentry.

² Travis et al. (2001) state that 600,000 adults are released from state and federal prisons each year. Adding that figure to the juvenile reentry population (100,000) yields the estimate of 700,000 individuals experiencing reentry.

³ The terminology used in the juvenile and criminal justice systems differs, but generally reflects the same underlying processes. Adjudication in juvenile court is akin to conviction in adult court; a disposition is equivalent to a sentence; and a commitment is similar to incarceration.

⁴ Each year, thousands of youth are transferred to adult court via transfer statutes. However, accurate estimates of transfers are difficult to obtain because of the numerous mechanisms through which juveniles can be transferred to adult court and the lack of data for most of these mechanisms (Mears 2003). We know that judicial transfers peaked at 11,700 in 1994 and that there were over 7,000 prosecutorial transfers in Florida in fiscal year 1994–1995. But we know little about the national counts of prosecutorial or other types transfers (Bishop et al. 1999; Snyder and Sickmund 1999). The expansion of laws that place greater discretion with prosecutors to transfer youth suggests that state and national rates of transfer are substantially higher than suggested by data on judicial transfers.

⁵ Snyder draws on several different data sources to estimate the juvenile youth reentry population and to describe their characteristics (e.g., mental health, education level, drug use). Comparable information for the young adult population of individuals age 18–24 are not readily available. The National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) data, which Travis and Visher (forthcoming) use in generating their estimate of the young adult reentry population, do not, for example, include such information. A description of the NCRP data can be found at the Bureau of Justice Statistics' web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/correct.htm#ncrp>).

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Appendix B. Summaries of Papers

Reentry of Young Offenders from the Justice System: A Developmental Perspective

By Laurence Steinberg, He Len Chung, and Michelle Little

Abstract

This paper presents a developmental perspective on the reentry of young offenders into the community. We begin with a discussion of the psychosocial tasks of late adolescence. Next, we discuss contextual influences on the successful negotiation of these psychosocial tasks. Third, we examine whether and to what extent the contexts to which young offenders are exposed in the justice system are likely to facilitate normative psychosocial development. Finally, we argue that the psychosocial development of youthful offenders is disrupted, or “arrested,” by their experiences within the justice system. Interventions designed to facilitate the successful reentry of young offenders into the community must be informed by what we know about healthy psychosocial development in late adolescence.

Some Key Points

- Steinberg and his colleagues emphasize that adolescents (and young people generally) must typically achieve a threshold level of psychosocial development to successfully assume adult roles (e.g., worker, spouse, parent).
- They point out that a youth’s level of development may affect their experiences of incarceration, and that the incarcerative experience in turn may affect the youth’s development. Both in turn may affect the ability of youth to benefit from treatment during and after confinement, as well as their ability to overcome the social stigma and barriers confronting ex-prisoners and, ultimately, to succeed in life.
- Steinberg et al. describe the importance of the transition to adulthood, and what is needed to make the transition successful. They argue that for youth to successfully transition from dependency into adulthood requires “psychosocial maturity.” This in turn entails development along three domains and, for each domain, completion of specific tasks: (1) mastery and self-competence (e.g., finishing high school or vocational training); (2) interpersonal relationships and social functioning (e.g., interacting appropriately with others, behaving responsibly toward the larger community); and (3) self-definition and self-governance (e.g., developing a positive sense of self-worth and an ability to set and achieve personal goals).
- The authors stress that successful psychosocial development requires the involvement of supportive adults and “healthy turning point opportunities” to develop autonomy and specific competencies, including establishment of prosocial relationships.

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An Empirical Portrait of the Youth Reentry Population

By Howard Snyder

Abstract

Nearly 100,000 juvenile offenders are released annually from custody facilities following adjudication or conviction, arguably all candidates for reentry programs. Their numbers increased substantially over the 1990s. These youth have spent a great proportion of their teenage years in custody. Most are male, minority, and non-violent offenders. About half lived primarily in a single-parent family while growing up. About one-fourth have a sibling, and about one-fourth have a father who has been incarcerated. Most have not completed 8th grade, compared to one-fourth of similarly aged youth in the U.S. population. Excluding alcohol, two-thirds report regular drug use. Two-thirds of committed males have a mental health disorder and the rate is higher for females. The paper concludes that the justice system cannot rely on others to provide the needed services if it ever hopes to control its own workload and reduce the problems caused by these youth.

Some Key Points

- Snyder focuses primarily on juvenile offenders. His analysis indicates that nearly 100,000 juvenile offenders are released annually from custody facilities following adjudication or conviction. This number increased substantially during the 1990s.
- He documents that young people, especially those incarcerated in the juvenile justice system, typically serve less than one year in juvenile facilities. But, he points out, they may have repeated placements that collectively add up to one or more years. As a result, many youth released from the juvenile justice system will have been incarcerated for approximately one-third of their adolescent years.
- Many of young people in the justice system have mental disorders, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia, as well as learning disabilities, that frequently have gone undiagnosed and untreated.
- Over half of all committed juvenile offenders have at least one family member who served a jail or prison sentence.
- Most released juvenile offenders are male, 4 of every 10 are white, less than half were committed for a violent offense.
- Young ex-offenders have multiple risk factors that if unaddressed place them at greater risk of failure. About half lived primarily in a single-parent family while growing up. Close to one-fourth have a sibling who had been incarcerated, and a similar proportion had a father who had been incarcerated. Over half of these juvenile offenders never completed 8th grade, compared to one-fourth of similarly aged youth in the general U.S. population. Excluding alcohol, two-thirds of incarcerated juvenile offenders report they use drugs (excluding alcohol) regularly.
- Given the challenges these young offenders present, Snyder argues that the juvenile justice system must develop strategies for providing services to young offenders.

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Youth Perspectives on the Experience of Reentry

By Mercer Sullivan

Abstract

The reentry process for youth returning to the community from secure confinement is shaped by the needs and capacities specific to their stage of development. In addition, youth who enter confinement are drawn disproportionately from communities in which the range of pathways of youth development tends to differ from those in the wider society, in areas such as school-to-work transition and household formation. Drawing on ethnographic data, this paper discusses several aspects of the youth reentry process from a theoretical perspective emphasizing the community contexts of youth reentry and dimensions of variation within these contexts. The topics discussed include variations in the extent of prior crime and justice system involvement; ongoing interactions during confinement between confined males and females in the community; the process of trying to reestablish conventional activities, including employment as well as further education and training; school enrollment as master social status for school-aged youth; variations in the availability of community supports; developmental progressions in criminal activity; and mental health concerns, particularly the role of depression and its relationship to drug abuse.

Some Key Points

- Sullivan argues that young people who are incarcerated and then released back into the community have an even broader range of needs than adult offenders who experience reentry, and that they come from and return to environments that offer few supportive networks. He notes that their developmental needs are often greater, and the resources available to support their development are typically meager.
- He draws on interviews with young people released from prison to identify several dimensions along which youth reentry may be both structured and experienced, including: Prior criminal involvement and lifestyles, education, mental health, continuity and change in social relationships, and reentry into different kinds of communities. His analysis of each dimension suggests the complexity of reentry and the need for policies that address that complexity. Sullivan also discusses the limitations of many analyses of official data, which often obscure important variation in whether and how certain factors, such as criminal records, lead to certain outcomes, such as crime.
- His analysis illustrates how the absence of social and family support, as well as economic opportunities contributes to young peoples' criminal activity. Released youth typically are years behind in their education and have extensive histories of school disruption and disciplinary and drug problems. When they reenter communities, schools typically are reluctant to accept them and may take steps to remove them for relatively minor infractions. For older youth, the prospects for employment or further education are greatly diminished. Sullivan also observes that many youth who have been incarcerated have difficulty maintaining family ties. Moreover, many of them are parents of children, and have financial and emotional responsibilities for which they are largely unprepared. Sullivan concludes that such factors contribute to greatly impaired prospects for success.

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Adolescent and Teenage Offenders Confronting the Challenges and Opportunities of Reentry

By David M. Altschuler and Rachel Brash

Abstract

This paper examines the challenges of reentry for teenage and youthful offenders. It discusses (1) reentry within a broader “reintegration” paradigm; (2) the mission and purpose of institutional and community corrections, as well as the tensions between them; (3) the intersection of chronological age and legal status; (4) the intersection of chronological age and stages of development; (5) risk and protective factors; and (6) the seven specific domains of reentry: family and living arrangement, peer groups, mental and physical health, education, vocational training and employment, substance abuse, and leisure and avocational interests. Particular attention is given to the need for reentry policies to be developmentally appropriate and age-specific. Finally, the paper closes by discussing the implications for reentry policy.

Some Key Points

- Altschuler and Brash state that “normal” (i.e., typical or average) developmental mastery may differ for incarcerated young offender populations, many of whom may lag behind their peers by several years. Developmental psychologists, they note, generally identify three age groupings: Early adolescence (ages 11–14); middle adolescence (ages 15–17); and late adolescence (age 18 to early 20s). Physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development varies across these groups.
- One of the most prominent challenges to successful reentry is the lack of systematic aftercare services across multiple agencies and institutions, which can be critical for reducing crime and improving youth outcomes. One of the reasons for this situation is, according to Altschuler and Brash, a continuing emphasis on “get tough” approaches to crime. The punitive crime policies of the 1980s and 1990s, they note, led to a greater reliance on incarceration, lengthier sentences, and less attention to rehabilitative or reintegrative programming.
- The authors identify many specific challenges that confront young people during the reentry process. The seven domains along which these challenges occur include: (1) family and living arrangements; (2) peer groups and friends; (3) mental, behavioral, and physical health; (4) substance abuse; (5) education and schooling; (6) vocational training and employment; and (7) leisure, recreation, and avocational interests.
- They briefly discuss the components of an effective reintegration strategy, drawing on Altschuler’s work in developing the Intensive Aftercare Program: (1) assessment, classification, and selection of high-risk youth; (2) individual case planning incorporating a family and community perspective; (3) a mix of surveillance and services; (4) a balance of incentives and graduated sanctions coupled with the imposition of realistic, enforceable conditions; and (5) service brokerage with community resources and linkages with social networks.

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Interventions and Services Offered to Former Juvenile Offenders Re-entering Their Communities: An Analysis of Program Effectiveness

By Margaret Beale Spencer and Cheryl Jones-Walker

Abstract

We review youth reentry and reintegration programming services findings and describe what works and what does not. Then, as an explanatory strategy for interpreting the findings, we introduce overlooked issues concerning identity formation and the influences of race/ethnicity and class. We consider (1) a systems theoretical stance that acknowledges youths' perspectives, (2) human development themes that do not emphasize psychopathology, and (3) the settings where reentry and reintegration programming occur. We conclude by recommending strategies for improving assessments of programming and services.

Some Key Points

- Spencer and Jones-Walker argue that the contexts that provide opportunities for development vary considerably, and can include families, peers, schools, work environments, and, for young offenders, prisons.
- The authors highlight that these contexts themselves may interact with one another, differ according to the gender of the young person, and vary depending on the racial/ethnic, cultural, and economic characteristics that define specific communities.
- In these communities, the process of identity formation and psychosocial development may follow different pathways. They may also be affected by coping mechanisms that have developed to understand and address concentrated social disadvantage, bias, and discrimination. Most youth, for example, come from and return to communities of concentrated disadvantage, where crime is widespread and opportunities for education and employment are limited. These youth typically have known disadvantage their entire lives and few have graduated from high school or had gainful employment. Stigma and racism may be facts of life for these youth and the communities where they live.
- The authors emphasize that how youth perceive themselves (e.g., do they view themselves as empowered to make choices or as having realistic opportunities to succeed in life?), and how that perception is colored by community contexts (e.g., are resources available to assist youth, and are youth expected to succeed?), may influence the probability that they will overcome the many barriers to successful reentry.
- Spencer and Jones-Walker also emphasize the conspicuous absence of well-grounded, empirically based reentry strategies across both juvenile and criminal justice systems, and the relative inattention to how race/ethnicity and gender shape the reentry process. They summarize recent meta-analyses that stress the importance of relying on accurate risk and needs assessments; cognitive-behavioral interventions; customizing services to address the specific needs of each offender and that take account of each offender's strengths, limitations, and learning style; comprehensive treatment and services that address all risk and needs, and continuity of these services after release from custody; and community involvement and resources.

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Appendix C. Summaries of Presentations

In this Appendix we provide a brief distillation of some of the points emphasized by the authors during their presentations at the Roundtable, and summarize some of the concerns and issues raised by the Roundtable participants and observers. The points raised in the presentations largely overlapped with those discussed in each of the authors' papers (see, e.g., Appendix B). However, the points emphasized in the presentations should give the reader a better feel for the specific issues discussed during the Roundtable. In most instances, the authors highlighted only a few select points and then clarified these during the subsequent discussion.

The summary of concerns and issues reflects some of the key points that the Roundtable participants and observers made. But it should be emphasized that the Roundtable did not result in, nor did it strive to achieve, any consensus about these points. Rather, the goal was to raise a number of policy relevant issues and questions that might be fruitful for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to pursue. More generally, it was to help foster new and creative ways among all participants of thinking about youth reentry.

Reentry of Young Offenders from the Justice System: A Developmental Perspective

By Laurence Steinberg, He Len Chung, and Michelle Little

Key Points from the Presentation

- Reentry and reintegration are not appropriate terms for juvenile offenders since arguably they have never been integrated into society in the first place. We need to put the “juvenile” emphasis back in the term “juvenile offenders.” What is sorely missing from our understanding of delinquent youths' transition to adulthood is a focus on how youths develop a level of maturity that helps them create and take

advantage of healthy turning points in their lives.

- The juvenile justice system has potentially contradictory missions: rehabilitation and punishment. Punishment is a key feature of juvenile justice, but to improve the chances that young people will successfully transition into healthy and productive adulthood, the system needs to strike a balance between treatment and punishment.
- Healthy psychosocial development doesn't happen in the absence of context—it is essential to have at least one relationship with a caring and committed adult, contact with and chances to form relationships with prosocial peers, and opportunities to develop the “psychosocial capital” needed to function effectively in society, including interpersonal skills, instrumental competence, and responsible autonomy.
- Practitioners and policymakers who wish to improve outcomes for young offenders face three specific challenges:
 - (1) The juvenile justice system does not provide a developmentally appropriate context for promoting psychosocial maturity. In fact, it is more likely to arrest than promote healthy psychosocial development.
 - (2) Young people in the juvenile justice system have serious mental health and educational deficiencies that challenge the justice system.
 - (3) The justice system may subject young people to harmful experiences that send them back into society with even more problems than they had when they were first incarcerated.
- To increase the successful reentry of youthful offenders, we should reexamine the goals of reentry through a psychosocial

development lens. From this perspective we should emphasize the necessary conditions for healthy development (e.g., supportive adults, opportunities to develop responsible autonomy, and interaction with prosocial peers). Ultimately, it may be the community, more so than the justice system or any specific agency, that is best suited to foster healthy development among young people released from prison.

Comments and Observations

Punishment vs. Rehabilitation

- Can we balance the competing goals of rehabilitation and punishment by creating a corrections system that views its role as that of an authoritative parent who is both demanding and responsive? The challenge is to take positive characteristics of parents and translate these into institutions such as the corrections system.
- Local jurisdictions need to examine the capacity of their communities to nurture the developmental needs of young people.
- Educational and social service agencies need to provide linkages that result in appropriate developmental services for reentering youth.
- We should provide more outreach and support to those who were formerly incarcerated so that they feel sufficiently welcomed back into the community and can take on a leadership role in that network of mentors.

Retooling the Criminal Justice System

- We need to incorporate the acknowledgment of racism, gender, and class issues if we are to earn the trust of young people who are incarcerated and work effectively with them to increase their prospects for success upon reentry. Given the increase in incarcerated populations from indigenous and new immigrant populations (e.g., Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders,

etc.), we run the risk of using “one size fits all” models that won’t work with these populations.

- Potential mentors should be identified and then given an accurate picture of the challenges and requirements for working with young offenders.
- For justice system practitioners, provisions should be made for addressing staff “burnout” to create a sustainable infrastructure of consistent, caring adults to facilitate successful reentry.
- It is important to train professionals in the corrections system to think about what it means to be a young person from a particular population and ethnicity. That is, cultural competency needs to be better developed throughout the juvenile and criminal justice system.
- To develop long-term, prosocial development programs within the juvenile and criminal justice systems, states and local jurisdictions will need to provide adequate resources and provide for staff training and monitoring.
- Should we think about helping young offenders move into alternate communities from those in which they committed their crimes if in fact it was a dysfunctional community that largely contributed to their being incarcerated in the first place? A related consideration: in under-resourced communities many people are struggling and it is hard to justify giving opportunities to ex-offenders when others who do not engage in criminal activities are also hanging by a thread and could benefit from similar opportunities.

Bridging the Walls of Detention: Continuum of Care

- The issue of a continuum of care needs to be addressed. Young people need supports throughout all phases of reentry to overcome

the many challenges to reintegrating back into society and families.

- Over the long term, a movement away from investing in large correctional institutions to a continuum of services (e.g., smaller residential services) may be an avenue for helping the justice system reorient its work in accordance with a psychosocial developmental perspective.

An Empirical Portrait of the Youth Reentry Population

By Howard Snyder

Key Points from the Presentation

- In 1997, 61 percent of youthful offenders were convicted for violent crimes, 22 percent for property-related offenses, and 11 percent for drug offenses.
- Between 1991 and 1999, the number of committed juveniles increased by 42 percent.
- On average, youth released from custody have spent one-third of their teenage years in confinement.
- Estimates suggest that up to 68 percent of committed males have a mental disorder (according to a study conducted by Gail Wasserman at Columbia University).
- Combining juvenile and adult offenders into one system raises a critical resource issue—in that situation, criminal justice resources likely would go to adults and relatively fewer resources would be allocated to youth, compared to current allocations. It can be argued that practically all young offenders should be candidates for reentry services since most incarcerated youth have many problems (e.g., educational deficits, mental illness) and histories of criminal involvement.
- There are two primary conclusions from the available data. First, an estimated 100,000

persons are candidates for juvenile reentry services—90 percent of juvenile offenders are within the juvenile justice system, and 10 percent are within the adult criminal justice system. (This estimate excludes youth who confined in short-term detention for four months or less.) Second, the juvenile justice system must rely on cooperation among community entities to provide needed services to these youth. The justice systems simply have too few resources to provide these services themselves.

- A number of concerns arise when we look at youth reentry. First, although violent crime increased and then decreased among males during the 1990s, this is not true for females. So, special attention should be given to gender and reentry. Second, adult corrections systems lack specialized services needed by juvenile offenders and therefore should be an area of policy focus. Third, changes in the welfare system (welfare-to-work) may contribute to increases in the number of parents and young people with low-paying jobs, in turn placing greater stress on juveniles, who may become more likely to offend or experience mental health problems, which in turn may increase the need for more intensive reentry services.

Comments and Observations

Youthful Offenders

- If the estimated number of juvenile offenders is between 80,000 and 100,000, that only comprises .5 percent of all youth age 13 to 17 and one-eighth of all people in custody. Is 100,000 a big or small number? Is it easily dismissed as a trivial policy issue? Should and can it become a compelling public policy opportunity?
- Parents and families should play a large role in youth reentry. Correctional institutions, for example, should encourage family members to come and help provide services,

and more generally should focus on the positive roles that families can play.

- It may be useful for researchers to construct an *index of disruption* that could gauge the extent to which young people at various ages and developmental stages experience major disruptions through incarceration. Measuring factors such as separation from parents, inability to continue schooling, length and location of incarceration, impact on one's ability to reenter the labor force (especially to obtain legitimate employment), and other such dimensions.
- Each year, 20,000 young people "age out" of foster care, but are not included in statistics cited by Howard. However, they very much face reentry issues (e.g., many of these youth lack independent living skills).

Cost Effectiveness: A Political Strategy

- It costs between \$4,000 and \$20,000 per year to keep juveniles incarcerated each day at the California Youth Authority (CYA). It costs less than half that amount to be put into prison.
- A study in Massachusetts in the mid-1980s demonstrated that \$12 million per year could be saved by a decreased focus on incarceration and a focus on shorter stays in confinement. This study could be used to argue for the need to invest more resources in reentry services.
- One broad-based strategy for improving youth reentry is to help policymakers and the public at large view juvenile and criminal justice through a caring perspective, one that emphasizes accountability but that also emphasizes care and love. However, neither "caring" nor "loving" is a winning political slogan, but cost-effectiveness is. So, ultimately advocates for young people need to prove that it is cost-effective to provide reentry services.

Providing Comprehensive Services: A Community-Wide Response

- The Friends of Island Academy (FIA) is a promising model for providing comprehensive services as New York juveniles (age 13 to 21) transition out of jail. The model includes a discharge plan, needs assessment, intensive case management, and on-site educational services in the community. More recently, FIA developed a partnership with the Board of Education, which may prove instrumental in providing educational services to young offenders during and after their incarceration.
- The key dimension underlying any effective youth reentry program likely includes a message to young people that they are important and that they are cared about. For many young offenders, such feelings may be foreign, and the result may be a lack of investment in themselves or society.
- Is it possible to infuse correctional systems with a different way of responding to developmental needs of juvenile offenders or helping different criminal justice systems to work together better? What is the role of "community" in shaping such changes?

Youth Perspectives on the Experience of Reentry

By Mercer Sullivan

Key Points from the Presentation

- Human development is embedded in social context. It may be that as few as 5 percent of U.S. census tracts supply over 50 percent of incarcerated persons. We need to bring the understanding of disadvantaged communities to a discussion of youth reentry, since these communities know how to support positive aspects of reentry for young people.
- There is a different range of developmental patterns in disadvantaged communities—

maybe adulthood starts sooner, or maybe it never starts at all. Intimate involvement and unplanned parenthood tend to happen earlier in disadvantaged communities, which can either contribute to a downward spiral or be a positive motivation for prosocial behavior. The motivations for criminal involvement differ for a 16-year-old (who may want respect) and a 25-year-old (who may be more interested in having a job). Understanding these differences can help us develop effective individualized treatment plans.

- Before age 18, school plays a major role in the lives of young offenders. One's chronological age can also impact access to housing—after age 18, young people are relocated to other apartments since they no longer qualify to live in public housing with their parents. Intimate involvement and unplanned parenthood tend to happen earlier in disadvantaged communities, which can either contribute to a downward spiral or be a positive motivation for prosocial behavior.
- Efforts to improve youth reentry might focus on increasing the professional expertise of the justice system, increasing the availability of individuals who can serve as intermediaries between different agencies and communities, and sustaining the ongoing involvement of communities.
- Mercer Sullivan's study of the community development corporation (CDC) movement highlighted the increasing need for professional expertise while being on guard against the danger of losing community roots. By and large, the CDC movement has been very successful in developing affordable housing.
- The Comer School Approach (developed by James Comer, a Yale psychiatrist) brought parents in to work with schools to bridge barriers between the schools and the community. Tom Cook from Northwestern University evaluated these programs and found that test scores did not improve but people liked these programs—was it a

failure or success? It's not clear. The social climate of the schools improved, and many people think that is important both in itself and as a precondition for better learning. By itself, however, it does not appear to be sufficient for improving educational achievement.

Comments and Observations

Social Context

- If we understand different pathways to development, are there different youth experiences (e.g., substance use/abuse or physical or verbal abuse) in which we could use an individualized treatment plan?
- In some “high risk” census tracts, there are high rates of welfare, dropouts, etc. The crime problem should not be left up to the corrections system to resolve, as it will take a major involvement by all social and cultural entities (e.g., education, employment, social services, medical, and others).

Political Dimension

- For youth reentry to become a policy priority, a marketing campaign to appeal to the public is needed, otherwise it will be difficult to generate sufficient concern for policymakers to pay attention to supporting effective reentry programs and policies.
- We will not have a change in reentry policies unless we demand it. The cost-effectiveness argument does not always work with policymakers. That is why a public awareness campaign is critical.

Community Context

- As policymakers and practitioners focus on youth reentry, they need to examine the multiple pathways by which healthy psychosocial development can occur. It is important to reframe discussions of youth reentry so they focus less on youth and the

problems “in” these youth and more on the systemic nature of the youth reentry problem and therefore the need for a systemic response to this problem. This is a “hard sell” in an individualistic society.

- How do we develop programs in the community to receive young men aged 25 or 26 who have spent most of their adolescence in custody? There are many barriers, such as the fact that communities have not been trained to help break the cycle of repeat offending.
- There is much to learn from Oakland’s experience of promoting reentry work through multiple agencies using community-based and political strategies (e.g., raising public awareness about the importance of reentry programs as a way of preventing crime). One of the lessons learned from the collaboration in Oakland is that *reentry work has to be tied to larger community strategies in order to be effective*. The City of Oakland, for example, initiated conversations with the Oakland Community Organizations (a collaboration that includes many faith-based organizations) to explore what role they could play in creating a community agenda.

Community-Based Organizations

- We need to push beyond community participation and press for a community partnership—actual partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and the criminal justice system. CBOs can play an important role in youth reentry because they can take risks and find funding that criminal justice systems cannot.
- Should there be a criminal justice organization that helps to establish linkages between the justice system and different “on the ground” service delivery organizations and agencies? The Aspen Institute has a group addressing comprehensive community initiatives in which different neighborhood-based organizations work together. Such a partnership would have a public purpose but

exist outside public institutions to validate and support reentry in communities most affected by incarceration.

- What can CBOs do to hold young people who are released from incarceration accountable and what external sources can the CBOs provide to improve the education and employment prospects of these young people? What are the methodologies of success at the community level and what do communities need to be successful?

Programming Considerations

- We need to move away from this mistaken notion that young offenders have to want to change. A good program motivates a person to change. One of the biggest challenges is that CBOs typically don’t want to work with young offenders and don’t want them back in their communities. It’s easier to treat someone perceived as being more deserving and more likely to succeed.
- There is a “disconnect” between funding and goals, and available programs and services. We need vision to get programs to achieve their goals. Many new programs target first-time offenders. In fact, the Repeat Offender Program in San Francisco actually banned repeat offenders from participating!
- Too often, programs lack a coordinated plan or long-term vision, resulting in wasted investments. For example, \$25 million was invested in San Francisco and the crime rate has dropped, but the number of young people in custody has increased!

Adolescent and Teenage Offenders Confronting the Challenges and Opportunities of Reentry

By David M. Altschuler and Rachel Brash

Discussion of Altschuler and Brash’s paper was circumscribed because the meeting was restructured to accommodate a discussion (summarized further below) of community-based efforts to improve youth reentry.

Altschuler's presentation emphasized a few select issues, listed below.

Key Points from the Presentation

- Dialogue with policymakers and practitioners should focus on the day-to-day practices, procedures, and requirements best equipped to facilitate the reintegration of young people from correctional facilities back into community settings.
- Multi-agency collaboration is one of the critical aspects that needs to fit into the puzzle of youth reentry. Interagency agreements are critical so that different obstacles can be addressed (e.g., staffing issues, competing orientations or philosophies of how to help young people).
- For multi-agency collaborations to take place, we have to discuss staffing, orientation, and philosophy. There are vast differences between facility-based versus community-based corrections. A great deal of effort is needed to get facility and community corrections staff to work together. There is a fundamental difference in mission between an institutional corrections mindset and a community-based one.
- Correctional reform needs to be guided by "thinking big, but acting small." Some of the "big" systems change strategies targeted on statewide policy reforms have been either too ambitious or amorphous. Having a long-term vision is crucial, but without a series of specific, actionable smaller steps, little progress can be made.
- Personnel, leadership, and training issues constitute one of the key dimensions of promising practices for effective aftercare/reentry. The goal is to develop qualified, properly trained staff who have leadership and support at the highest levels of the organization. Cross-training is useful, with direct service staff working in teams.

- An overarching case management framework lends itself to day-to-day practice on an interagency basis. We need to think strategically since we have limited resources. One could argue that many young people do not pose a public safety risk but maybe have a high level of need for services. Low risk but high need offenders generally require low levels of correctional supervision. We need to emphasize brokerage and linkage, particularly in the provision of services beyond correctional supervision—without these, we can't even get to first base with regard to improving the reentry experience.
- All youth reentry activities need to be informed by a family-sensitive perspective.
- The provision of correctional supervision requires a calibration between deterrence-based supervision practices and service delivery. Both graduated sanctions and incentives need to be developed.

Interventions and Services Offered to Former Juvenile Offenders Re-entering Their Communities: An Analysis of Program Effectiveness

By Margaret Beale Spencer and Cheryl Jones-Walker

As with the Altschuler and Brash paper, discussion of Spencer and Jones-Walker's paper was circumscribed because the meeting was restructured to accommodate a discussion (summarized further below) of community-based efforts to improve youth reentry. Spencer summarized a number of specific issues, listed below, which she felt should be given special attention.

Key Points from the Presentation

- It has been found that theory-driven programming is five times more effective than non-theory driven programming.

- We must be careful not to view development as a simple linear pattern. We need to grow in our understanding of how to support individuals in context. A dual focus on the individual and context is needed.
- We should not take developmental issues of privileged young people and superimpose them on underprivileged youth. To do so risks misunderstanding the unique development of these youth and how best to improve their development.
- How can we train staff to become more comfortable in talking about racism and sexuality? We have to acknowledge the continuing invisibility of brown and black people and minorities in general in our economic and educational policies.
- Protective factors such as cultural background, spirituality, and pride in group membership can be transformed into age-appropriate supports. The net stress experienced by a young person is diminished if he or she can integrate these supports. Almost all risks can become transformed into developmentally linked challenges. The key is to take the protective factors and transform them into specific supports that are age-appropriate and customized for each individual.
- Effective intervention occurs in rehabilitation programs for young offenders when (1) services are intensive and behavioral; (2) characteristics of offenders, therapists, and programs are carefully matched; (3) interpersonally sensitive and constructive communication is used; and (4) program structure and activities are designed to disrupt delinquent networks.
- It is critical to make arrangements for alternative living situations and for schooling options so that returning youth do not lose out on further schooling.
- Effective rehabilitation programs need to be linked to new ways of thinking about how to

best serve young people in underserved communities.

Collective Assignment

By Jeremy Travis

During the second day of discussion, participants from corrections institutions were asked to answer the following question: what support would you need to retool or reengineer the work of your institution to support the positive development of young people in correctional institutions? At the same time, participants from community-based organizations were asked to answer the following questions: How would you move from an institution-based to community-based approach to addressing reentry from the ground up while making connections with the broader justice and social policy environment? How will people on the ground make hard choices in an environment of dwindling resources?

Correctional Institutions

- Colorado and Missouri both can provide examples of an effective retooling of the corrections system through the implementation of administrative changes. Colorado realigned its funding streams so that resources could follow youth back into the community. Missouri has located its juvenile corrections system located within the Department of Human Services, not the Department of Corrections, leading to a fundamentally different emphasis on youth reentry.
- The Colorado Division of Youth Corrections' (referred to as Youth Corrections) experience has been that it starts with a vision statement that speaks to the corrections institution's intent to operate as a safe and just environment. This requires bringing the community in and increasing the comfort level of visiting families. A key concern for how Youth Corrections is ensuring that community-based organizations have the resources needed to help youth during reentry. Youth

Corrections uses a wide variety of CBOs as service providers, including grassroots and faith-based organizations and seeks to involve paraprofessionals with alternative education, drug, and alcohol treatment strategies. Youth Corrections realigned its resources so that funds could follow the youth from the corrections institution into the community. Part of the new vision involved seeing youth as resources for the communities to which they returned. There were staff-related issues that arise with regard, for example, to redefining job descriptions, hiring practices, training, and changes in routines. But these issues were successfully addressed. *The main point is that changes can be made without funding—but the real challenge is culture change.*

- The Division of Youth Services in Jefferson City, Missouri has realized unanticipated benefits from downsizing its largest institutions 30 years ago. Today, its largest facility has 80 young people. The rationale for decentralization was that smaller facilities could be operated more safely and made it easier to keep young offenders near to their own communities. There are community liaison councils in each community that include individuals representing various types of communities (e.g., education, law enforcement, mental health, child advocates, and labor unions providing resources to these young people). The faith community may help with providing alternative living or employment venues. There is a practice of taking the young people out into the community to experience different lives. Significantly, Missouri's juvenile corrections system is located within the Department of Human Services and not within the Department of Corrections. Finally, aftercare providers tend to be brokers for services in their own communities rather than the probation department and caseloads are manageable numbers.

Community-Based Organizations

- There needs to be room for community-based organizations to work with high-risk youth. We need to link the efforts of the CBOs with those of probation and parole departments, and tap into the experience of members of the community who understand and can access informal networks in the community and among different agencies.
- A critical piece of success with any CBO is having enough relationships at the supervisory end so corrections institutions and CBOs can manage reentry together. For example, when young people are sent to state prison in New York, their education then comes under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education, but their credits are not easily transferable. The community-based organization, CASES, Inc., has brought the educational and prison authorities to the table to try and resolve the problem of large numbers of young people returning from state prison without having made much if any educational progress. Ideally, detention institutions could share educational assessments and diagnoses with CBOs and probation and parole offices would work with CBOs. These organizations then would be better positioned to more proactively address problems among these youth before they recidivate and so the youth can be linked to educational and other services.
- Public/Private Ventures is a technical assistance provider and intermediary that is new to the reentry issue. It is doing reconnaissance work with faith-based or community-based organizations with historic ties to faith-based organizations in efforts to support the nurturing of multiple networks, which do not work in isolation. One of the key findings is that there are approximately 10,000 large faith-based organizations around the U.S. providing a panoply of services, with reentry emerging as an area of focus. PPV seeks to help strengthen these partnerships with everyone

involved (including many informal, ad hoc networks and correctional facilities). One key challenge is to professionalize operations without losing, ceasing to be islands of hope—this involves formalizing partnerships and having systems of accountability on the service delivery side. Someone has to organize these mega-faith-based organizations to move beyond service deliver and get involved in policy work. One cautionary note is that some faith-based organizations still espouse traditional values including conservative mores about sexuality, but it is encouraging to note that increasingly, there are more progressive, open-minded clergy.

- We've got to target the "deep end" (repeat) offenders—they need the most help while the widest array of services is available for first-time offenders. It works like a funnel with progressively fewer services available for those needing the most help. It's important that funding be channeled into criminal justice programs that focus on and encourage work with the toughest population. The Safe Passages Program in Oakland is a consortium of CBOs funded and targeted to work with "deep end" offenders. To be effective, the recruited CBOs that provide services must understand prison culture.
- We have many sound bites we could use in pursuing public policies supportive of youth reentry:
 - Restore young people to the community.
 - Reentry, not recycling.
 - Prisons as punishment, not for punishment.
 - "Talk to your kids. It's the anti-drug" (similar to California's First Five Years ads).

Research and Policy Questions

By Jeremy Travis

At the end of the Roundtable meeting, Jeremy Travis posed the following questions to the

participants: If there were a strategic reentry-related opportunity that you would present to a funder, what would that opportunity look like? What could the role of the foundations be? If you were, for example, to receive \$1 million to invest in one community to inform change and national thinking about "throwaway" youth, what would the "big idea" be?

- It would be interesting to establish state-level roundtables to learn about how reentry varies, say, in California and New York. In this same vein, it would be helpful for foundations to support state-specific work.
- Perhaps we do not need any more demonstration projects and the focus of investment should be on implementation of existing best practices.
- Correctional facilities staff need training on how to operationalize a developmental perspective.
- For bigger policy changes, we need to focus on systemic changes. The bigger challenge is, for example, how we shift constituencies that support corrections interests to support successful reentry practices. Efforts are needed to persuade legislatures to invest outside their correctional systems.
- The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) has a successful track record for implementing policy changes. For \$1 million, CSH likely could put together a model demonstration project with a solid evaluation component, bringing together mental health and health providers, treatment providers, and criminal justice partners. The project likely would show cost savings—it could, for example, serve five people for the \$50,000 that some criminal justice systems spend on incarcerating one offender for a year. Such evidence would be especially persuasive in a context in which state budgets are tight.
- Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos is committed to representing the incarcerated, especially juvenile offenders, and we need to bring

them to the table in these discussions, in a rich, full way. What's particularly meaningful is gathering creative ideas about how to train a caring adult and how to increase the capacity of a community to provide a caring adult for juvenile offenders upon reentry.

- Research is useful but systemic change will not happen until communities from which large numbers of incarcerated young people come are empowered and take action. Thus, the \$1 million should be invested in organizing and mobilizing people in the community on issues such as voting. Community-based organizations need to see themselves as more than researchers or service providers since they are in an excellent position to be agents of change.
- The \$1 million could be invested in a ballot issue to take non-violent offenders out of the criminal justice system and place them in a community-based setting. Such an approach is viable. For example, California's law enforcement and criminal justice systems alike opposed Proposition 36 (known as the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act), an initiative that gives first- and second-time, non-violent, simple drug possession offenders the opportunity to receive substance abuse treatment instead of being incarcerated. And 61 percent of the electorate voted yes, essentially transforming drug abuse into a public health issue rather than a criminal justice one.