A Model of Ex-Offender Reentry in Suffolk County, Massachusetts

by

Ryan P. Allen
B.A., Economics & History
The College of William and Mary, 1997

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Signature of Author: __

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 16, 2002

Certified by: __

Professor Langley Keyes
Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: __

Professor Dennis Frenchman
Chair, MCP Committee
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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ABSTRACT

The United States, like every other country, has a system of correctional facilities in which it places people for punitive and rehabilitative reasons. To determine what kinds of people come back compared to those who went in to prisons, we must examine what happens to prisoners while they are incarcerated and how they return to society as ex-offenders. To that end, this thesis investigates the reentry model and reentry in practice in Suffolk County, Massachusetts. Broadly defined, this reentry model consists of the criminal justice system, the social service system, and the community. These three systems collaborate to produce a reentry model for all offenders who are incarcerated. The model promises supportive services for any offender and ex-offender who need them.

This reentry model does not work well for most offenders and ex-offenders. Instead of a model that gives services in proportion to need, the reentry model has several systemic characteristics that result in less needy offenders and ex-offenders receiving the most intensive services and support at the expense of the most needy offenders and ex-offenders. A pilot program in Suffolk County, called the Boston Reentry Initiative, seeks to help reverse the outcome of this model by offering services to the most needy offenders.

Thesis Supervisor: Langley Keyes
Title: Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning
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I dedicate this thesis to my friends and family who have supported me every step of the way. Rest assured mom and dad, I am finally beginning to understand the joy of learning for learning’s sake
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States, like every other country, has a system of correctional facilities in which it places people for punitive and rehabilitative reasons. That is, when people in the U.S. are convicted of a crime, they are generally sentenced to a period of incarceration in one of these correctional facilities. As a society, we have judged that these individuals should be removed from society for a certain period of time. But about 97 percent of the people who enter a prison eventually return to society.¹ To determine what effect the reentry of ex-offenders has on public safety and community development, we must examine what happens to prisoners while they are incarcerated and how they return to society.

The return of ex-offenders to their communities is important for community development on at least two levels. First, ex-offenders return to families and friends whom they have been separated from for a significant amount of time. This reunion can be positive or negative, depending on the relationships between these people and how the relationships changed during the incarceration period. Second, the return of incarcerated men to the community has a direct impact on the stability and safety in the community.² Ex-offenders could return to their communities, increasing the employment base and strengthening community organizations. On the other hand, ex-offenders could return to their communities and continue the illegal activities that resulted in their incarceration in the first place. An increase in crime would undoubtedly reduce the stability of the community and decrease public safety.

What happened to an offender while he was incarcerated and how he is reintegrated into society affects his actions when he is released and returns to his community. If an offender spent his time unproductively and returns to society without a plan on how to live an improved life, he will likely emerge from prison the same person who went into the prison. On the other hand, if an offender makes a concerted effort to change his life and move away from illegal activity and returns to society with ideas for how to live a better life, he will probably leave prison intent on becoming a productive member of society. But changing the activities of an offender takes more than just a good attitude. If supportive services do not surround him during his incarceration and after he is released to the community, then the chances of an offender making positive and sustainable changes in his life are very small. Even ex-offenders who experienced a conversion that turned them away from illegal activity admit that without supportive services during their incarceration and after they returned to the community, they might have resumed illegal activity after their release from incarceration.\(^3\)

But what about offenders who are not inclined to change their lives? Can all of the supportive services in the world change a person who does not want to be changed? To be sure, internal motivation is a major aspect of rehabilitation. But a view of something better and a way to achieve it may be an important component of rehabilitation as well. Given no alternatives, the only certainty for an offender with a negative attitude is that he will not improve his behavior and the community will be that much less safe when he is released.

\(^2\) This thesis will only examine the reentry of male offenders, despite the fact that the percentage of total offenders who are female has increased recently.
With this in mind, this thesis examines the ex-offender reentry model for men incarcerated in the county correctional facility in Suffolk County, Massachusetts. By reentry model, I mean the collection of institutions and services that an offender encounters when he is incarcerated and after he is released. The goal of this thesis is to determine this reentry model and how it works in practice. When there are differences between the model and practice, it explores what has caused these differences and how practice might be changed to reflect the model more closely.

A Reentry Model

Based on a series of interviews with criminal justice officials, service providers, community representatives, offenders, and ex-offenders, I posit that the model of ex-offender reentry involves what I am calling “three systems:” the criminal justice system, the formal social service system, and the community system. The model operates under the following:

- At every step of reentry the three systems act synergistically to ensure a successful reintegration for someone leaving prison;
- The engagement of each system is vital for a successful reentry; and
- The lack of participation of one system will ultimately reduce the effectiveness of the entire model.

I pay particular attention to the linkages among these three systems to test how accurately the operation of the stated model matches reentry in practice.

3 During conversations with ex-offenders, they related the difficulties facing them during their attempts to “go straight.” Without help from social services and a positive social network, they believed that a conversion would not have been enough to keep them away from crime.
The Suffolk County criminal justice system includes the Suffolk County House of Corrections (HOC), the Division of Community Corrections, Offices of Probation and Parole, the court system and the Boston Police Department. Programming in prisons and supervised release programs operated by either the Division of Community Corrections or Offices of Probation or Parole, are major aspects of this system. In-prison programming includes education classes, counseling, and health care. Supervised release programs include parole (typically gives an ex-offender a bed in transitional housing or help finding housing, and a job or help finding a job), probation (includes scheduled check-ins with a probation officer and information or referrals to various resources), and job furlough programs (an arrangement where an inmate will work in the community and live in supervised housing).

The social service system includes institutions in the community that provide individuals with assistance in finding housing, job training classes, educational classes, substance abuse counseling, and mental or physical health care. These institutions could be city or state government agencies, non-profit organizations (including faith-based non-profits), or for-profit organizations. Ex-offenders are linked to social services through:

1) Formal relationships between the criminal justice system and local social service providers (ex-offenders may seek social services as a part of a supervised release program) and

2) Personal relationships in the informal safety net that ex-offenders use to gain access to resources and opportunities provided by local social service providers. Personal relationships range from family members and neighbors

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4 For the purposes of this thesis, a “system” is a set of interrelated institutions that interact to produce a given set of outcomes.
to community leaders and clergy to members of the local business community and civic associations.

Finally, the community system is composed of families and friends of offenders, social groups and churches. Families and friends of ex-offenders comprise their “strong ties” – the individuals that ex-offenders depend on for getting by in day-to-day life. Social groups and churches represent potential avenues to gain “weak ties” for ex-offenders. “Weak ties” are relationships that could help an ex-offender “move up” in life. In other words, these are relationships that an ex-offender might leverage to find information about housing, job openings, or help filling some other need. Social groups could be sports teams, volunteer organizations, or the YMCA. Some institutions in the community system are difficult to distinguish from institutions in the social service system. For example, churches often act as informal therapy-providers. However, most churches that formally offer social services establish a non-profit arm to do so. Therefore, I place churches in the community system and any nonprofits associated with churches in the social service system.

**Tracing the Reentry Model**

Prior to examining the reentry model in detail, I will first sketch a general outline of how the model should work. There is recognition on the part of players in each of the three systems that each system has a role in the reentry model. For example, a model of reentry that does not include treatment services supplied by the social service system is bound to fail in helping the majority of ex-offenders who are reintegrating into society. While each system is an important part of the reentry model, the relative importance of
each system waxes and wanes as an offender moves through the model. At the beginning of the model, the criminal justice system is relatively more important than the community system. As an offender progresses through the model, the importance of the criminal justice system declines and the importance of the community system increases. The importance of the social service system fluctuates depending on where an offender is located in the model. For example, at strategic points in the model, like immediately after an offender has been released from prison, the importance of the social service system may surpass the importance of the criminal justice and community systems.

With the shifting importance of the systems in the model in mind, the three systems collaborate in the reentry process. According to the model, reentry in Suffolk County begins the first day that an offender spends in the Suffolk County HOC and continues after he is released to the community. When an offender enters the prison, staff members assess his needs and then create a plan for that inmate’s stay in prison that is coordinated by a case manager. While prison officials would like to provide the most intensive services to the most serious offenders in the prison, the reentry system in Suffolk County is built on the premise that all offenders should have access to needed services to aid in their rehabilitation. Therefore, prisoners gain access to most services through a referral from their case manager. While a judge does not mandate the services, inmates are expected to follow the service plan created for them. Failure to do so results in sanctions against the inmate. With this protocol in place, every inmate who needs services while he is incarcerated should receive them. There are exceptions. The model excludes the worst offenders incarcerated in the Suffolk County HOC from participating in certain aspects of the model. Specifically, these offenders cannot participate in
Community Corrections programs that provide offenders with intensive social services and access to the community. This constraint is largely in place because the criminal justice system considers these worst offenders a threat to community safety.

As inmates move through the prison, they encounter progressively less supervision. This “step-down” method of corrections begins a normalization process that results in a portion of the most motivated inmates spending increasing amounts of time in the community. These inmates are the ones most likely to receive intensive services through aftercare programs affiliated with partnerships between the criminal justice system and various social service agencies. Inmates not involved in these services use a discharge planner provided by the prison to help them access needed post-incarceration services when they are released. For inmates that fail to access post-incarceration services through either of these avenues, the model makes an implicit assumption that they do not need social services or that they can access needed services on their own or through social networks that they have in their communities. Their success in accessing services when they enter the community is a function of their motivation, the strength of their social network, and the effectiveness of outreach programs run by various social service organizations or agencies. Where the model ends is more difficult to discern than where it begins. For the purposes of this thesis, I recognize that an “end” of the reentry process is variable, depending on the individual ex-offender and their propensity to relapse into criminal activity (e.g., begin to use drugs or alcohol again).
Methodology

This thesis is based on a review of pertinent literature about the reentry of ex-offenders into society and a series of interviews with key players in the Suffolk County reentry model. All interviews focused on the reentry model and how it operates in practice. Interviews also paid special attention to the role of social services and the community in the reentry process. For a complete list of individuals that I interviewed please see Appendix 1.

Some interviews deserve special mention. I interviewed five offenders currently living in a pre-release center in Suffolk County. I also interviewed three ex-offenders who all spent time incarcerated in the Suffolk County HOC. At the time of my interviews, all of these ex-offenders had been out of prison for between one month and several years. Because of the sensitive nature of these interviews, I took special precautions to ensure that interviewees participated voluntarily and that their identities were kept confidential. To see a copy of documents of informed consent, confidentiality protocols, and a list of questions that I asked the offenders and ex-offenders, please see Appendix 2.

Prior to investigating the details of the ex-offender reentry model in Suffolk County, it is useful to understand the wider context of the reentry issue. To that end, in Chapter 2 I explain the most serious barriers to reentry faced by ex-offenders when they return to their community, along with some of the current debates that surround the reentry issue. In Chapters 3 and 4, I conduct a detailed trace of the reentry model and where it differs in practice based on existing research that has been done on reentry in Suffolk County and conversations with many of the key players in the model. Finally in
Chapter 5 I discuss possible long- and short-term policy recommendations that could help solve the discrepancies that I found between the reentry model and reentry in practice.
Chapter 2: Barriers, Theoretical Debates and Reentry

Ex-offender reentry is not a new issue. As long as prisons have existed, ex-offenders and the communities to which they return have presented challenges to each other. This thesis focuses on the challenges faced by ex-offenders as they return to society. From an ex-offender's perspective, the immediate requirements when he returns to the community are finding a stable housing environment, a job, and a supportive social network in their community. Research shows that these challenges coincide with the most important determinants of a successful reentry. In other words, the most important aspects of a successful reentry are also the most difficult to attain. Overcoming these challenges is difficult for many reasons, of which the three key ones are:

1. Shortages of available housing;
2. A scarcity of adequate employment opportunities; and
3. An absence of a strong or positive social network in their community.

Housing

The first and most pressing barrier to reentry for an ex-offender is finding a place to live after release. An ex-offender has several living options when he steps out of the

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5 Many anecdotal stories from ex-offenders focus on the problems they face when they first return to society. In interviews that I conducted with ex-offenders, they identified these three challenges as the most difficult to overcome. Also see James Austin and Patricia Hardyman, “Exploring the Risks and Needs of the Returning Prison Population,” Working Paper for the National Policy Conference “From Prison to Home: The Effects of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities.” Sponsored by the Urban Institute and the Department of Health and Human Services, January 30-31, 2002.

6 Recent research suggests that the first days of an ex-offender's return to the community and how they overcome these challenges are the most important determinants of their success. See The First Month Out: Post-Incarceration Experiences in New York City, The Vera Institute of Justice, (September 1999). I define a successful reentry as an ex-offender staying out of prison after returning to the community. Some
prison.\textsuperscript{7} A friend or family’s house, his own house (either market-rate housing or subsidized housing), or an emergency or transitional shelter. Probably the best, and most realistic, option for many ex-offenders is staying with a family-member or friend until they can find a permanent housing arrangement. However, if the ex-offender is perceived as a destabilizing influence, he may not be welcome.\textsuperscript{8} Conversely, an ex-offender may balk at returning to a living-situation with a family-member or friend because of the negative environment there. This was the case with one ex-offender that I interviewed who stayed away from his previous living arrangement with friends because of their illegal activity.\textsuperscript{9}

Ex-offenders could also elect to find their own house, but finding a market-rate or subsidized housing unit the first day out of prison is extremely difficult. Boston currently faces a shortage of affordable, market-rate housing units. Low vacancy rates and extremely high housing prices that accompany a hot real estate market make finding an affordable and available unit nearly impossible.\textsuperscript{10} Actually securing a market-rate unit once a vacant unit is found is another challenge in its self. Many landlords require a criminal background check and payment of first-month’s rent, last month’s rent, and a security deposit prior to leasing a housing unit. This could be upwards of $2,400 for a studio apartment in Boston. The criminal background check will usually take an ex-

\textsuperscript{7} These scenarios assume that the ex-offender is not entering parole or some other ex-offenders reentry program.
\textsuperscript{8} This is a particular concern if an ex-offender is returning to a family-member or friend who lives in subsidized housing. HUD’s “One Strike and You’re Out” policy could result in the eviction of all members of a subsidized housing unit if someone with a criminal background is found living there without appearing on the lease. See Bradley, Katharine H. et al. “No Place Like Home: Housing and the Ex-Prisoner,” Policy Brief, Community Resources for Justice (November 2001), p.3.
\textsuperscript{9} Also see Travis, Jeremy et al. “From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry,” The Urban Institute Press, June 2001, p.35.
offender out of the running for an apartment and the impoverished state that most ex-offenders find themselves in when they return to the community precludes them from finding the money to make the necessary payments to a landlord.\textsuperscript{11}

Finding a federally subsidized housing unit in Boston can be even more difficult than finding a market-rate unit. It is difficult primarily because of the extremely long waiting lists for the relatively few units available. Most people that I interviewed believe that getting a subsidized unit is at least a two-year long process. This waiting period justifiably seems overwhelming to people who need a place to stay the day they walk out of prison. According to Kurt Francois, the Safe Neighborhood Initiative Case Manager at Community Resources for Justice, putting your name on a waiting list for subsidized housing cannot occur while you are in prison, so the wait begins after an ex-offender’s release.\textsuperscript{12}

Difficulty in attaining a federally subsidized housing unit is also caused by accurate and commonly held misconceptions about restraints on subsidized housing for ex-offenders. Many believe that any type of criminal background keeps someone out of subsidized housing. Federal law actually specifies three types of criminal backgrounds that limit access to subsidized housing. The first type is eviction from subsidized housing because of drug-related activities. Ex-offenders who fit this description are typically prohibited from subsidized housing for three years, but this period can shrink if the individual enrolls in an approved rehabilitation program. The second type is a conviction

\textsuperscript{11} Andre Norman, Lead Field Organizer for the Ella J. Baker House, discussed these problems in a presentation at the program “Reality Revisited: Prisoner Reentry” sponsored by Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries at Eliot Church in Newton, MA on April 1, 2002.
\textsuperscript{12} Interview on March 13, 2002.
of a sex crime. All sex offenders are permanently banned from federally subsidized housing. The third type is a conviction involving the manufacture of methamphetamines on the premises of subsidized housing. Like sex offenders, individuals convicted from this offense are permanently banned from subsidized housing. In addition to these three types of criminal backgrounds, all public housing authorities have the discretion to prevent access to subsidized housing for any other kinds of criminal activity. What most ex-offenders do not realize is that there is an appeals process when the public housing authority denies access based on criminal background. Ex-offenders who go through the appeals process often have equal success in attaining subsidized housing as other citizens.\textsuperscript{13}

If staying with a friend or family-member or procuring a market-rate or subsidized housing unit is not an option, then an emergency or transitional shelter is the final choice for some ex-offenders when they return to their community. According to research on Boston-area pre-release inmates, 33 percent of the inmates who have been incarcerated in the past spent time on the streets when they were released from custody.\textsuperscript{14} In some cases, ex-offenders who want to access an emergency shelter must first prove that they are actually homeless. Therefore, they sometimes spend 24 hours on the streets before an emergency shelter will admit them.\textsuperscript{15} The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance indicates that Boston’s emergency shelters serve annually between 4,000 and

\textsuperscript{13} This description of federal subsidized housing regulations and ex-offenders is adapted from Bradley, Katharine H. et al. “No Place Like Home: Housing and the Ex-Prisoner,” Policy Brief, Community Resources for Justice (November 2001), p.5.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Based on an interview with Liz Curtain, Director of Adult Services at the Brooke and McGrath Houses at Community Resources for Justice, April 1, 2002.
5,000 clients who were previously incarcerated. The transitional housing system is also difficult for ex-offenders to access because of the system’s long waiting lists and the tendency for clients already in the emergency shelter system to receive priority over clients just entering the system.

Obtaining a stable place to live after returning to society from a prison sentence is an obstacle for many ex-offenders. Particularly in the hot real estate market of the Boston-area, prohibitive rents and fees limit the access of poor and working class people to the private housing market. Long waiting lists and rules that prohibit ex-felons from living in subsidized housing also constrain the housing options of a returning ex-offender. Finally, potentially unwelcoming family members and friends further restrict an ex-offender’s choice in the housing market.

**Employment**

Once an offender finds a place to live, he must find a way to support himself. An analysis of a cohort of prisoners (both men and women) released from the county-correctional facilities shows that the majority (54 percent) was working prior to his or her incarceration. However, research indicates that incarceration has at least short-term

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16 Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, *Ex-Prisoners and Massachusetts Shelters, Individuals Entering Emergency Shelters Directly Upon Discharge from a State or County Correctional Facility*, 2001 as cited in Bradley, Katharine H. et al. “No Place Like Home: Housing and the Ex-Prisoner,” Policy Brief, Community Resources for Justice (November 2001), pg.7. The authors estimate that approximately one-quarter of the released prison population experiences homelessness within a year of their release from prison.


18 Based on data from a cohort released in January, 2001. The data were supplied by Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent, Community Corrections Division of the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department.
negative effects on employment and earnings.\textsuperscript{19} Most prisoners released from a county correctional facility in Massachusetts have low education and skill-levels. For example, less than a quarter of the prisoners released from the Suffolk County HOC in January 2001 had a high school diploma or a GED.\textsuperscript{20} Criminal background checks, which many employers use as a screening process, are more prominent now in urban labor markets than they have been in the past. According to Kamilah Drummond, Employment Specialist at The Work Place, a One-Stop Employment Center in Boston, criminal background checks have increased as a result of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001.\textsuperscript{21} This, coupled with the fact that most ex-offenders have low education-levels and the economy is still recovering from a recession, has made placing ex-offenders in jobs exceedingly difficult.

**Supportive Social Networks**

Based on a series of interviews with current and former prisoners, I have found that many of them acknowledge a problem in returning to their former social networks. Often, friends or family-members in these networks were part of the reason that they participated in illegal activity in the first place. Many interviewees could list only a few individuals whom they considered to be a positive influence on their lives. Typically, these were girlfriends or spouses, children, or a couple of close friends. Each of these examples is “getting by” ties.\textsuperscript{22} Few of those interviewed were involved with social

\textsuperscript{20} The data were supplied by Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent, Community Corrections Division of the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department.
\textsuperscript{21} Based on an interview on March 28, 2002.
organizations, such as the YMCA, and those who were so involved expressed concern over “dumping” their problems on people they met there. Of the eight interviews I conducted, only two of the individuals attended church and few of the offenders had any interests that they wanted to pursue when they were released. For example, interviewees were not interested in joining social groups or participating in community activities. Instead of reaching out to the community for support, most of the interviewees were content to surround themselves with a few family or friends and try to get on with their lives.

The relative social isolation suggested by many of my interviewees makes reentry a difficult process. Research in the area of social networks highlights the importance of a broad social network in helping someone find necessary amenities or services. For example, the article “The Strength of Weak Ties” by Mark Granovetter, insists that a social network beyond a network of close friends is an important source of support for people. Through social networks, ex-offenders could foster social capital that would help them find housing and jobs, along with access to a variety of social services.

I have discussed three of the most important impediments to a successful reentry. There are others: substance abuse problems, mental illness, and physical health issues can all reduce the likelihood of a successful reentry for an ex-offender. Another general complicating factor is the allure and “thrill” of a former life of crime. Many may find it difficult to walk away from “easy money” that they made while participating in illegal activity in favor of the low wages that they garner from a job they view as demeaning.

In the past, ex-offenders overcame the challenge of finding housing, a job, and a supportive network with the use of formal supervisory institutions, such as the Parole
Department and half-way houses, that assisted them in accessing needed services and connecting to positive social networks. These institutions are still in place to assist ex-offenders in their reentry, but for a variety of reasons that I discuss in Chapter 4 fewer ex-offenders are taking advantage of them. In addition to the shrinking number of ex-offenders who use post-release supervision programs and half-way houses, reentry has changed to such an extent that new programs are needed to help ex-offenders with the reentry process. Experts in the field of criminal justice and community development disagree on why the phenomenon of reentry has changed and the appropriate kinds of programs or policies that could help with reentry. These issues merge to make for a complex series of debates around the reentry issue in the U.S.

The reentry of ex-offenders may seem deceptively simple: ex-offenders need housing, a job, and a social network and everything else will fall into place. However, the nuances of reentry, such as substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling, make reentry complicated. How a reentry model unfolds – how much supervision vs. treatment, which providers should offer treatment, and the sequencing of this treatment – is a hotly contested debate. Researchers argue over the success of the current model of reentry as well as the nature and size of the reentry population. In the next section, I turn to these debates.

**Debates About Reentry**

Researchers Jeremy Travis and Anne Morrison Piehl believe that the biggest change in the current reentry situation when compared to historical reentry is the increase in the number of ex-offenders returning to communities in the U.S. In 1990, the total

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number of offenders released from state and federal correctional institutions was 423,800. In 2000, this number is projected to grow to 585,400. This represents an increase of 38% over a ten-year span. In Massachusetts, state and county prisons released almost 22,000 prisoners annually between 1994 and 1998, after releasing less than 18,000 in 1990. In Suffolk County, Massachusetts, the Suffolk County HOC currently releases between 200 and 250 inmates every month. Travis and Piehl believe that the increased scale of the reentry population has fundamentally altered how reentry works. In other words, the dramatic increase in the numbers of ex-offenders returning to society means that, even with increased funding, the current mechanisms for helping ex-offenders with reentry will be unsuccessful.

Other researchers question the logic of a change in the character of reentry simply because of increased numbers. For example, James Lynch and William Sabol point out that the actual rate of growth of reentry was higher in the 1990s than it has been since 2000. In other words, the number of people released from prisons during the 1990s increased at a faster rate than it did for the number of people released from prisons after 2000. Therefore, they argue that if a high rate of growth in the release of ex-offenders is the primary reason that reentry is a serious issue now, then reentry should have been a much bigger issue in the 1990s. They also suggest that if funding for services offered

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24 This is the total number of prisoners serving sentences of at least one-year.
inside and outside of prisons during the reentry process are keeping up with the number of new prisoners released, then there may not be a need for new policy development.\textsuperscript{28}

Lynch and Sabol see the increased scale of the reentry population as obscuring two other critical issues. They posit that differences in the composition of the returning prisoners and the communities that prisoners return to are as important as the number of prisoners returning to society.\textsuperscript{29} Instead of focusing on the numbers of ex-offenders returning to society to justify new reentry programs, they contend that recent cohorts of inmates exiting prison are less prepared for the reintegration process (i.e., they have participated in fewer rehabilitative programs), more likely to have health or substance abuse problems, and more likely to return to fewer communities than previous cohorts. Therefore, they argue that these ex-offenders have different needs than past ex-offenders and are moving back to fewer working class and poor communities that have only shallow resources to help assist them in the reentry process. Thus, differences in the character of the returning ex-offender population and the milieu to which they return are compelling reasons to increase attention on the reentry. The increased size of the cohort of returning ex-offenders is of secondary importance.

Besides the size and composition debates, there are many other contentious issues around reentry. Some researchers think that reentry will help stabilize communities while others believe that reentry will destabilize communities.\textsuperscript{30} Dina Rose and Todd

\textsuperscript{28} Data from the criminal justice system shows that funding for programs and services has not kept up with the growth in the prison population. See Lawrence, S. et al. “The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming.” Draft report from the Urban Institute Press, March 2002.


Clear argue that concentrated incarceration and reentry will on the whole destabilize communities. Using a social disorganization framework, they hypothesize that the movement of people to and from prison disrupts the social relationships that form the basis of informal social control.31

Determining the effects of reentry on a community is not easy. First, an offender’s sentence length and the relationship of this length to the “type” of offender have important implications for public safety and the relative difficulty that ex-offenders have when they return to society. If a violent offender who is likely to recidivate leaves before rehabilitation occurs, then community safety and stability are threatened. If the same offender stays in prison long enough for some degree of rehabilitation to occur, then reintegration may result in less disruption for the community. Conversely, if a minor offender stays in prison too long, then breaks with family and friends may make reentry more difficult. If the minor criminal is released shortly after incarceration, then ties to family and friends will be more intact and reentry may be a stabilizing event.32 Therefore, community stability in the face of ex-offender reentry is partly a function of matching correct sentences and services with the various types of offenders.

Second, the capacity of an ex-offender’s community to absorb the high numbers of ex-offenders that return to it is critical in determining whether reentry is stabilizing or destabilizing. Community capacity includes the attitude of the community members towards accepting ex-offenders into the neighborhood and the resources and services that communities have to offer ex-offenders when they return. Preliminary research suggests

The Effect of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families and Communities,” sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and The Urban Institute, January 30-31, 2002.
that community members may not welcome ex-offenders with open arms. In fact, this research suggests that public safety is still a primary concern of community members that accept large numbers of ex-offenders.\textsuperscript{33} Research also shows that ex-offenders tend to come from and return to poor or working class communities.\textsuperscript{34} These communities have high rates of poverty, high living densities, and high levels of residential instability, each of which is linked to high crime rates.\textsuperscript{35} Poor communities may also contain institutions, such as neighborhood organizations, that do not have a large amount of “public control.”\textsuperscript{36} Public control is defined as the ability of institutions to leverage extra local resources, such as city services, for the use of community residents. Therefore, ex-offenders returning to a community that fits this description might not find resources that they need to help with their reentry. Despite these preliminary findings, very little is known about how a community is affected by ex-offender reentry.

The increase in the ex-offender population and the fear that the crime rate will increase as a result has created a new sense of urgency for policy makers around reentry. Traditionally, prisoners returning to society relied on a parole system to help them find employment and a place to live after their release. Some researchers fear the results of new laws, such as the “three strikes and you’re out” and minimum mandatory laws, that require longer prison sentences without options for parole or other forms of early release.

\textsuperscript{32} The influence of time and the type of offender on reentry is adapted from Lynch, James P. and William J. Sabol. “Prisoner Reentry in Perspective,” The Urban Institute Press, September 2001, p.8.
Without these traditional reentry mechanisms, they argue that prisoners will be much less prepared to return to society. Other researchers now believe that new initiatives are necessary to help return prisoners to society in a safe and smooth fashion. For example, Joan Petersilia suggests that the community take a more active role in supervising ex-offenders.\textsuperscript{37} Other researchers recommend a tracking system, where the most severe criminals are intensively supervised and receive needed services at a higher rate than more minor criminals.\textsuperscript{38}

Case management, a service delivery model popularized in the 1960s by the social work field, is often cited as a model that should be applied to ex-offender reentry. In a case management model, one person is responsible for securing and coordinating social, mental health, medical, and other services for a client. The rationale for this model is that services will be more efficient and effective if one person coordinates them. Case management was developed in response to the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, when social workers had to develop a new method for connecting their clients with community-based social services.\textsuperscript{39} The increasing number of ex-offenders who leave the criminal justice system without post-release supervision is an interesting parallel to the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill. Some researchers, such as Kerry Murphy Healy, claim that a case management model of ex-offender reentry "reduces recidivism

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Suggested in an interview with Liz Curtin, Director of Programming, Treatment, Adult, and Women's Services for Community Resources for Justice, April 1, 2002.
or relapse, encourages social reintegration, and enhances public safety.\textsuperscript{40} Others are more cautious and argue that evaluations of prison programming that approximates the case management approach to reentry usually have flawed methodologies and cannot prove decisively that the approach is effective in reducing recidivism.\textsuperscript{41}

Though an outcome evaluation is still underway, a case management reentry model for juvenile offenders developed by David Altschuler and Troy Armstrong in the mid-1990s appears to be a promising solution to reentry difficulties. This model, called the Intensive Community-Based Aftercare Program (IAP), was developed in response to the need to more effectively monitor and assist chronic and serious juvenile offenders return to their communities. IAP operates on the premise that effective intervention with a population requires “intensive supervision and services after institutional release, but also a focus on reintegration during incarceration and a highly structured and gradual transition process that serves as a bridge between institutionalization and aftercare.”\textsuperscript{42} This model focuses on the highest risk population in order to have the greatest impact on crime rates. It encourages interaction between offenders and community support systems, while mixing intensive surveillance and services for the offender. At the heart of the model is the belief that supervision and services alone cannot guarantee a successful reentry: interaction with the community is vital. Though questions still remain about the effectiveness of the IAP model, it appears to be a good candidate for replication in the adult corrections system.

\textsuperscript{39} Healy, Kerry Murphy. “Case Management in the Criminal Justice System,” National Institute of Justice, Research in Action (February 2001).

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, pg. 1.


While these debates offer a range of possible research paths, I have picked a path that seeks to help explain the reentry issue in the wider context of community development. Therefore, this thesis focuses on a topic that seems to have fallen through the cracks in the recent research and debates: the nuts and bolts of how a reentry model works in theory and practice. I pay particular attention to how the social service and community systems interact with the criminal justice system to produce a reentry model. Through a series of interviews of players and participants in the Suffolk County reentry model, I examine the model of reentry and compare it to what actually happens in practice. In the next chapter, I begin a more detailed comparison of an individual’s path through the Suffolk County reentry model and how reentry unfolds in practice.
The standard aphorism is that “the reentry process begins as soon as a prisoner enters the Suffolk County HOC and continues when the prisoner is released into the community.” Where the process ends fluctuates depending on the inmate. In theory, every inmate has access to needed services to assist with their reentry into society. During this process, the three systems that make up the reentry model (criminal justice, social services, and the community) work together to ensure a successful reentry.

In practice, the systems have problems assisting inmates in the reentry process and they tend to interact in a disjointed fashion. Relatively few resources exist in the criminal justice system and not every inmate has equal access to them. Compared to the criminal justice system, the social service system only has half of these problems: there are abundant types of social services in this system, but ex-offenders face constraints when they try to access them. These constraints include a lack of information about the services available, waiting lists to receive the services, and personal reservations on the part of the ex-offender about accessing the services. Finally, the community system tends to have an underdeveloped relationship with the criminal justice system. This is not true for every part of the criminal justice system. For example, community groups often have strong connections to police departments through initiatives such as community watch groups and community policing programs, but weak connections to prisons.

For mainly political and economic reasons, most parts of the reentry model tend to favor low-risk inmates: they are easier to work with, are generally more receptive to
support and provide greater likelihood of success. These three characteristics mean that low-risk inmates are not likely to commit a serious offense when they are eventually released and offering them treatment will not be prohibitively expensive. As a result, proponents of this reentry model can point to a low-cost method that achieves a high degree of success.

The model’s favoritism towards low-risk offenders perpetuates disparities between hard and less difficult to rehabilitate offenders. In other words, the less difficult offenders receive the bulk of the services and supports at the expense of the more difficult offenders. As one staff-member in the prison said, “The services that we provide in the prison work great for people who are good advocates for themselves. We would like to serve all inmates, but some people get lost in the system.” The social service and community systems are usually only involved in the reentry process of relatively few low-risk offenders, late in their period of incarceration. As a result, most of the hardest to rehabilitate prisoners are released from prison without post-release supervision or a firm connection to the social service or community systems.

To describe how reentry in Suffolk County differs in practice, I trace the paths that offenders may take once they are incarcerated in the Suffolk County HOC and after they move back into the community. I define these paths based on information from interviews with practitioners who work with offenders and ex-offenders in Suffolk County, and the experience of offenders and ex-offenders themselves. By tracing these paths, I find where divergences in the reentry model and reentry practice occur and possible reasons for the divergences. To see a diagram that represents the reentry model

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43 Based on an interview with Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent of the Community Corrections Division at the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department, on April 12, 2002.
in Suffolk County see Appendix 3. This diagram depicts four potential paths of reentry:
1) Community Corrections programs, 2) Parole, 3) Probation, and 4) straight to the community. One of these paths represents the first step out of prison for every offender in the Suffolk County HOC. As the diagram illustrates, there are a number of possible steps that an offender could take after this first step. A discussion of this reentry model over the course of the next two chapters will help to clarify these paths.

Because the reentry process is lengthy, I confine this chapter to a discussion of the reentry process while an individual is still incarcerated. I examine the reentry process after an individual is released from incarceration in the next chapter.

The Suffolk County House of Corrections

Administered by the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department, the Suffolk County HOC is a correctional institution that holds approximately 1,850 inmates. Only inmates serving a sentence of 2.5 years or less are incarcerated at this institution. Inmates who commit more serious crimes receive a longer sentence of incarceration and are placed in either the state or federal correctional system. Therefore, the inmates at the Suffolk County HOC are the most minor criminals in the prison system in Massachusetts.

The reentry process for an individual begins when he arrives at the Suffolk County HOC. Each inmate goes through an immediate classification process when he enters the prison. This initial classification is used to determine emergency conditions, like suicidal tendencies, health problems, and whether the inmate is a suspect in another trial (which means that he may have to be treated differently than other inmates). This

classification also determines what basic services the inmate should receive while in the prison. Based on this assessment, each inmate has an in-service plan constructed for him that includes a diagnosis for various services that he might need. At the Suffolk County HOC, these services include health care, substance abuse counseling, education programs, and job training programs. With the correct assessment and access to quality services at the prison, inmates begin to prepare for reentry as soon as they arrive in prison.45

After completing the initial classification, each inmate is assigned a case manager who helps coordinate the service provision and “checks-in” on how the inmate is progressing. At 60-90 day intervals, the inmate appears before the Classification Board at the prison. This board is responsible for judging whether an inmate is ready to move to a new, less restrictive part of the prison. Based on the recommendation of the inmate’s case manager and other mitigating or aggravating evidence, such as enrollment in programs offered by the prison or disciplinary problems, the board decides whether the inmate should progress to a new position in the prison.

Conversations with prison officials and prisoners who have completed this initial assessment and the subsequent creation of an in-service plan indicate that the beginning of the reentry process does not usually unfold as planned. According to Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent of the Community Corrections Division at the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department, there is an expansive array of special services on file that the prison offers to inmates. However, many of these services are no longer offered at the prison. These cancelled services often began as a response to special one-time grants

45 The Sheriff’s Department in Hampden County is even further ahead on the reentry issue than Suffolk County. For an example of an innovation in Hampden County, see Christopher, Gail. “Creating Winning
from the government or a foundation for a demonstration project. In addition to one-time grants, budget cuts could also affect the amount and type of services that the prison offers inmates. Most prisons place an emphasis on security over treatment. This preference dictates that when budgets are reduced, as they have been recently in Massachusetts, job and program cuts will occur first in the programming side of the prison. A reduction in the number of services offered to inmates is an issue faced by correctional institutions across the United States at every level of security. Generally, this reduction has been caused by a failure of funding for social services to keep up with the increase in prisoners in prisons. Therefore, the range of services available at the Suffolk County HOC is overstated.

In reality, inmates only use a small number of services “officially offered” by the prison because the in-service plans are constrained by the limited number of classes that the prison actually offers. Services actually available include an AIDS awareness class, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), minimal vocational education and job training classes, and GED classes. Detoxification from illegal drugs or alcohol occurs involuntarily because of the unavailability of these substances in prison.

A portion of the prison staff works with men in a substance abuse program. This program typically involves group therapy sessions. Other prison staff members work

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46 Correctional Officers are usually unionized, making layoffs in this category of prison staff extremely difficult.


48 Numerous offenders and ex-offenders indicated that the exclusion of drugs and alcohol from prisons is a myth. They described a lucrative and thriving drug market in prisons, where the prices are inflated to reflect the increased risk of having controlled substances and the difficulty of bringing controlled substances into the prison.
with men in a violence prevention program. While the prison may be able to point to a large number of services that they “officially” offer inmates, the reality of the situation in prison is that there are actually only a small number of programs of which men can take advantage.

Analysis of a cohort of a recently released group of prisoners from the Suffolk County HOC suggests that most inmates receive some type of service during their incarceration. Of the 187 men in this cohort who had data available on their use of programs, 81 percent participated in an education program, 82 percent participated in a therapeutic or vocational program, and 84 percent participated in any type of programming (this could include work detail). There is a confounding factor in examining the percentage of inmates who sought services. Namely, the “good time,” or time taken off of a sentence in exchange for good behavior, may have been the biggest reason that men participated in these programs. Of course, it is hard to gauge the level of commitment by offenders. Also, from examining the data we have no way of knowing how intensely men participated in the programming or how many programs they participated in. However, it is probably safe to assume that inmates who are seriously interested in obtaining a service because they recognize that they need help are more likely to receive benefits from the service.

Many of the offenders I interviewed admitted that the potential good time was much more important to them than the actual service provided. This suggests that they went through the motions in the social services only to qualify for reduced prison time. This suspicion is confirmed by the actions of men serving mandatory minimums. A

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mandatory minimum is a sentence that requires inmates to spend a minimum amount of time in prison. Therefore, they are not eligible for good time. Seven percent of the January 2001 cohort served mandatory minimums. This part of the offender population often chose to not participate in the social services that earn offenders good time.\textsuperscript{51}

While it is difficult to gauge, the high percentage of men who participated in some kind of program while incarcerated likely overestimates the percentage of men who actually benefited from the programming. Also, the limited types of services offered raise questions about the effectiveness of these services in helping men with many complex problems.

Instead of complaining about the lack of variety in the services offered at the prison, the most frequent complaint from prisoners about the social service function of the prison is that they receive an inadequate amount of time with their intake specialist and their case managers. According to interviews with prisoners, the only way to access a service that the prison offers is to get a referral for the service from their intake officer or case manager. Many prisoners report that their case managers did not always grant their requests for services. It is unclear whether these requests were denied because the case manager did not deem the service necessary for the inmate, the service was unavailable because of capacity limitations, or if the case manager failed to perform their job correctly. In any case, the limited amount of time that inmates spend with intake specialists and case managers is mostly a function of the large case loads that these prison staff must serve. For example, at the Suffolk County HOC case managers work with 150 inmates at a time. Another complaint from inmates is a problem accessing services that

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
they have enrolled in because of security constraints. If the prison ever goes into “lock-
down” no inmates are allowed out of their cells and they cannot attend classes as a result.
Other inmates cited unsympathetic correctional officers who would not allow them to
attend classes or services because “they did not feel like it.” Finally, most inmates
experienced frustration in accessing services because of capacity constraints in the
services. GED courses usually have long waiting lists of inmates who are interested in
taking the classes.⁵²

A minimal variety of actual services provided for inmates at the prison and
trouble experienced by inmates in accessing what services are available indicates a weak
link between the criminal justice system and the social service system inside the
correctional facility. Linkages between the criminal justice system and the community at
this stage of the reentry process are even more questionable. One volunteer from a faith-
based volunteer organization expressed frustration with attempts to work in the prison.⁵³
In his opinion, prisons make it difficult for volunteer organizations like his to work with
men in prison. In some cases, security concerns cause this friction, while other cases
could be linked to mutual distrust between the two sides. Besides visits from friends,
relatives, and occasional volunteers, the community has little involvement with the
reentry process during the initial period of incarceration. In fact, analysis of a group of

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⁵² These various complaints surfaced from a set of interviews with inmates who were incarcerated at the
Brooke House. Evidently, Suffolk County House of Corrections is not alone in capacity limitations for
their social service programs. A 1994 report issued by the Ohio Legislative Office of Education Oversight
specified overcrowding as a major limitation for the effectiveness of education programs in the Ohio
Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (Cogswell, S. (1994). Education Behind Bars:
Opportunities and Obstacles. Columbus, OH: Legislative Office of Education Oversight, as cited in
Lawrence, Sarah et al. (2002). The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming (Draft Report).
Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
⁵³ Comment raised by Michael Meyers, volunteer with the City Mission Society at the public presentation
of the publication “From Cell to Street: A Plan to Supervise Inmates After Release” by Anne Morrison
Piehl at The Boston Foundation on February 12, 2002.
recently released prisoners at the Suffolk County HOC found that each prisoner received an average of five visits over a seven month incarceration, and 23 percent of offenders received no visitors during their incarceration.\textsuperscript{54} The minor role of social services in the prison and the disjointed relationship between the community and the prison casts serious doubt over whether the reentry model is really acting holistically at this stage of the reentry process.

\textit{Moving Through the Suffolk County House of Corrections}

The Suffolk County HOC operates in a “step-down” manner: inmates face progressively less supervision as they get closer to the end of their sentence. From the perspective of the inmate the process is a \textit{step-up} rather than a \textit{step-down}. Interestingly, this negative image is the one most prevalent among staff at the prison and inmates. Two primary rationales exist for this type of system. First, less supervision is a benefit that prison officials can use as a carrot for inmates. Increasing privileges offers an incentive for inmates and may even contribute to social control in the prison. Second, decreasing supervision allows inmates to begin a normalization process while they are still technically incarcerated. While in prison, inmates are subject to rules and procedures that the prison creates and enforces. When inmates return to their communities, they will be faced with societal rules and expected norms, but have few institutional rules that govern their lives. Therefore, decreasing supervision is an attempt by the prison to get inmates used to living in a less structured environment that begins to approximate life in their communities.

\textsuperscript{54} Based on data on the people released from the Suffolk County HOC in January 2001. These data were supplied by Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent of Community Corrections at the Suffolk County
With this step-down philosophy in mind, prison officials have organized the prison to reflect a gradual reduction of supervision. After the initial intake, inmates begin their time at the prison in the “New Man” building. This building is adjacent to the entrance of the prison. At New Man, inmates meet with a case manager to discuss what services are available and what services they would like to take advantage of while in prison. It is widely believed that the time that inmates spend in New Man has a large impact on their future trajectory within the prison. If the inmate seeks services and attempts to spend his time in prison focusing on self-improvement while maintaining good behavior, he will begin a path that leads toward less supervision, increased privileges, and time taken off of their sentence. If he does not take these steps, he will still progress through the stages at the prison, but will not have the same opportunities and privileges. Decisions on whether or not to graduate an inmate to a new level at the prison is made every 60-90 days by a Classification Committee and depends on the recommendation of the inmate’s case manager and a review of the inmate’s record that reflects the extent to which he is using available services.

This self-selection process is one of the built-in mechanisms at the prison that reduces the number of inmates who benefit from services offered there. One prison official acknowledged this self-selection process and its potential negative impact on a portion of the inmates, but countered with the following argument: “Mandatory services for every prisoner would result in long waiting lists given our capacity to provide the services.”55 Obviously, a capacity problem could be fixed by budget redistributions. The

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55 Interview with Stefan LoBuglio, April 12, 2002.
official’s statement suggests that a redistribution of funding away from security and
towards social services is a tough sale politically at the prison.

After graduating from the New Man building, inmates usually progress to
Building 3. Spatially, inmates move in a clockwise direction through the various
buildings within the prison, until they eventually come full-circle. After moving through
four levels in Building 3, inmates move to Building 4, where there are four more levels.
By the time that inmates reach Building 4, they spend the majority of their time outside
of their cells.

In both Building 3 and 4, inmates can attend GED courses. However, Building 3
has more formal services available than Building 4. Inmates can also attend a substance
abuse, anger management and domestic violence-counseling program in Building 3. For
all inmates in Building 4, there is an attempt to prepare the men for reentry. This largely
consists of group and peer counseling. At Building 4, there is also a split among the
inmates. For inmates that have made positive steps toward self-improvement and have
been cooperative with prison officials, they may be chosen to begin the Community
Work Program (CWP). Other inmates simply stay in Building 4 until their release or
parole. The Classification Board makes this determination in conjunction with an
inmate’s case manager.

The CWP is a work program that allows inmates to begin working in various
capacities in the community while remaining under supervision at night and on
weekends. Jobs included in CWP are painting, carpentry, landscaping, and other more
menial tasks. When inmates begin CWP, prison officials inquire about existing skills and

56 In interviews, no one could tell me why there was not a Building 2. Depending on the inmate, the
Classification Board may assign him to Building 4 immediately.
place them in jobs accordingly. Inmates are paid very low wages for their work in CWP regardless of what job they perform or their skill-level.

The Classification Board chooses a portion of the inmates in Building 4 to participate in a program in the Community Corrections programs of the county prison system. Examples of Community Corrections programs are a pre-release program called the Brooke House and the Suffolk County Community Corrections program. In every example of Community Corrections, participants have been “creamed” to yield inmates that have committed the least serious crimes (including minor assault and battery, possession or distribution of drugs, petty larceny, DUI, etc.) and have made the most efforts to access services while in prison to improve their stations in life. Any inmate incarcerated for a violent crime, an inmate who has a serious criminal background (as determined by the Classification Board), an inmate serving a mandatory minimum sentence, or an inmate with an outstanding warrant is precluded from participating in a Community Corrections program. Other than these exclusions, all other inmates have the same chance of participating in the more resource intensive programs in the Community Corrections division.

There are a number of incentives for individuals to encourage them to work towards moving to Building 4 as soon as possible. First, participants spend a large portion of time outside of prison in the case of CWP and are removed from the prison altogether in the Community Corrections programs. Second, participants are free to move about with less supervision during the day. Third, participants in Community Corrections programs are allowed to visit friends and relatives for a certain amount of time each week. Fourth, Inmates earn time off of their sentence for the “good time” they
put in during their time in Community Corrections or CWP. For example, for every month completed without incident at Brooke House, a residential pre-release program, inmates earn 7.5 days of reduced sentence.

In practice, linkages between the criminal justice system and the social service and community systems become closer, as inmates progress through the prison. The access to substance abuse and other counseling services in Building 3 is the first time in the prison that inmates receive this vital service. According to trends in the prison population across the United States, a majority of inmates have substance abuse histories and a high percentage have mental health issues. Connections to the community increase dramatically for many inmates in Building 4. Some even return to the community to some degree through the CWP or a Community Corrections program.

When inmates arrive at Building 4, there is a dramatic difference between the paths of inmates. As mentioned above, those who have navigated their way through the system most effectively acquire the best jobs at the prison or leave the prison for a Community Corrections program where they will have access to more intensive social services. Other prisoners in Building 4, who have either made bad choices about the activities they participate in while in prison or are prohibited from entering the community until the end of their sentence, await the end of their sentence at the prison. By virtue of their bad attitudes or the severity of the crime that resulted in their incarceration, these are the highest risk prisoners in the Suffolk County HOC. It is likely that these prisoners could benefit from a normalization process that involves the community and more intensive social services that are provided in Community

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Corrections programs. However, the prison has made the decision that they are too risky to allow back out in society any earlier than their sentence allows. While no current prison official admitted this, a recent article in the *Boston Globe* demonstrates the historic political problems with letting risky inmates back into society while they are still the responsibility of the prison system. This article specified the Willie Horton incident that eventually contributed to the failed presidential bid of former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. It is reasonable to assume that this tragic event probably still resonates with prison officials.58

**Community Corrections Programs: The Brooke House**

For eligible offenders, there are a variety of Community Corrections programs. To look in detail at the kind of work that they do, I will explore the example of the Brooke House. It is a good example of a Community Corrections program that attempts to link the criminal justice system with the social service and community systems. The Brooke House is a pre-release house, located in the South End of Boston at 79 Chandler St. It houses minimum-security inmates from the Suffolk County HOC. Approximately 50 men ranging in age from 18 to 55 live in the House at any one time. The Brooke House was established in 1965 as a residential-based treatment center for male offenders and is currently run by the Community Resources for Justice (CRJ), a non-profit organization in Boston. CRJ operates the Brooke House based on a three-year renewable contract from the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office. Wealthy Bostonians who were committed to social reform originally established CRJ in Boston in 1878. Their original

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58 Willie Horton was convicted of rape while out on a job furlough during a prison sentence. See the article, “Prisoner rehabilitation revived as cause in Mass,” Francie Latour, *The Boston Globe*, April 5,
role was very similar to the role they play today. Namely, they “assist discharged prisoners and educate the public on the causes of crime and the treatment of offenders.” 59

With this mission in mind, the Brooke House also provides non-residential based services to ex-offenders.

Inmates and former inmates access the Brooke House through two paths. The first path is the Suffolk County HOC self-selection process described above. The second path for accessing the services at Brooke House is the opposite of self-selection. Through an elaborate process that I will discuss later in this thesis, inmates whom prison and Boston Police Department officials believe are the most likely to recidivate are tracked to gain access to a variety of services for ex-offenders. The Brooke House represents one group of these services. Thus the Brooke House serves those “creamed” from the top and those “creamed” from the bottom, though the clear emphasis on the Brooke House is on the former.

The type and level of services differs depending on which path an inmate uses to access the Brooke House. If an inmate has been creamed from the bottom, he only gains access to simple, non-residential based services. The Brooke House, through a grant from the Massachusetts Society for Aiding Discharged Prisoners (MSADP), distributes money to these ex-offenders to help them with employment related issues. For example, they give ex-offenders subway/bus tokens for job search and the first few weeks of employment, funds to use for obtaining a birth certificate ($6-$10), the cost of Massachusetts Identification Card ($15), work related clothing (typically for construction-related employment, work boots, heavy jacket, coveralls), and tools

2002.
necessary to begin work. Despite the apparent benefits of this program at the Brooke House, it reaches relatively few ex-offenders. In fact, approximately three ex-offenders access its services each month.\textsuperscript{60}

The bulk of services offered at the Brooke House are for residents participating in the Community Corrections pre-release program. Inmates who are in the pre-release program enter Brooke House when they have a very short time left on their sentence - typically, three months or less. However, there are examples of inmates at the Brooke House who have as long as six months on their sentence. Inmates receive various services and can work at a job in the community while they live at the Brooke House. They finish their sentence at the Brooke House unless they violate one of the rules at the Brooke House during their stay. If such a violation occurs, they may return to the Suffolk County HOC.

\textbf{Residential Services at the Brooke House}

A description of the physical layout of the Brooke House and security measures used by the staff help illustrate its mission of getting inmates ready to return to their communities. The Brooke House is four stories plus a basement. Each floor corresponds with a different use, with the exception of the top two floors which both have the bedrooms for Brooke House residents. In addition to these rooms, case managers have offices on both floors. Case manager offices are integrated into the living space where offenders spend most of their recreational time while at the Brooke House. The second floor serves as office space for CRJ employees. Besides a large conference room that is used for meetings and programming for residents, the entire floor is off limits to Brooke

\textsuperscript{60} Based on an interview with Kurt Francois, March 13, 2002.
House residents. A large recreational area as well as an eating area and kitchen dominate the first floor. In addition, the “control room” of the Brooke House (phone switch board and a staff member at all times) is located just inside of the front door. Staff members of the Offender Reentry Program (ORP) use the basement. The ORP uses several classrooms and a computer room for the educational component of the program. More information on the ORP is available below.

Compared to the Suffolk County HOC, security at Brooke House is minimal. Instead of a concentration on physical restraints and armed guards, Brooke relies on the power of routine in the lives of the men who live there with a heavy amount of administrative oversight by staff members. The physical appearance of Brooke House is the first indication that security is less important at Brooke than it is at the HOC. The Brooke House is among some of the most expensive real estate in the South End of Boston. The façade of the building blends into the brownstones that characterize the rest of the street. There are no visible bars on the windows and the front door does not have a lock. However, no one can enter the front door of the Brooke House without passing the control room, which is manned 24 hours per day. Staff sitting in the control room can see whoever enters Brooke House immediately after they have walked into the building. Everyone who enters the Brooke House must check in with the staff on duty at the control room. From the large communal areas, to the dormitory style rooms and rest rooms, the Brooke House gives every impression of an undergraduate dorm at a college. Inmates live in rooms ranging from one to three per room, and seem to have freedom to keep a variety of personal items (such as televisions, radios, weights, personal toiletries, etc.). None of the rooms have locks on the door and inhabitants are subject to
unannounced spot searches of their person or any of their personal items. There are no visible cameras, bars, or arms.

Brooke House employees rigorously manage the time of inmates at Brooke. The day starts for some inmates in a voluntary meditation period at 7:45 AM. At 8:00 AM there is a mandatory head count of the inmates. At 8:15, inmates start their days. Some begin classes in the ORP, while others leave Brooke House to go to their jobs or attend OCC sessions at the Suffolk County Courthouse. At noon, 4:00 PM, 8:00 PM, 10:00 PM, 12:00 AM, and 3:30 AM there are additional head counts.

Each inmate is required to fill out an itinerary for every day of the week, for every day that they are incarcerated at Brooke. On their itinerary, they must list what place they are leaving from, what time they are leaving, the address of their destination, a phone number where they may be reached at their destination, their arrival time, how they are traveling, and the purpose of their trip. Any scheduled trip must be to an approved destination. Inmates are required to make scheduled call-ins to the Brooke House throughout their day. Failure to call Brooke within 45 minutes of a scheduled call-in results in a phone call from staff at Brooke House to the appropriate phone number listed on an inmate’s itinerary. If the individual is not at the phone number listed in the itinerary or no one answers the call, the staff orders a visit by a uniformed Suffolk County Field officer. During the mandatory head-counts mentioned above, any inmate not present must be accounted for through the log of arrivals and departures and the call-in schedule. Finally, each inmate is required to submit a urine sample at least once a week. Brooke House staff members determine the timing of their urine sample, but they could request a sample at any time. It is possible to test for cannabis, cocaine, opiates,
Benzodiazepines, and alcohol use with a urine sample. All inmates at the Brooke House are eligible for some amount of unstructured time away from the facility. Depending upon the amount of time that an inmate has spent at the Brooke House, they are eligible for between 6 and 10 hours of free time. Inmates usually spend their time with family or friends in the community where they will eventually return.

A period of incarceration at the Brooke House starts with an intake assessment by a case manager. The staff at the Brooke House uses this assessment to help pair an inmate with services that they or one of their institutional partners can provide. Each case manager works with approximately 10 inmates and meets with each inmate at least once a week. Some of the services at the Brooke House are available to all inmates who live there. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous (mandatory for all residents), Narcotics Anonymous, meditation sessions, free health care, assistance in finding and applying for jobs, and finding a suitable place to live after finishing their sentence at the Brooke House are available to all inmates. When an inmate is admitted to the Brooke House, he is admitted into a specific program. Inmates can come into the Brooke House as members of the Office of Community Corrections (OCC) program, the Offender Reentry Program (ORP), or “Straight Brooke.” These programs and the services affiliated with each are discussed below.

The OCC Program was designed as an intensive counseling program with ancillary services for inmates with substance abuse problems. All programming for the OCC program occurs at the Suffolk County Court House in downtown Boston. Time at the Court House is spent spread between group therapy sessions, GED classes, and community service. The group therapy sessions focus on building self-esteem for
inmates, discussing how substance abuse affects the friends and family of the abuser, and requiring inmates to begin to admit their problem and focus on ways to help themselves. All inmates admitted into the Brooke House OCC program spend five days per week at the Court House participating in the program. Once an inmate finds a job, they only spend two nights a week in the OCC program.

The Offender Reentry Program (ORP) is an educational program that is patterned after another reentry program in Hampden County and is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It is a collaborative program that involves the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, Bunker Hill Community College, Community Resources for Justice, Ella J. Baker House, and The Work Place.

Institutional relationships of the Brooke House are illustrated in Appendix 4. As this chart shows, the majority of Brooke House services are provided by service-providers that are not on the staff of the Brooke House. The major exception is the Offender Reentry Program. ORP is a program supported by a Department of Education grant that engages offenders in a multi-level program. ORP is a six-week course that teaches educational, life skills, and job skills classes at the Brooke House.

- Educational: history, vocabulary, writing, hand writing and is designed for students who read at a fifth-grade reading level or above.

- Life Skills: Action for Personal Choice (APC) curriculum, including decision-making strategies and anger-management.

- Job Skills: mock interviews, resumes, cover letters, addressing questions from potential employers about their incarceration, labor market/job search strategies, use of One-Stop career service centers.
Services offered at Brooke House in conjunction with ORP include help from a career specialist from The Work Place; access to a community-based mentor that helps support individuals during their stay (all mentors are ex-offenders affiliated with the Baker House); and contact with a Support Services Specialist who procures items such as birth certificates, social security cards, and Massachusetts identifications (e.g., driver’s license, etc) for inmates who do not have these forms of identification.

ORT represents a model of inmate reentry in Suffolk County that comes the closest to linking the criminal justice system to the social service and community systems. While under supervision from the criminal justice system, inmates in ORP have access to social services at the Brooke House as well as in the community. During their participation in the program, inmates take computer, GED, and job training classes inside the Brooke House. They also visit The Work Place and Bunker Hill Community College to get a tour of the facilities and, in the case of The Work Place, take part in mock job interviews. Inmates regularly meet with mentors inside the Brooke House and at specific locations in the community. While they are with their mentors, ORP inmates attend community meetings and may even take a field trip to another city.61

Inmates who participate in the Brooke House and are “Straight Brooke” focus on learning job search strategies, finding a stable job, and saving money. Typically, these are the inmates who have the fewest needs in terms of social services. Still they have access to the mandatory AA meetings and weekly contact with a case manager. Men who are Straight Brooke are only a small percentage of the total population at the Brooke House. In ideal cases, their focus on employment creates strong links with the
community system, because the inmate enters the community to work early in their stay at the Brooke House. No matter which program an inmate participates in at the Brooke House, all inmates share the distinction of having a reasonably minor criminal record. Therefore, inmates with the most minor criminal records have the best connections to the three systems that comprise the reentry model.

**Discharge Planning at the Suffolk County House of Corrections**

Approximately 90 to 95 percent of inmates at the Suffolk County HOC do not take part in a Community Corrections program. For most of these inmates (except for those who enter a post-release supervision program like parole or probation), access to a discharge planner represents one of their last chances to use the criminal justice system to access needed social services when they are out in the community.

As inmates at the Suffolk County HOC get closer to their release date, they can meet with the discharge planner. This meeting explores different housing options for inmates and other services that are available in the community. Discharge planners at the HOC use a passive referral system, leaving follow-up and ultimate access to the services to the initiative of each inmate who leaves the prison after their meeting. Any inmate can have access to a discharge planner.

According to interviews with inmates at the Brooke House and prison officials, the discharge planner actually meets with only a small portion of the inmates who could benefit from his services. The discharge planning service is poorly advertised to inmates.

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61 During my observation of the mentor program at the Ella J. Baker House, inmates have traveled to Washington, DC and taken part in multiple community meetings on public safety, the relationship between urban and suburban churches, and a real world discussion of legal contracts in the music business.
and for those inmates who do hear about the service, they must file a written request to meet with the discharge planner. The Suffolk County HOC only employs one discharge planner. As a result, of those who apply, only a portion is selected to meet with him.

Therefore, the majority of inmates at the Suffolk County HOC leave the prison without access to a Community Corrections program, the Boston Reentry Initiative, or a meeting with the discharge planner. Also, about half of inmates leave the criminal justice system completely at the end of their incarceration, either because they are not eligible for or they have decided to forego a post-release supervision program (like parole). The repercussions of this situation and what happens to prisoners as they return to society at the end of the incarceration period are discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusions: Theory and Practice in the Criminal Justice System

During the incarceration phase of the reentry process, the criminal justice system plays a major role in the reentry of most inmates. In many ways, the criminal justice system operates a reentry model that gives the most services and resources to inmates who need them the least. The incarcerated population that represents the greatest security risk receives the least amount of support from the criminal justice system. They fail to receive this support because they refuse to engage in programming at the prison in a meaningful way and they face constraints from the prison system when they do try to access services. Additionally, this needy portion of the incarcerated population receives little support from the social service and community systems while in prison.

Based on an interview with Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent of Community Corrections for Suffolk County on April 12, 2002.
On the other hand, the inmates that represent the smallest security risks self-identify through a self-selection process. These are the inmates who need help accessing social services and the community the least. However, because they are small security risks based on their criminal records and their behavior while incarcerated, these inmates receive the most support from the criminal justice system in accessing social services and the community. This support is accentuated by the large degree of access that the social service and community systems get to this part of the inmate population through Community Corrections programs and supervised release programs. The remainder of the inmate population that leaves the prison receives little if any formal assistance in accessing social services or smoothly reconnecting with the community.
Chapter 4: An Ex-Offender Reentry Model and Reentry in Practice After Incarceration

This chapter focuses on the reentry model of ex-offenders after their release from incarceration. As in the prior chapter, the focus is on the model of reentry in Suffolk County and how it differs when put into practice. The chapter also focuses on how reentry in practice perpetuates disparities between hard to treat ex-offenders and more easily treated ex-offenders.

The model of reentry in Suffolk County after release from incarceration specifies that ex-offenders go down one of three paths: a supervised release period with the Parole Department, a supervised sentence with the Probation Department, or straight into the community without further supervision from the criminal justice system. These paths are somewhat clouded by the fact that some inmates who go down each path participated in a Community Corrections program. For the sake of simplicity, I will address release from a Community Corrections program separately. Appendix 3 illustrates each of these reentry paths in a diagram.

Like the first half of the reentry model when offenders are incarcerated, each path of reentry into the community is still defined by the interaction of the criminal justice, social service, and community systems. In the cases of parole and probation, community supervision officers monitor the activities of the offenders and help them find needed social services. Both types of officers also ensure that offenders have a stable place to live, have a job or are looking for a job, and do not affiliate with the “wrong crowd.” When an offender goes straight to the community, the police monitor them, like they monitor any other citizen. Depending on the ex-offender, the police may be particularly
aware of who they are, where they live, and with whom they affiliate. Access to the
social service system for offenders going straight to the community is built on the
assumption that the social services provided in the prison create a natural tendency for the
ex-offenders to seek the same or additional services as necessary when they return to the
community.

In practice, the post-incarceration reentry process is difficult to trace. The
primary reason for this is that it is easier to follow an ex-offender’s reentry path when he
is required to remain under the supervision of the criminal justice system. Generally, the
reentry period ends after the point where an offender is no longer required to report to a
supervisory system. When this point occurs, there is a distinct change in the nature of
reentry. Interaction with the social service system changes from mandatory (or highly
encouraged through incentives) to completely voluntary. Therefore, there is a period of
time where an ex-offender may or may not interact with the social service system without
anyone knowing. All ex-offenders must return to the community after they end their
relationship with criminal justice system. This means that like those who end their
sentence in prison and return straight to the community, even parolees and probationers
eventually graduate from the watchful eye of the criminal justice system. When this
relationship with the criminal justice system ends, we are effectively blind to where these
men live, what they do, and with whom they associate while they are living in the
community. In the interest of the civil rights of ex-offenders, our ignorance is
appropriate. But for the purposes of trying to describe and improve a reentry model,
respect for these rights creates a severe handicap.
To mitigate this handicap, I will describe the possible trajectories of an ex-offender after he completes his interaction with the criminal justice system. The self-selection bias of the reentry populations who participate in social service programs makes an understanding of the “typical” path of a reentrant difficult to discern. Therefore, to help clarify post-incarceration reentry paths I interview ex-offenders. The use of these methods helps trace the post-incarceration reentry model in Suffolk County and how it works in practice.

Who goes where?

Almost half of the prisoners released from the Suffolk County HOC proceed straight to the community instead of participating in parole or probation. Based on a cohort of 194 men who left the Suffolk County HOC in January 2001, eight percent of the men went to parole, 23 percent were released to probation, 16 percent had an outstanding warrant (reentered the criminal justice system), and three percent were remanded to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). In contrast, 49 percent left the prison and went back to the community.

From these data, it is not possible to discern how many of those who went straight back to the community, probation, or parole also participated in a Community Corrections program. Community Corrections programs are important because the resources and services they offer should allow participants to be more successful in their reentry than non-participants. However, Community Corrections programs only affect a

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63 These data on the return status of men represent a combination of sources: Analysis of the January 2001 release cohort from Stefan LoBuglio and analysis on the same cohort by Anne Morrison Piehl in “From Cell to Street: A Plan to Supervise Inmates After Release,” The Massachusetts Institute for a New
small percentage of offenders. In fact, Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent of Community Corrections, estimates that only five to 10 percent of inmates at the Suffolk County HOC get access to a Community Corrections program during their incarceration.

The January 2001 release cohort from the Suffolk County HOC is typical of the prison population. Therefore, we know that practically a majority of men who are released from the Suffolk County HOC go straight back to the community. A minority of offenders enters a post-release supervision period like parole or probation. The relatively small number of people entering post-supervision programs does not present a problem if we believe that these people are the ones most in need of the services and supervision that accompany post-release supervision programs. For example, the reentry model in Suffolk County posits the provision of services to any inmate needing them. Men who receive these services and support should be less likely to commit more crimes.

However, the previous chapter illustrated how the reentry process in the Suffolk County HOC tends to favor the least risky inmates with the most intensive services. This trend that started inside prison seems to continue in the areas of post-release supervision and access to community-based services for inmates who leave the prison. The low-risk offenders continue to receive the bulk of the resources and services at the expense of high-risk offenders. Therefore, the fact that low-risk men tend to leave prison with post-release supervision or a discharge plan while high-risk men receive little if any supervision or help is a cause for some alarm. Given this mismatch of men, supervision, Commonwealth, January 2002. For this chapter, I will focus only on those proceeding to the parole system, to the probation system, or to the community.

64 The breakdown by age, sex, race, and incarceration offense of the population in the January 2001 release cohort closely resemble those in the prison. See Alexander Horowitz’s thesis for a more thorough analysis of the similarities between the two groups.

65 This is even truer if we exclude the men who do not immediately return to another authority (like the court system for an outstanding warrant or the INS).
and services it is worth taking a close look at each potential reentry path and comparing how the model of each fits with the practice of reentry in Suffolk County.

**Community Corrections**

Ex-offenders who participate in parole, probation, or return straight to their communities may have first gone through a Community Corrections program. The increased amount of services and gradual reintroduction of offenders back to the community that occurs at a Community Corrections program makes the reentry process easier for ex-offenders who participated in one of these programs. For example, each man at the Brooke House receives a discharge plan and a number of referrals for needed services such as supportive housing, substance abuse counseling, and mental health counseling. In some cases, men leave the Brooke House and enter a parole or probation sentence. However, all men who were involved in the Brooke House eventually sever their ties with the criminal justice system. At this point, staff members place their hope in the belief that the supervision and services that offenders received while in the prison and at the Brooke House will help them stay out of prison.

Tracing the paths of men leaving the Brooke House means looking at the organization’s capacity for discharge planning. Every inmate at the Brooke House has a discharge plan in place prior to his release. Case managers are responsible for helping inmates create these plans and they typically consist of identifying a place to live, making arrangements to meet with a job placement specialist at the Work Place if the inmate is still unemployed, and making provisions to continue substance abuse counseling when the inmate returns to the community. For inmates involved in the Offender Reentry
Program (see Chapter 3), a case manager assists them with their discharge plan and even practices a follow-up procedure to keep in touch with them during the first six-months of their release.

After their release from the Brooke House, most ex-offenders still need help with some complex issues. Finding help for these issues means either setting up a relationship with a social service provider before they are released or finding the services on their own when they are released. Discharge planning at the Brooke House concentrates on the former, but also gives men contacts they can use should initial services fail to help them. According to Karen Bacon, the case manager for the ORP, most men in the program have a substance abuse problem. Therefore, the discharge plan must try to address this by finding a residential substance abuse program in the Boston area. If the offender does not have a place to live after his release, this is an especially important task. These programs combine substance abuse counseling with a supportive living environment. The reality of these programs is that they can be restrictive (in some cases more restrictive than the Brooke House), short on space, and only temporary. Men will eventually have to find another place to live when their stay at the residential substance abuse program is over.

One example of such a program is SPAN, Inc. in Boston, MA. SPAN has operated in Boston for 25 years, serving only ex-offenders from various-levels of prisons. SPAN offers two main supportive housing programs. The first is the Reintegration Support Program (RSP) for men leaving prison without a place to live. This program is for non-HIV Positive men who need extra time to find a job and a permanent place to

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66 The following descriptions of programs at SPAN are based on an interview with Debbie Cooper, Housing Advocate at SPAN, April 20, 2002.
live. The program only lasts for three-weeks and includes caseworker services, such as substance abuse and mental health counseling, as well as job counseling. In-house staff provides all services.

The second program is the Transitional Housing Program for ex-offenders who are HIV Positive. This drug rehab program combines intensive case management for substance abuse and mental health counseling, with a sober living arrangement in a halfway house or sober house setting. In exchange for living in the housing for the six-month time limit, men must participate in five NA or AA meetings per week, submit random urine tests, and weekly group therapy sessions. In addition, each man living in the program must attend a six-week life skills course that meets once a week. All of these commitments make it difficult for participants to work full or part-time.

Access to both programs is typically through referrals from health workers or case managers in the criminal justice system. Both programs also take ex-offenders who contact the organization on their own volition, but each program has time limits that dictate how long ex-offenders may be out of prison before they are not eligible to receive services. For example, the RSP must take men who have just been released from prison and the Transitional Housing Program takes ex-offenders within six-months of their release from prison. Given these constraints and SPAN’s popularity with case managers in the criminal justice system, it may be difficult for an ex-offender without a referral to gain access to the services offered by SPAN. So, while the model contains community-based social service organizations reaching out to the ex-offender population, the reality is that many of the openings for services are already taken by low-risk offenders who
received referrals from the discharge planner at the Suffolk County HOC, a Community Corrections program, or some other entity.

If an inmate at the Brooke House has no drug problem and no place to live after his release, he is typically forced to try to save money for a room in a rooming house or turn to the emergency and transitional shelter programs. According to Karen Bacon, neither of these arrangements is ideal for a returning ex-offender because they are not permanent and they lack a supportive environment. 67 For example, one ex-offender whom I interviewed spoke of his frustration with living in the shelter environment where his clothes were stolen, he had no privacy, and he had no place to iron his clothes in preparation for work. When it comes to this point in the reentry experience, most men find somewhere to stay, be it a family-member or friend. Usually these arrangements are a last resort because they are undesirable and put the men in an awkward or negative environment. Many researchers speculate that a housing arrangement in a negative environment, even if it is with family or friends, can be detrimental to a successful reentry. 68

Maintaining the various counseling services that occur at the Brooke House is the other priority of the discharge plan. For the reentry model, a continuation of services that an inmate received during incarceration after he is released is an important part of a successful reentry. To that end, if an inmate has another housing arrangement but still needs counseling services related to mental health, substance abuse, or other problems, one prominent organization that Karen refers clients to is called STEP.

67 Interview with Karen Bacon, Case Manager for the Offender Reentry Program, on March 29, 2002.
A conversation with Johnnie Ward, a counselor at STEP and an ex-offender himself, revealed that STEP is an outpatient substance abuse and anger management treatment program that works extensively with ex-offenders.\textsuperscript{69} Two counselors are responsible for intake. The intake process uncovers an ex-offender’s family, medical, and psychiatric history, along with their criminal history. Most of STEP’s services seem to revolve around group therapy, with several weekly sessions for ex-offenders to discuss behavior modification, the challenges of reentry, and substance abuse. According to Karen Bacon, STEP also offers some ex-offenders job assistance, MBTA tokens for getting back and forth from work, clothing, GED services, and even help finding temporary housing.\textsuperscript{70} Men access STEP largely through referrals from the criminal justice system, but according to Ward, men also hear about the program through word-of-mouth and come because of the reputation the organization has earned in the community. Similar to SPAN, STEP only has limited resources to offer ex-offenders and low-risk offenders who received a referral from a discharge planner in the prison or Community Corrections program use many of these resources. This results in the potential crowding out of high-risk offenders, who are typically not involved in discharge activities and must find services on their own.

In addition to the variety of referrals that staff members at the Brooke House make as part of the discharge plan, Karen Bacon conducts a regular follow-up with individuals who participated in the Offender Reentry Program. Bacon calls ex-offenders, or on occasion meets them at a local store like Dunkin Donuts, weekly during the first month of their release. For the next five months, she calls them once a month. She

\textsuperscript{69} Based on an interview on April 18, 2002
\textsuperscript{70} Based on an interview on March 29, 2002.
conducts this follow-up voluntarily because she believes that it is important to know how much success the program has had with participants. Typically, any action that occurs as a result of the follow-up is limited to another referral to The Work Place, but Karen feels that the follow-up is valuable as a “venting” opportunity for the men.

Despite the best intentions of Bacon, there is no true systematic follow-up procedure for men who have left the Brooke House. According to Kurt Francois, a discharge plan should include follow-up that is consistent, systematic, and carries with it services that an ex-offender can use once he is back in the community. Without this crucial element, it is actually inaccurate to say that the Brooke House has discharge planning. Instead of discharge planning, Brooke House staff members effectively point ex-offenders in the right direction after their release and hope for the best.

Offenders who have participated in a Community Corrections program have been grounded in more intensive social services and should be more inclined to continue needed services after their release from prison than those who did not participate in a Community Corrections program. This is even truer for ex-offenders who leave a Community Corrections program to enter a term of probation or parole. The reality of this portion of the reentry model is that it is hard to know if ex-offenders leaving a Community Corrections program take advantage of services after they are released. With slight and non-standardized attempts to follow-up on the activities of ex-offenders it is impossible to know what actions these men take once they leave the prison’s doors. Further, the lack of space in some of the social services may mean that the low-risk offenders who access the services through referrals may crowd out any higher-risk offenders who would like to access the services without the benefit of a referral.
The Parole System

Another possible reentry path for an offender is the Parole Department. The Parole Department in Massachusetts releases prisoners and puts them back in the community under the supervision of a parole officer. This practice, called discretionary release, is lauded by criminal justice officials as an effective mechanism for encouraging social control inside the prison – if an inmate fails to demonstrate good behavior or is serving an incarceration sentence for certain crimes then he will not qualify for parole and will spend more time in prison.

A Parole Board decides who will be released to community supervision, when they will be released, and under what conditions they will live in the community.\(^72\) The inherent risk associated with releasing an offender to the community before the end of his sentence, is that the offender will be more likely to recidivate than if he remained incarcerated. Thus, the enabling legislation for the Parole system in Massachusetts states that the Board will grant an offender parole “only if the parole board is of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such prisoner is released, he will live and remain at liberty without violating the law, and that his release is not incompatible with the welfare of society.”\(^73\) Therefore, the spirit of the program is to provide discretionary release to offenders who have achieved a level of rehabilitation that makes them less likely to recidivate.

The actual steps of the parole process for an inmate start with an appearance before the Parole Board. The Governor appoints seven individuals to serve on the Parole

\(^{71}\) Based on an interview on April 22, 2002.


\(^{73}\) Massachusetts General Law c. 127 § 130.
Board for five-year terms. Members of the Parole Board must have experience in criminal justice, law, psychology, social work, or related fields. The legislation even states that it is desirable to have an attorney, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and a member of the Massachusetts parole staff on the Board, but it does not mandate a specific mix of individuals.  

If the Parole Board grants an offender parole after its review, he spends the remainder of his sentence living in the community and working with a parole officer. This parole officer acts in a dual role. First, the parole officer supervises the time that an offender spends in the community. Generally, offenders are not released if they cannot prove that they have a discharge plan in place in addition to proving that they have rehabilitated. This discharge plan includes a safe and positive place to live, potential job leads, and access to a supportive network (such as family, friends, a church group, or a substance abuse support group). A parole officer will monitor an offender to ensure that he follows his discharge plan. In addition, the parole officer ensures that an ex-offender provides a urine specimen for drug testing, does not interact with individuals who are known or thought to be negative influences, and stays away from certain areas within the community. A violation of any of these conditions could result in the parole officer sending the ex-offender back to prison for an extended sentence. In addition to the monitoring role, parole officers have a supportive role to play with ex-offenders under their supervision. In some cases, this role may seem heavy handed, such as when parole officers require attendance at substance abuse counseling meetings and obtaining and retaining a job as a condition of parole.

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In practice, the parole system follows very closely its goal of only releasing the least dangerous offenders into the community. In response to an increasing shift toward “tough on crime” policies, there was a move to appoint a more conservative Parole Board in the 1990s. In fact, in 2001, the Massachusetts Parole Board had six members with backgrounds in law enforcement and one vacancy, hardly living up to the recommendation for diversity on the Board that is in the enabling legislation.

Predictably, this has led to fewer approved discretionary releases for parole. This change is more obvious at the state-level of corrections than it is at the county-level. For example, between 1990 and 1999, the chances of obtaining parole at a parole hearing for an inmate incarcerated in a state correctional facility fell from 70 percent to 38 percent. In the same time period, the chance for an inmate in a county-level facility to obtain parole dropped from 58 percent to 53 percent.

Perhaps as a result of the decreased number of approvals for parole, the proportion of those inmates eligible for a parole hearing who decide to forgo their hearing and finish their time in the prison has increased between 1990 and 1999. It is possible that inmates simply do not want to participate in the hearing process if they suspect they will only be rejected. There is some evidence that suggests inmates may prefer institutional incarceration to the “strings attached” to supervised community release.

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Both of these calculations are taken from Piehl, Anne Morrison. “From Cell to Street: A Plan to Supervise Inmates After Release,” The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth, January 2002, pg. 31.
78 Ibid.
Another reason could be the foreboding example set by parolees: many return to prison because of parole violations.

Evidence from a study on recidivism for the January 2001 cohort from the Suffolk County HOC suggests that, once age and the total number of convictions is controlled for, there is no significant relationship between parole and recidivism.\textsuperscript{80} This means that a parolee is just as likely to recidivate as a non-parolee. The author of the study, Alexander Horowitz, suggests that one of the reasons that parole has no positive effect on recidivism is that the parole practices in Suffolk County break with the reentry model: the Parole Department offers only supervision and penalties without any support. Most re-offenders with experience in the parole system interviewed by Horowitz as a part of the recidivism study had only negative things to say about their experiences.\textsuperscript{81} Their comments focused on drug monitoring without focusing on any help their parole officer may have provided them for getting services or housing.

In practice, parole focuses on exactly the population that the theory of reentry dictates it should. In other words, the enabling legislation for parole specifies that parole is only for low-risk offenders who are the least likely to recidivate and this is precisely the population that they select. However, theory and practice diverge when it comes to what actually happens to that population. The model suggests that parole should be a balance of supervision and assistance in finding and using needed social services.

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\textsuperscript{80} Horowitz, Alexander. "An Analysis of Recidivism in Suffolk County," Undergraduate Thesis, Sociology Department, Harvard University, March 22, 2002, pg. 67. The recidivism study is based on a re-arraignment within eight months of release.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, pgs. 75-76.
According to ex-offenders who have experienced parole, the system is much more geared toward supervision than social services.\textsuperscript{82}  

The importance of parole in the reentry of ex-offenders has gradually decreased as a result of more conservative sentencing policies that reduce the number of offenders eligible for parole and a decline in the number of eligible offenders accepting parole. This trend is clearer in the population of offenders in state prisons than in county prisons. When offenders do choose the parole path, they are usually low-risk offenders. According to the reentry model, low-risk offenders are the appropriate offenders for parole, parole’s focus on this population defies logic. If public safety is the primary goal of parole, then it should focus on high-risk instead of low-risk offenders. Regardless of the population upon which parole focuses, it only really provides supervision instead of the combination of supervision and services that it purports to supply to ex-offenders.  

It is instructive to note that the men in a Community Corrections program or the Parole Department are the least-risky offenders in the model. If they have serious needs after they are released from prison, as their placement in residential drug rehabilitation programs as a part of a discharge plan demonstrates, then it is only logical to assume that the most serious offenders in prison must have identical if not more intense social service and support needs. The next two reentry paths tend to support more serious offenders.

\textsuperscript{82} An overemphasis on supervision in parole is a nation-wide trend. Parole officers now have larger caseloads and less time to spend with each parolee than they had in the past. They also offer few if any treatment options for parolees despite evidence that has linked a blend of supervision and treatment with lower recidivism rates. See Travis, Jeremy et al. “From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry,” The Urban Institute Press, June 2001, pg. 21.
In the reentry model, the Probation and Parole Departments are parallel institutions. For example, both institutions monitor the activities of offenders while they live in the community, while also introducing offenders to services that will make their reentry easier. However, probation differs from parole in several key ways. First, most probationers have not served a prison sentence in addition to the probation sentence, while all parolees have served prison terms before their community-supervision. Judges hand down a probation sentence in two instances: as an alternative to incarceration and in addition to incarceration. Therefore, probation officers monitor both offenders who have never been to prison as well as offenders who have returned to society after serving a prison sentence. Parole officers monitor only ex-offenders who have been released from incarceration. Second, probation is under the purview of the court system while the executive branch of government controls parole. Third, probation controls a larger population of offenders than parole. For example, of those inmates released from the Suffolk County HOC in January 2001, only eight percent were under parole while 23 percent were under probation. It is possible for an offender to have both parole and probation simultaneously, but data on these cases are generally not available.

In practice, the Probation Department’s role in reentry is becoming more similar to the Parole Department’s role. First, judges are using a probationary sentence in

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83 When a judge sentences an offender to both a prison sentence and a probation sentence, it is commonly called a “split sentence.” In Massachusetts, truth in sentencing laws have made split sentences illegal except for when an offender serves his sentence in a county correctional facility. See Piehl, Anne Morrison. “From Cell to Street: A Plan to Supervise Inmates After Release,” The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth, January 2002, pg. 37-39.

84 Ibid, 40.
addition to a prison sentence more frequently. Judges have increased their use of split sentences (a prison sentence and a probation sentence) in response to the decline of parole, to ensure that some degree of post-release supervision occurs for offenders they consider to be serious enough to need post-release supervision.⁸⁵ Second, probation officers face similarly large caseloads and lack of time with the men under their supervision as parole officers. Therefore, men on probation tend to receive greater amounts of supervision than treatment during their sentence. Third, most men involved with the Probation Department believe that the Probation Officer assigned to them is primarily concerned with supervision rather than helping them access services. In interviews with re-offenders in the Suffolk County HOC, Alexander Horowitz found that most viewed probation as only punitive.⁸⁶ In fact one of Horowitz’s interviewees declared that probation was the only thing standing in his path towards permanent freedom. Because of the strict nature of his probation sentence, he felt that a technical violation resulting in his return to prison was inevitable. From various evaluations, we know that supervision without supportive services typically does not result in successful reentries.⁸⁷

**Going Straight to the Community**

As I mentioned earlier, nearly half of ex-offenders go straight from the prison to the community without the benefit of parole, probation, or a Community Corrections

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program. According to the model of reentry presented in the previous chapter, these men received a chance to access needed services while in prison. They have not been sentenced to probation and they have either not been selected for or have waived parole. Therefore, the reentry model suggests that those offenders returning straight to the community received necessary services while in prison, are capable of finding any needed community-based services on their own, and are not a threat to community safety.

The reality of reentry is that many of the ex-offenders who return straight to the community are precisely the offenders who could benefit most from additional services and supervision. In the previous chapter, I described how a variety of factors converge to discourage or preclude the most serious offenders from participating in programming in the prison and Community Corrections programs. Without parole or probation, these men are returning to the community without any post-release supervision and a strong likelihood that they did not access or were not receptive to any programming while they were in prison. In short, chances are high that they are leaving prison the same men they were when they began their sentence.

If these men have not changed as a result of their incarceration, then they are probably inclined to participate in illegal activity again. This potentially negative activity could be curtailed if they moved into a supportive environment, but the difficulty in finding stable housing and a job that most ex-offenders usually face will probably make that difficult. So now these men are living in the same environments that they lived in prior to their incarceration, with the same problems that they faced before they were incarcerated (e.g., substance abuse) and more barriers to accessing housing and jobs because of their criminal record. The criminal justice system has lost track of them and
these ex-offenders probably do not know how or do not want to find social services that can help them. Because the reentry model has been unsuccessful in rehabilitating or has not even attempted to rehabilitate these men, an increase in criminal activity may occur in the communities to which they have returned.

There is a collection of community-based institutions that attempt to find men who are in this situation, help them access social services, and act as a positive influence for them. They are attempting to help rehabilitate these men after they have completed their incarceration. These institutions hope that their interventions will help these men improve their lives, stabilize their communities, and increase public safety. Two examples of these organizations are the Ella J. Baker House and the Streetworkers Program.

**The Ella J. Baker House**

The Ella J. Baker House is a non-profit, community-based organization founded and supported by the Azusa Christian Community in Dorchester. The Baker House offers a settlement-house-style community center with direct outreach into the streets, the courts, and correctional facilities. Staff members at the Baker House act as mentors and informal support networks for many ex-offenders now residing in the Four Corners area of Dorchester.

The mentor model practiced by staff at the Baker House rests on the assumption that people respond and learn best from other people with whom they can relate. In the words of Andre Norman, Lead Field Organizer for the Baker House, “doctors teach
doctors, lawyers teach lawyers, ex-cons should teach ex-cons."88 This same kind of model has been used by other organizations in the Boston area (see the description of STEP above), as well as by organizations in other cities in other times. For example, Marion Barry advocated such a model for community organizing and working with at-risk youth in Washington, DC in the late 1960s.89 In Marion Barry’s case, this type of model proved to be a disaster as the ex-offenders who participated in it along with the organizers of the program were charged with and eventually convicted of several types of illegal activity. In contrast, the Baker House has operated this model while maintaining the confidence and support of the police department and helping to stabilize their community.

The Baker House staff operates several programs that work with ex-offenders. Some of these, such as the mentor programs with the Brooke House Offender Reentry Program, conduct outreach to men when they are still incarcerated. However, other programs that work with ex-offenders depend on word-of-mouth, the reputation of the Baker House, and outreach efforts to attract ex-offenders. The Baker House gained its reputation as an effective intervener through their work in stemming youth and gang violence in the early 1990s. The “Boston Miracle,” as it is now known, was the result of collaboration between a group of ministers and the Boston Police Department. The Baker House and its reverend, Eugene F. Rivers, III, played a prominent role in this achievement. The Baker House has maintained their status with the community by supporting community events and working with hundreds of youth to prevent crime. But

88 Andre Norman at a panel discussion of ex-offender reentry at the Boston Foundation on February 12, 2002.
their prominence in the community is only one reason that they have a good reputation with many ex-offenders. Another is the fact that many staff members are ex-offenders themselves. This gives them more authority than other organizations in promising and delivering access to services for ex-offenders.

The Baker House fills another role besides a bridge between ex-offenders and needed social services. They also work with the police department to help control crime in the community. In many cases this means targeting specific ex-offenders who have been released and might start illegal activity again. In other cases, it means paying attention to “hot spots” of violent crime. To these ends, staff members at the Baker House meet weekly with representatives from the Boston Police Department, the Youth Violence Strike Force (an anti-gang police unit), school security, other criminal justice institutions, and community groups to share information. In some cases, Baker House staff members hear about individuals who have returned to the neighborhood and try to reach them with a mentor before they have a chance to commit a crime. Therefore, this more supervisory-role directly feeds into their outreach and service provision efforts.

**The Streetworker Program**

A secular example of an outreach program for ex-offenders in the community is the Boston Community Centers’ Streetworker Program. As an outgrowth of the 10-Point Coalition in the early 1990s, the Boston Community Centers began to operate an outreach program called the Streetworker Program in 1991. The Streetworker Program targets at-risk youth and their families. These youth typically do not depend on family support
and they have been unreceptive to traditional service delivery avenues, such as schools and summer youth programs. The Streetworker staff members perform outreach by walking around the community and getting to know the youth and families that live there. The organization’s philosophy centers on “meeting the kids where they are.” Streetworker staff members intervene with over 300 youth and make over 3,000 resource referrals per year in a wide array of health and social services including recreation, education, intervention of drug and alcohol abuse, food, clothing, shelter and employment opportunities. In the words of David Kennedy, Senior Researcher at Harvard University’s Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at the Kennedy School of Government, “they were not in the enforcement business, their loyalties were to the youth, they often looked and sounded like the kids they hung out with, and they often mistrusted the police and were in turn mistrusted by the police.”

The organization is an important component of ex-offender reentry because it is one of the few secular organizations that conduct outreach in communities that receive large numbers of ex-offenders. For ex-offenders who are not religious, the Streetworker Program provides a secular alternative for moral guidance and help finding and accessing social services.

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90 The 10-Point Coalition was a group of clergy in Boston who organized and collaborated with the police department to address the high-level of youth violence in Boston that had reached very serious levels by the early 1990s.
92 See http://www.cityofboston.com/communitycenters/youth.asp.
Other Paths of Reentry: Evidence from Interviews

The organizations and programs described above are not the typical paths of reentry for most men coming out of the Suffolk County HOC. For one reason or another, many men rely on small social networks when they return to the community. Men who receive referrals to social services from staff in the criminal justice system may also rely on social networks to access other services, but for most men a social network is all the support that they have. They may fear or have negative opinions of counseling and other supportive services, or believe that they should only rely on themselves during their reentry. To make matters worse for these men, the temptation to return to a life of crime is present after they are released from prison. Without the benefit of a strong and wide social support system or intensive social services while they were incarcerated, one may assume that the temptation of crime is especially strong. To find out more about the reentry paths of men who return to society without a intensive services or supervision, I now turn to interviews completed with ex-offenders who have been out of prison between one month and several years to find out how social networks helped successful reentries. 94

Interviews with ex-offenders who have stayed out of prison, suggest that they share several characteristics. All had a supportive environment that they returned to or formed when they were released. For many of these men, a religious conversion supplied this supportive environment. In contrast to their lives prior to their incarceration, this conversion installed moral rules to help to govern their lives. Another result of a religious conversion is an immediate social network that the men could rely on for moral
support as well as avenues to find jobs, places to live, and access to social services. One ex-offender found a supportive environment in his close friends and a discussion group he was involved with prior to his incarceration. This supportive environment was not as rich as a religious community in terms of establishing a moral code and giving him more opportunities to help with reentry, but it did serve to keep him away from illegal activity. Most ex-offenders that I spoke with had girlfriends who they either moved in with or with whom they reestablished contact. They all viewed this as an integral part of their successful reentry because of the positive influence that the relationship had on them. Most successful reentrants also had a stable place to live, either with a girlfriend or a close friend, and found a job soon after their release. In fact, some ex-offenders commented that even with the improved attitude that they had when they left prison, they might have returned to crime if they did not rely on supportive services and a positive social network to help them cope with difficulties that accompany reentry.

The Results of Reentry

The first half of the reentry model in Suffolk County, i.e., the portion of the reentry model that occurs inside the Suffolk County HOC, results in the least risky offenders receiving the bulk of supportive services and earlier and frequent interaction with elements of the community system. This outcome occurs at the expense of the most risky offenders, who receive few social services and limited interaction with the community system prior to their release. These outcomes of the reentry model are both intended and unintended. The model specifies that the riskiest offenders will not receive

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94 Because I did not interview ex-offenders who had an unsuccessful reentry experience, I cannot tell what effect social networks had on their experience. However, based on the literature, I can speculate that a lack
access to some of the best services and will not interact with the community until the end of their incarceration. However, there is another range of systemic factors that converge to dissuade offenders from seeking services while they are incarcerated. These factors include overburdened case managers, waiting lists for the few services that are available, and a failure on the part of the criminal justice system to allow easy access to the prison for community-based organizations that volunteer to work with offenders.

This second half of the reentry process, when the offender leaves the criminal justice system and enters the community, is a continuation of this cycle where the least serious offenders receive the most support and the most serious offenders receive the least amount of support. Because the minor offenders have been tracked to receive the most services and interaction with the community, they continue this path. Through referrals from discharge planners at the prison, parole officers, probation officers, and Community Corrections program case managers they access social services in the community, largely crowding out more serious offenders who do not have the same initial access to services. The second portion of the reentry model is complicated by the lack of contact between ex-offenders and the criminal justice system. Thus the reentry model becomes less regimented as ex-offenders decide whether or not to access needed social services and how and with whom to interact in the community. Without the order supplied by the criminal justice system, there are few guarantees that ex-offenders will follow the path dictated by the reentry model. Instead, they may disregard social services and reconnect with negative influences in their lives. When this occurs, further illegal activity may result and ex-offenders may find themselves in prison once again. However, due to the initial progress and contacts that minor offenders make during the first half of

of a positive social network is probably a significant contributor to an unsuccessful reentry.
the reentry model, they may be more inclined to continue through the community portion of the reentry model than are major offenders.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The outcomes of the reentry model that I have described in this thesis are not entirely without a rationale. They cycle of disparity between minor and major offenders can be explained by the market-oriented access to social services inside the prison, the risk and risk aversion present in the reentry model, and the notion of triage.

*Market-Oriented Services*

Besides a portion of inmates who are not allowed to access the best social services that the criminal justice system offers, the criminal justice system offers services according to market principles. In other words, inmates who would like to participate in services must decide to access these services. Those who do participate in these services are rewarded with increased access to more services, less supervision, and increased access to the community. Therefore, those offenders who access the services are likely to have a more successful reentry experience than those who do not access the services. Arguably, offenders with the initiative to seek the services are less risky offenders, while those who do not access the services are more risky offenders. Even though the criminal justice system offers incentives to offenders to encourage their participation in these services, it is difficult to discern how enthusiastic most offenders are about these services.

*Risk and Risk-Aversion*

In the case of reentry, risk and aversion to risk are reflected in three distinct forms. The first form is the risk ex-offenders face when they are released from incarceration and the risk-averse behavior that they engage in as a result. An ex-offender
generally faces risks when he returns to his neighborhood: how will he be perceived by his peers and family, will he be able to stay away from crime, and, if he cannot stay away from crime, will he be caught again. Offenders under parole or probation face the additional risk of violating the terms of their release and going back to prison for a technical violation. With these risks in mind, ex-offenders sometimes waive parole or refuse to access social service programs that have a monitoring role.

The second form is the risk experienced by the community. Community members fear that ex-offenders will commit more crimes. As a result, community members are hesitant to welcome ex-offenders into their community and may reinforce barriers that ex-offenders experience to finding housing and jobs.

Third is the risk experienced by the criminal justice and social service systems. Should an offender commit another crime while they are under the supervision of the criminal justice system (Community Corrections, parole, or probation) or under the care of an intensive social service organization, it puts the organization in a compromised position. This is closely related to the risk experienced by the community, because any crime committed by an ex-offender who is connected to a criminal justice or social service institution will probably result in a public backlash against the institution. This produces a political will that punishes an institution that is “responsible” for an ex-offender’s bad behavior. Therefore, it is not surprising that these institutions cater to low-risk offenders who are less likely to recidivate and will probably commit relatively minor crimes when they do recidivate.
Triage

Related to risk-averse behavior, the concept of triage also helps explain why low-risk offenders receive more services and support than high-risk offenders. From a cost-benefit perspective, spending significant amounts of resources on high-risk offenders to give them services and supports may ultimately result in few gains for public safety. The idea that these resources could be “wasted” on high-risk offender populations, while low-risk offenders could benefit from the resources and increase public safety, may also be a reason that resources are concentrated on low-risk offenders.

Whatever the rationale for the model, men in the Suffolk County HOC tend to move in one of two directions: toward increased freedom and privileges or toward increased isolation from the community and more strict supervision. Those who eventually gain access to a Community Corrections program like the Brooke House have learned how to navigate the reentry model. To get to the Brooke House, they had to be motivated to make all of the right choices to progress through the prison as quickly as possible, gain access to social services, and get back to the community. Because of institutional rules made by the criminal justice system, they are not the inmates with serious violence problems. The other spectrum of the inmate population represents those that the prison considers the most dangerous. They have not made the right choices or were not eligible to participate in programming offered by the criminal justice system. Therefore, they may not have the same amount of motivation as offenders who gain access to a Community Corrections program.

With the market-oriented provision of services for inmates, risk-aversion, and triage in mind, prison officials have determined that motivated, low-risk prisoners should
receive the bulk of resources. In some cases, inmates have been restrained from access to the community and intensive services that go along with the Community Corrections programs because the criminal justice system feels they are the greatest threat to commit another crime. As a result, the criminal justice system is not willing to take a risk on letting them back into the community before their sentence is complete. Therefore, inmates who have successfully navigated the prison system and gained access to services provided there may need social services relatively less than other inmates in the prison. The system allows the “best” inmates to benefit from what resources and services are available, while the “worst” inmates fail to access the resources and services that could help them.

These outcomes at the county-level beg the question of what happens at the state and federal-level of corrections. While the same systems interact in the reentry model for each level, is it possible that state and federal reentry models have different outcomes? The state and federal-level prisons house more serious offenders when compared to the county prisons. Therefore, some of the rationales (risk-aversion and triage) for these outcomes are even more of an issue for state and federal-level reentry models. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the federal and state reentry models result in the same outcomes: a concentration of services and support for the least risky offenders at the expense of the most risky offenders. For example, according to Andre Norman, if there are any reentry services for offenders at the state-level they are concentrated on low-risk offenders.95 These outcomes at every level of the prison system (i.e., the county, state, and federal levels) suggests that breaking the cycle of disparity between less and more risky offenders could benefit large numbers of offenders and improve public safety.
Recently, the Suffolk County HOC acknowledged the inequitable outcomes of its reentry model and has sought to balance access to services through an initiative called the Boston Reentry Initiative. This program also came about because of the realization that intensive services could be effective in turning some of the most dangerous offenders from criminal activity and in the process produce some legitimate reductions in community crime. Therefore, this initiative shows promise of ending the cycle of deprivation for the most needy and support for the least needy that currently characterizes the reentry model in Suffolk County.

For at least the past two years, a coalition of criminal justice officials, community-based non-profit service-providers, and faith-based mentor programs have recognized that the large numbers of ex-offenders returning to the Boston community could cause an increase in crime in Boston. Of particular concern to this coalition was the potential increase in crime in specific neighborhoods in Boston, like Roxbury and Dorchester, and the return of specific offenders considered to be the toughest cases. The result of this recognition and the subsequent concern that it raised was the establishment of the Boston Reentry Initiative (also called the Reentry Panel) at the Suffolk County HOC.

Since January 2001, the Reentry Panel has convened once a month at the Suffolk County HOC. The Reentry Panel consists of three groups of people. The first group is a collection of prisoners in the Suffolk County of HOC. Based on age (they target young offenders) and the rate of conviction the staff at the Suffolk County HOC and the Boston Police Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF) detectives create a list of potential prisoners.

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95 Based on a conversation on April 24, 2002.
to participate in the panel.96 These prisoners are identified as individuals who will be most at-risk for recidivism when they leave the prison. A list of these individuals is forwarded to the Boston Police Department, which matches the list to known “impact players” in the neighborhoods that they will return to after their release. The Boston Police Department sends a list of the individuals that they consider to be the most at-risk for recidivism based on their analysis of the potential participants in the Reentry Panel. Based on these suggestions, the prison requires about 10 to 15 prisoners to participate in the Reentry Panel every month. This weeding out of more minor offenders in favor of the more serious offenders is somewhat unique in the criminal justice system. Often, due to pressures to show positive results, intervention programs select more easily treatable populations rather than the most difficult populations.97

The second group of people that participates in the Reentry Panel is a collection of representatives of local service-providers and faith-based mentor programs from Boston. These individuals range from ministers to representatives of community centers who provide or arrange for services for ex-offenders. A complete list of the local service providers and mentors represented in the February 2002 Reentry Panel appears in Exhibit 1.

96 Boston Reentry Initiative Grant Application, Stefan LoBuglio, Suffolk County House of Corrections, Community Corrections Department, October 4, 2001. An inmate might be passed over for the Panel even if they have more incarcerations showing on their record. The Panel is most interested in intervening with young inmates who are incarcerated at a high rate.

Exhibit 1: Service-Providers in the Reentry Panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Resources for Justice</td>
<td>Basic necessities for employment (transit fare, clothes, etc.) and mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Community Centers</td>
<td>Mentors, day care services and job search strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Wall Ministries</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten-Point Coalition</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Work Place</td>
<td>Job training and searching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Revenue, Child Support</td>
<td>Planning for child support payment and father and child reunion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Opportunities Boston</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella J. Baker House</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation of Islam</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAN</td>
<td>Access to resources, substance abuse counseling, housing, and jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final group of people that participate in the Reentry Panel is comprised of criminal justice officials. Included in this group are representatives of probation, parole, the District Attorney’s Office, and the Office of the Federal Prosecutor.

The Boston Reentry Initiative Philosophy

The Reentry Panel works under the “good cop – bad cop” model. The first speakers in the Panel are the local service-providers and faith-based mentors. Each speaker addresses the group of inmates and describes the services that they offer, as well as what responsibilities fall onto the shoulders of ex-offenders who access their services. Common themes that develop from their presentations revolve around mutual
responsibilities of ex-offenders and service providers. Many of the organizations that are represented in the Panel have been in existence for 10 or more years. Through the life of the organizations represented at the Reentry Panel, each has experienced positive and negative interactions with ex-offenders. The credibility of virtually all of the service providers and mentors has been hurt by irresponsible ex-offenders who “burn bridges” by taking advantage of services without following through. For example, they accept a job, but then arrive late for work, or worse, do not come to work at all. This reflects poorly on the organization or individual that helped them obtain the job, so their capacity to find more jobs for other ex-offenders is diminished.

This trend is not limited to help in employment placement. Help in finding housing, counseling, and substance abuse treatment has been met by similar lack of responsibility on the part of the ex-offender. After too many “burnt bridges” these mentors are left with few contacts in the social service world. With this trend in mind, service providers and mentors at the Reentry Panel stress the unavoidable responsibility of ex-offenders to reach out for help and take advantage of available services without burning bridges and jeopardizing future opportunities for other ex-offenders.

Another common theme of the presentations of the service providers is the sense of teamwork among the service providers. Different service providers have various strengths, ranging from job placement, to referrals, to substance abuse counseling. According to service providers, if they cannot help an individual, they know someone else within the service provider network that can. In the words of one service-provider, “If I have a job lead, but no qualified individual to fill it, why would I keep it to myself?
I would get in touch with the other service providers and mentors and ask them to plug the lead with a qualified person.98

The team concept transcends the status of the organizations involved in the Reentry Panel who are affiliated with the criminal justice system and the service provision sector. While the ties are not as tight, representatives of parole, probation, the District Attorney’s Office, and the Federal Prosecutor all have connections to the organizations doing the work with ex-offenders in the community. After the service-providers and mentors have presented, each member of the criminal justice makes a presentation to the inmates. The parole and probation representatives stress the collaborative and positive relationship they hope that they have with inmates who will be eligible for their programs. In addition to the supervisory role that these programs have, both can also help ex-offenders find needed services when they are reentering society. In a dramatic shift, the District Attorney and Federal Prosecutor present the inmates with various scenarios they will face if any of them are caught committing a crime again after they are released from custody. Most of the inmates in the group are repeat offenders. Typically, most of the inmates will be eligible for a 10 to 15 year minimum sentence if they are convicted of another serious crime. See Appendix 5 for a diagram that represents the relationships between service providers, mentors, criminal justice officials, and inmates/ex-offenders from the Suffolk County HOC in the Reentry Panel.

When the panel ends, each inmate is paired with a mentor. The mentor begins regular visits to the prison to meet with the inmate while he is still incarcerated. When the inmate is released, the mentor is instrumental in helping him connect with various

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social services, such as housing, job training, and, in some cases, even jobs. The mentors act as helpers to navigate the inmate through the first period of his return to society.

The effect of this Reentry Panel on the recidivism rates of participating inmates is currently unknown. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some participants have been “scared straight” and take advantage of the services offered to them, while others are unimpressed by the presentations and are suspicious of the service providers and mentors. In some cases, the inmates who are suspicious of the service providers and mentors are simply waiting and testing the intentions of the promises of the program. In other cases, the inmates are not interested in seeking help from the Panel and presumably rely on existing networks for help once they get out of prison.

It is unclear how cohesive this Reentry Panel social service and mentor team really is. A conversation with one service provider who preferred to remain anonymous suggested that the team is full of internal divisions and tensions. The concept of a well-integrated team that makes referrals to other service providers and mentors is seriously compromised by the implications of this confidential conversation. If providers and mentors do not share information or freely make referrals, then the system that looks like a well-functioning service provision machine on paper may turn out to be of little use to ex-offenders in the process of returning to society.

The Boston Reentry Initiative bears an uncanny resemblance to the Intensive After-Care Community Program (IAP) discussed in Chapter 2. The most important similarities between the two models include the following: a concentration on the most serious offenders; a recognition of the importance of early contact and interaction with
representatives of the community; an introduction of intensive services for each offender; and aggressive follow-up for each participant in the program.

There are also some glaring differences. First, the IAP model was developed to work with the most serious juvenile offenders and the Boston Reentry Initiative was designed with adults in mind. It is worth noting that the Boston Reentry Initiative actually targets young offenders. However, these offenders are still incarcerated in a prison for adults. This fundamental difference in the populations served by these systems suggests that there may be a difference between adolescent and adult offenders that requires different reentry strategies.

The second major difference is that the IAP model focuses on youth in a parole setting where the programming supplied as a part of the IAP model was mandatory for ex-offenders. The Boston Reentry Initiative does not specify that ex-offenders who participate in it be parolees. In fact, because the men selected to participate in the Boston Reentry Initiative are considered to be some of the worst offenders in the prison, they are probably not eligible for parole. Therefore, ex-offenders selected to participate in the model may refuse the programming that is a part of the Boston Reentry Initiative once they are released. Despite these differences between the models, the literature supports the efficacy of the main ideas of the Boston Reentry Initiative: early interaction between the offender and community representatives and intensive case management for the ex-offenders starting while they are incarcerated and continuing after their release. Therefore, an expansion of the Boston Reentry Initiative could provide benefits for ex-offenders and, as a result, potentially reduce the crime rate in Boston. Those involved in the Boston Reentry Initiative also suspect that it will have a multiplier effect in the
community. Because they have chosen offenders who are known to be serious “players” in the community, they hope that helping them will result in other potential offenders in the community also moving away from illegal activity.

**Obstacles to Changing the Reentry Model in Suffolk County**

The current reentry model in Suffolk County continues to perpetuate a disparity between the hardest to serve and the easiest to serve inmates. The experimental Boston Reentry Initiative shows promise in mitigating this disparity, but it currently only affects a maximum of 15 offenders per month (approximately six percent of the total number of offenders released from the prison). But expanding the Boston Reentry Initiative to more offenders in the Suffolk County HOC faces several serious obstacles.

First, there is a lack of political will to change the current system. Given their position in society, prisoners carry very little political capital. They also do not have a strong political constituency in society at-large. Besides some advocates in the social service arena, the research community, and some churches, there are few people who lobby for the liberalization to the criminal justice system that would be necessary to implement the Boston Reentry Initiative on a larger scale. As the “tough on crime” policies of the 1980s and 1990s show, our society more readily accepts that prisoners need fewer contacts with the community and more time behind bars. Repackaging the reentry issue as a public safety problem that can only be solved by offering prisoners intensive services and help when they return to society has managed to increase the public dialogue on this issue, but a legitimate change to the system is still a long way off.
A second obstacle that is related to the first is the high percentage of funding for prisons that is concentrated on security rather than treatment. Instead of this arrangement, funding could be distributed more evenly between security and social services inside the prison and aftercare programs for ex-offenders. The public perception that more prisons will offer more security is prevalent in our society. While this has begun to change, it still dominates decisions around criminal justice policy formulation. In addition to public perception, changing the budgets of prisons is difficult because of the labor contracts with correctional officers. These long-term contracts usually win out over temporary contract employment for social service providers within the prison.

A third, and perhaps most important obstacle, is the unwelcoming or ambivalent attitude of most community-members towards returning ex-offenders. The common perception of the community is that ex-offenders caused their own problems and do not deserve public sympathy. Therefore, they bristle at the thought of ex-offenders receiving more social services than other citizens who have not committed crimes. This results in few job opportunities and housing options for ex-offenders. Without the support and acceptance of the community, it is more difficult for an ex-offender to stay away from illegal activity.

With the Boston Reentry Initiative, the criminal justice system has identified a possible solution to the current discrepancies between demonstrated need of services and the actual provision of services. Members of the social service and community systems have joined this model, to create a synergistic reentry model for the most serious offenders in Suffolk County. I recommend that the systems that comprise the reentry
model in Suffolk County fundamentally change how they operate to more closely reflect the Boston Reentry Initiative.

It remains to be seen if the criminal justice system can expand the Boston Reentry Initiative to capture more offenders coming out of the Suffolk County HOC. If the Reentry Initiative can help the most serious offenders, it can probably help more medium risk offenders as well. Given the generally positive findings from evaluations of programs that combine supervision with intensive social services, the criminal justice system should also consider what steps it can make to expand formal supervision on the participants in the Reentry Initiative. The barriers to expanding this program that I mentioned above mean that these goals should be long-term. However, there are a number of short-term recommendations that I have for more minor changes to the Suffolk County reentry model. These short-term recommendations are based on possible improvements to currently ineffective areas in the reentry model.

**Short-Term Recommendations**

**My** short-term recommendations are based on improving parts of the present reentry model that I believe are ineffective. However, measuring the effectiveness of a reentry model is fraught with problems. First, there is disagreement on what is the best measure of effectiveness. The most popular measure is recidivism – whether or not ex-offenders stay out of prison once they are released. However, other measures of success are also important. Social service providers that work with ex-offenders are concerned with recidivism as well as indicators of general well being for ex-offenders. For example, measures of educational attainment, sobriety, and stability in employment and
housing are all valid measures of success in a reentry model. Generally, good empirical evaluations of the effectiveness of reentry models are hard to find. Therefore, I will rely on qualitative data to shed some light on the effectiveness of the reentry model. A second but related problem is figuring out what changes could be made to improve the functioning of the model and its outcomes.

**Short-Term Recommendation #1: Move some social services currently offered inside the prison to outside of the criminal justice system.**

The ability of the criminal justice system to act as an institution that facilitates reentry is questioned by many people. The basis of this concern rests on the reputation of the criminal justice system with populations who are most affected by it. African-Americans and Latinos, disproportionately affected by incarceration when compared to whites, tend also to have more negative opinions about the criminal justice system. Dina Rose and Todd Clear interviewed citizens who have been exposed to incarceration, through personal experience or the experience of someone they know, and show that these citizens have less positive opinions about the criminal justice system than those who have little to no exposure to incarceration.99 These opinions manifest in a distrust of the criminal justice system and institutions closely linked to the system. This suggests that the criminal justice system and related institutions may be less effective at helping

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Criminal justice system officials and inmates in the Suffolk County HOC also question the potential of the current criminal justice system to provide services that can help prisoners reenter society. Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent, Community Corrections Division at the Suffolk County HOC, thinks that an “institutional bubble” reduces the effectiveness of some services offered in the Suffolk County HOC. In many cases, inmates are under extreme psychological pressure because of the unpleasant conditions in the prison and difficult personal situations (such as strained relationships with significant others outside of prison, isolation from children, and conflict with other inmates or correctional officers at the prison). Even the best attempts by the prison to create programs that facilitate reentry for inmates are constrained by these conditions. In his opinion, services that the criminal justice offers to prisoners should focus on developing “hard skills,” such as education and job training skills, and rely more heavily on social services from service providers in the community to address other important issues like substance abuse and counseling. Interviews with inmates at the Brooke House confirm the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system as a tool to assist

100 Liz Curtin, Director of Adult Services for Community Resources for Justice, disagrees with this assessment. In her opinion, institutional affiliation is less important in determining the effectiveness of social services than the quality of the service offered and whether or not the service is mandatory for inmates. In her view, mandatory services can be as effective than voluntary services. Still other experts in the field of criminal justice believe that a positive attitude of an inmate is one of the most important determinants of the effectiveness of social services. See S. Bushway and P. Reuter. (2002). “Labor Markets and Crime.” In Wilson and Petersilia (eds.), Crime: Public Policies for Crime Control, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, CA: ICS Press as cited in S. Lawrence et al. (2002). The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming (Draft Report). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

101 Based on an interview on March 27, 2002.

102 Ibid.
reintegration. Most view the prison and its staff as a system to overcome rather than as a tool to use to improve their chances for a successful reintegration.\footnote{Based on interviews with five inmates between April 1, 2002 and April 14, 2002.}

This finding suggests that some social services will be most successful when they are located outside of the criminal justice system. For example, social services involving most kinds of counseling, which prisoners tend to be suspicious of anyway, should at the very least be offered by community-based service providers that have limited connections to the criminal justice system. At best, these services should be offered in an institutional setting, like the Brooke House, that is outside of the prison. The Suffolk County HOC should expand services, such as vocational education classes, life skills classes and GED education classes that promote “hard skills.” These services may seem more benign to prisoners and can still offer them skills that will help with their reentry.

\textit{Short-Term Recommendation #2: Increase the number of serious offenders who have access to Community Correction’s programs like the Brooke House}

The presence of the Brooke House in the community and the wealth of services available there suggest that the Brooke House blurs the lines between the criminal justice system and the social service and community systems. According to interviews with staff at the Brooke House and inmates who reside there, the reduced visible affiliation with the criminal justice system makes the programming at the Brooke House more effective than comparable programming inside the Suffolk County HOC. One inmate even declared that he has to remind himself that he is still technically incarcerated during his stay at the Brooke House. All inmates interviewed admitted that they had much more access to case managers than they did to their case managers at the Suffolk County HOC and most felt
that their case managers had more interest in helping them access services than their case managers at the prison. Staff members believe that inmates view them as less authoritative than they view staff at the prison. As a result, most Brooke House staff felt that they could be more effective than staff at the prison. Therefore, the model should expand the number of men who can take advantage of the “soft skill” services, such as mental health and substance abuse counseling, and with help getting a job and housing that occur at the Brooke House.

Even in an institution that prisoners identify less with the criminal justice system, the perceptions of the inmates do affect whether or not they benefit from the services. Inmates typically do not exhibit consistently positive opinions of the services and supervision that they receive at the Brooke House. Rather, they exhibit shifts in attitudes toward the Brooke House programs and staff. If one were to graph their attitude, with the Y-axis reflecting an inmate’s attitude and the X-axis representing time spent at the Brooke House, the graph would approximate an inverted “U.” Inmates enter the Brooke House with a high degree of mistrust of the criminal justice system. This is reflected in a negative attitude toward the staff and programs that they are involved with. Over time, they begin to appreciate the services that are offered at the Brooke House and begin to view the staff as people who can help ease their transition to the community. Predictably, their attitude improves over this period. Eventually, as the end of an inmate’s sentence, the frustration-level of inmates increases as they realize that their freedom is almost at hand but they still must follow Brooke House rules. Over this period, their attitudes usually worsen. This general pattern suggests that to achieve the

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104 I owe this model of inmate attitude to Kurt Francois, who described it to me at a meeting on March 13, 2002.
best results, policy interventions at the Brooke House should be concentrated at the middle of an inmate’s stay.

Short-Term Recommendation #3: Connections to the community should begin early for all offenders

One common way for representatives of community groups to reach offenders is to meet them while they are still in prison. Evidence from a recent study of recidivism in Suffolk County shows that visits help reduce recidivism. Therefore, visits from mentors from various community organizations could help offenders reenter society and supply an immediate social network when he is released. Currently, only inmates in the Brooke House and those involved with the Boston Reentry Initiative may choose to use staff at the Baker House as mentors during their incarceration. This option should be open to all offenders at the prison. Mentors should still meet with these inmates regularly to help give them moral guidance and supervise their community service. However, these meetings should begin soon after an offender enters the prison, because it may help him with the adjustment to living in prison.

A recommendation that involves community involvement with the reentry process through mentor programs brings with it controversy about what kinds of institutions should act as mentors: faith-based or secular community institutions. Spirituality can be a powerful force in helping an offender begin a new life that moves away from illegal activity. However, there is always the danger that religious differences between these institutions and individual prisoners will create friction. Therefore, it is important to have a mixture of secular and faith-based institutions involved in a mentor program. In the
case of the Boston Reentry Initiative, the Boston Community Centers Streetworker Program represents a secular option for offenders as a mentor. If there are not other secular organizations that can act in a similar capacity as the Streetworker Program, then its role should be expanded.

Further Research

Timing and financial constraints prevented me from completing research that would have been helpful for this thesis. First, I would have liked to interview more people involved in the reentry model in Suffolk County. While I tried to speak with the key players in each system in the model, there are several obvious omissions. From the criminal justice system, I did not interview members of the Youth Violence Strike Force, the Discharge Planner at the HOC, or case managers at the HOC. In the social service system, I would have liked to talk to a variety of community health organizations and other social service providers to get a better idea of how they get clients who have been ex-offenders. Finally, in the community system I would have liked to interview more members of the Streetworker Program and other community representatives on the Reentry Panel.

Second, to really complete a trace of the reentry model, I would have liked to follow individuals from the start of the model to the end of the model. It would be ideal to follow at least five individuals as they moved through the prison and into the community. This would have supplied rich ethnographic research that would have strengthened some of my arguments and provided a more intimate account of reentry in

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Suffolk County. Unfortunately, this technique requires more time and money than I had available.

While Suffolk County seems to be moving in the right direction, the reentry model there could benefit from more research on what kinds of interventions are effective in reducing recidivism, while increasing community stability and prosperity. In addition to the two suggestions above, I would also recommend an intensive study of the effectiveness of the Boston Reentry Initiative. Anecdotal evidence and evaluations of similar programs in other cities suggest that it could be a powerful intervention to improve the lives of incarcerated men. Only an impartial evaluation of the program will really determine if it is a success.
Appendix 1: Individuals Interviewed

Diana Aubourg, Member of the Azusa Christian Community, March 14, 2002.
Karen Bacon, Case Manager for the Offender Reentry Program at the Brooke House, March 29, 2002.
Debbie Copper, Housing Advocate at SPAN, April 21, 2002.
Liz Curtain, Director of Adult Services for the Brooke and McGrath Houses, April 1, 2002.
Kamilah Drummond, Career Specialist at The Work Place, March 28, 2002.
Kurt Francois, Director of the Safe Neighborhood Initiative in Bowdin St. and Geneva Ave., January 29, 2002; March 13, 2002.
Donovan Holgate, Program Monitor at the Brooke House, March 7, 2002.
Bobby Jo Leaster, Special Assistant in the Youth Services Unit of the Streetworker Program at the Boston Community Centers, April 2, 2002.
Stefan LoBuglio, Deputy Superintendent of the Community Corrections Division at the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department, March 27, 2002; April 12, 2002.
Peggy Lucien, Assistant Director at the Brooke House, April 1, 2002.
Shelli Rossman, Principal Research Associate at the Urban Institute, February 1, 2002.
Johnnie Ward, Counselor at STEP, April 18, 2002.
Appendix 2: Background Information on Offender and Ex-Offender Interviews

Document of Informed Consent: Offender Interview

The purpose of this interview is to investigate the availability and quality of services for people in prison and people in pre-release programs. This interview will also ask questions about networks of friends and how these help or hurt an ex-con’s ability to access services. You will only be interviewed once; only one person will interview you; and the interview will last for approximately one hour. I will audiotape this interview so that I don’t miss any responses or parts of responses that you have for any of the questions. These tapes will remain in a secure location at Community Resources for Justice at 355 Boylston St. in Boston, MA. After completion of the study, all tapes (including tapes from interviews where an interviewee decides to withdraw from the study) will be destroyed.

I have pledged confidentiality to any participant in this research project. I will not use your name or any other identifying physical characteristics. A record of your name will be linked to a research identification number and this record will be kept in a secure location at Community Resources for Justice at 355 Boylston St. After completion of the study, I will destroy the file that links your name to your research identification number. Staff at the Brooke House will not be allowed hear any of the substance of this interview. They will also not see a transcript of this interview. Brooke House staff will only be able to see an analysis of the substance of this interview after all identifiers have been removed. Your confidentiality will be kept in any research papers that use the substance of this interview.

Any participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent to participate and/or stop participation in the project at any time. You may also refuse to answer any and all questions that are a part of this interview. Agreeing or refusing to be a part of this interview will in no way influence your terms of incarceration or your prospects of release. In exchange for your participation in this interview, you will receive a gift that is worth approximately $10. You will receive this gift after we complete the interview.

If you have any questions about the research project, please direct your questions to Langley Keyes (lkeyes@mit.edu or (617) 253-1540). Also, if you feel that you have been treated unfairly during the course of this interview, you may contact the Chairman of the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects at MIT [(617) 253-6787].

Signature: __________________________________________
Date: ______________________________________________________________________

Signature of interviewer: ______________________________________________________
Date: ______________________________________________________________________

You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.
Document of Informed Consent: Ex-Offender Interview

The purpose of this interview is to investigate the availability and quality of services for people who have just left prison. This interview will also ask questions about networks of friends and how these help or hurt an ex-con’s ability to access services. You will only be interviewed once; only one person will interview you; and the interview will last for approximately one hour. I will audiotape this interview so that I don’t miss any responses or parts of responses that you have for any of the questions. These tapes will remain in a secure location at my apartment. After completion of the study, all tapes (including tapes from interviews where an interviewee decides to withdraw from the study) will be destroyed.

I have pledged confidentiality to any participant in this research project. I will not use your name or any other identifying physical characteristics. A record of your name will be linked to a research identification number and this record will be kept in a secure location at my apartment. After completion of the study, I will destroy the file that links your name to your research identification number. Staff at the Baker House will not be allowed hear any of the substance of this interview. They will also not see a transcript of this interview. Baker House staff will only be able to see an analysis of the substance of this interview after all identifiers have been removed. Your confidentiality will be kept in any research papers that use the substance of this interview.

Any participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent to participate and/or stop participation in the project at any time. You may also refuse to answer any and all questions that are a part of this interview. Agreeing or refusing to be a part of this interview will in no way influence your terms of incarceration or your prospects of release. In exchange for your participation in this interview, you will receive a gift that is worth approximately $10. You will receive this gift after we complete the interview.

If you have any questions about the research project, please direct your questions to Langley Keyes (lkeyes@mit.edu or (617) 253-1540). Also, if you feel that you have been treated unfairly during the course of this interview, you may contact the Chairman of the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects at MIT [(617) 253-6787].

Signature: ____________________________________________
Date: ________________________________________________

Signature of interviewer: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________________________

You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.
Community Resources for Justice: Brooke House

Community Resources for Justice (CRJ) is an organization in Boston, MA that operates pre-release programs for the criminal justice system. In addition, it has a research arm that studies correctional institutions and the corrections population in Massachusetts. Primarily working in the Boston area, CRJ operates several pre-release centers, where offenders who are near the end of their sentence begin to transition into society. One of these, the Brooke House, houses approximately 50 inmates who are set to return to the Boston area. These inmates have been judged to be low-level risk and have been incarcerated for non-violent crimes. To assist with my investigation of the reentry of ex-offenders, I will interview both participants in the Brooke House pre-release program as well as staff who work at Brooke House. All interviews will focus on three topics: 1) the quality, availability, and integration of services for inmates during incarceration and after release; 2) the barriers experienced by inmates in obtaining services during incarceration and after release; and 3) the helpfulness or hindrance of an ex-offender’s social network in obtaining services after release from prison.

Subject Sample:
I will interview approximately six participants in the pre-release program at Brooke House. Staff at Brooke House will select individuals who have lived at Brooke House for at least four weeks. All residents who have lived at the Brooke House for at least four weeks will be eligible to participate in the study. The interview will be a one-on-one interview between the offender and myself. While this study is not an evaluation, an honest discussion about the services at Brooke House as well as needed improvements for these services will be extremely helpful for the study. Open discussions on this subject could be compromised if a member of the Brooke House staff is present. Each interviewee will have the right to refuse the interview and stop the interview at any time. Should a refusal occur, staff will solicit another Brooke House resident to participate in the study. Similarly, each resident will have the right to refuse to answer any question that is asked during the interview. They will not be replaced with a new interviewee unless they refuse to answer a majority of the questions.

Subject Interviews:
All interviews will occur within CRJ facilities at the Brooke House (the Brooke House is located at 79 Chandler St., Boston, MA 02116). All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed later, using equipment in the Crime and Justice Institute at CRJ’s headquarters (located at 355 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116). Each interview will last no longer than one hour. I will conduct one interview with each participant in the study. Specific questions for this pre-release interview are included as Appendix 1. To encourage individuals to participate in this study, CRJ will provide a small incentive (valued at less than $10). Examples of an incentive are MBTA fare (e.g., weekly pass) or gift certificates to local restaurants.

Some interview questions from each survey are taken or adapted from questions culled by the Urban Institute for their pending proposal entitled “Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry.” These questions come from a variety of reputable sources and most have been used in another study. I developed the remainder of the questions in consultation with Professor Langley Keyes at MIT and Shelli Rossman at the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Each interview will have a “script” that I will develop in conjunction with CRJ.
Confidentiality and Data Security:

As mentioned above, all interviews will take place at Brooke House. All subsequent transcription of interviews, coding of documents, data entry, analysis of data, and review of interview or other materials relating to the interviews will be conducted in the offices of the Crime and Justice Institute at CRJ. The Crime and Justice Institute will provide me with space to conduct these activities as well as keys to offices for after-hours access.

Other steps to ensure confidentiality of participants are as follows:

1. I will pledge to maintain the confidentiality of any offenders and ex-offenders who are involved with this project.
2. A list of ex-offenders who participate in this project, with names, contact information, and research identification numbers will be created. Using these research identification numbers, I will create a linking file that will be stored in a locked drawer at the Crime and Justice Institute and on a password-protected, local hard drive at the Crime and Justice Institute. After completion of the interviews, research identification numbers will immediately replace the names of participants and all records of names will be destroyed.
3. All hard copies of data and electronic copies of databases containing identifiers for ex-offenders will be stored in a locked drawer at the Crime and Justice Institute and on password-protected local hard drives at the Crime and Justice Institute.
4. At the conclusion of the project, paper copies of data will be destroyed in the offices of the Crime and Justice Institute. Any remaining personal identifiers on electronic databases will be replaced with a research identification number from the linking file and will be stored in my password protected files and archived.
5. The data will be subject to content analysis to identify and report patterns of findings. Findings will be reported without identifying individuals. If case anecdotes are used for illustrative purposes, precautions will be taken to ensure that the actual persons referred to are not in any way identifiable. Final versions of these case anecdotes will be reviewed by Kurt Francois and Elspeth Slayter before any oral presentations are made, written reports, papers, articles, or the thesis are submitted.
6. At the end of the project, all hard copy and electronic files with personal data, including the linking file, will be destroyed in the offices of the Crime and Justice Institute.
7. Any publications other than my thesis will be co-written with staff from Community Resources for Justice, Inc.

Azusa Christian Community: The Ella J. Baker House

The Ella J. Baker House is a non-profit, community-based organization founded and supported by the Azusa Christian Community. The Baker House offers a settlement-house-style community center with direct outreach into the streets, the courts, and correctional facilities. Staff members at the Baker House act as mentors for some individuals who reside at the Brooke House. They also offer informal support to many ex-offenders now residing in the Four Corners area of Dorchester.
To assist with my investigation of the reentry of ex-offenders, I will interview ex-offenders who receive formal or informal support from the Baker House. All interviews will focus on three topics: 1) the quality, availability, and integration of services for inmates during incarceration and after release; 2) the barriers experienced by inmates in obtaining services during incarceration and after release; and 3) the helpfulness or hindrance of an ex-offender’s social network in obtaining services after release from prison.

Subject Sample:
I will interview approximately six ex-offenders who have a formal or informal relationship with staff at the Baker House. Staff at Baker House will select these individuals. Each interviewee will have the right to refuse the interview and stop the interview at any time. Should a refusal occur, staff will solicit ex-offender to join the study. Similarly, each participant will have the right to refuse to answer any question that is asked during the interview. They will not be replaced with a new interviewee unless they refuse to answer a majority of the questions.

Subject Interviews:
All interviews will occur within facilities at the Baker House (the Baker House is located at 411 Washington St., Dorchester, MA 02124). All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed later, using my personal equipment (transcriptions will occur at my apartment, which is located at 79 Gordon St., Brighton, MA 02135). Each interview will last no longer than one hour. Specific questions for the interview of ex-offenders who rely on formal or informal Baker House support are included as Appendix 2. To encourage participants to come to the Baker House for this interview, I will rely on a small incentive (valued at less than $10). Examples of an incentive are MBTA fare (e.g., weekly pass) or gift certificates.

Some interview questions from each survey are taken or adapted from questions culled by the Urban Institute for their pending proposal entitled “Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry.” These questions come from a variety of reputable sources and most have been used in another study. I developed the remainder of the questions in consultation with Professor Langley Keyes at MIT and Shelli Rossman at the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute.

Confidentiality and Data Security:
All interviews will take place at Baker House. All subsequent transcription of interviews, coding of documents, data entry, analysis of data, and review of interview or other materials relating to the interviews will be conducted in my apartment (79 Gordon St., #18, Brighton, MA 02135).

Other steps to ensure confidentiality of participants are as follows:
1. I will pledge to maintain the confidentiality of any offenders and ex-offenders who are involved with this project.
2. A list of ex-offenders who participate in this project, with first names, contact information, and research identification numbers will be created. Using these research identification numbers, I will create a linking file that will be stored in a locked drawer at my apartment and on a password-protected, local hard drive on my lap top computer. After completion of the interviews, research identification numbers will immediately replace the names of participants and all records of names will be destroyed.
3. All hard copies of data and electronic copies of databases containing identifiers for ex-offenders will be stored in my apartment and on a password-protected, local hard drive on my laptop computer.

4. At the conclusion of the project, paper copies of data will be destroyed in a paper shredder at MIT. Any remaining personal identifiers on electronic databases will be replaced with a research identification number from the linking file and will be stored in my password protected files and archived.

5. The data will be subject to content analysis to identify and report patterns of findings. Findings will be reported without identifying individuals. If case anecdotes are used for illustrative purposes, precautions will be taken to ensure that the actual persons referred to are not in any way identifiable. Final versions of these case anecdotes will be reviewed by Andre Norman at the Baker House before any oral presentations are made, written reports, papers, articles, or the thesis are submitted.

6. At the end of the project, all hard copy and electronic files with personal data, including the linking file, will be destroyed in a shredder at MIT.
Pre-Release Interview of Brooke House Residents

Quality, Availability, and Integration of Services

The purpose of this section of the interview is to give residents a chance to provide feedback on the social services that they have received during their incarceration. Equally important is feedback on services that were unavailable during incarceration.

1. While you have been in prison (including Brooke House), have you had access to social services? For example, GED classes, health care services, mental health services, job training, life skills, substance abuse counseling, etc.

2. Were you required to take part in any of these services as a part of your sentence?

3. Which services did you take advantage of and who provided the service (prison staff, outside service providers, etc.).

4. Did you get what you needed out of the services?

5. Which services were not available that you wish you could have access to?

6. What kinds of improvements would you like to see in the services that were offered to you?

7. If you took advantage of services, did you have a case manager that helped keep track of what services you needed? Was this case manager helpful to you?

8. Will you continue to receive services that you are receiving now when you are released? Which organizations will provide these services to you?

Barriers to Receiving Services While in Prison

The purpose of this section of the interview is to focus on what kinds of problems offenders experienced while trying to access services during their incarceration.

1. If there were any services available to you in prison that you wanted to take advantage of but could not, what kept you from accessing the service? For example, did a job that you held keep you from gaining access to the service? How about security constraints? Personal reasons?

2. Do you think that you have the necessary identification to get by in society when you are released? If not, are you trying to obtain the necessary identification? Is someone helping you?
**Social Network Outside of Prison**

The purpose of this section of the interview is to investigate the social networks of offenders and the likelihood that these networks will be helpful or harmful in easing the reentry of the offender back into their community.

1. Who are your best friends outside of prison?

2. Do you have a place to stay or have you arranged for a place to stay after you are released? Where (what neighborhood) and with whom are you staying? Do you know how many other people are living in that house? How did you find a place to stay if you had to look for one?

3. Have you thought about a job when you are released? If you have a job already set up, did someone help you find it? If you haven’t found a job, what kind of job do you think that you would like to do?

4. Were you active in any civic organizations before you went to prison? For example, church, sports team, neighborhood group, etc. Did you maintain any ties with the organization(s) that you were involved with while you were in prison? Do you think that you’ll get involved with those organizations again when you are released? Are there other organizations in your community that you would like to join for the first time when you are released?

**Wrap-Up**

1. What do you expect it to be like on the outside?

2. What are you most looking forward to doing on the outside when you are released?

3. What worries you the most about your life after prison?
Interview of Ex-Offenders Who Use the Baker House

Quality, Availability, and Integration of Services

The purpose of this section of the interview is to give the ex-offender an opportunity to discuss the social services that they have received since leaving prison. It will also allow ex-offenders to reflect on the services that they received while in prison and how effective these services were in preparing them for reentry to their community.

1. Since you left prison, have you had access to social services? For example, GED classes, health care services, mental health services, job training, life skills, substance abuse counseling, etc. Are these services a continuation of services that you received in prison or new services?

2. Were you required to take part in any of these services as a part of your sentence (i.e., parole or probation)?

3. Which services have you taken advantage of and who is providing / provided the service (state agency, non-profit, for-profit.).

4. How well are the services that you are receiving working for you?

5. Which services are not available that you wish you could have access to?

6. What kinds of improvements would you like to see in the services that are offered to you?

7. Do you have a case manager that helps keep track of what services you need? Does your case manager make referrals or just give you information about services that are available? Is your case manager helpful to you?

8. Did the services that you received in prison do a good job of preparing you to go back to society? Looking back, what services should you have taken advantage of? Were these services offered in prison?

Barriers to Receiving Services When Released from Prison

The purpose of this section is to clarify what barriers ex-offenders found to accessing services once they got out of prison.
1. What services have you tried to take advantage of but found that you cannot? What has kept you from accessing the service? For example, did a job that you hold keep you from gaining access to the service? How about CORI problems? Personal reasons?

2. Did you have the necessary identification for getting along in society when you were released? What were you missing? If not, have you obtained the right identification now? For example, a social security card, current driver’s license, etc.

3. Did you have any trouble getting housing? If so, what were the problems?

4. What should be changed that would reduce barriers for receiving services (both in prison and in society)? What more could Baker House have done to make the reentry easier for you?

Social Network Outside of Prison

The purpose of this section is to find out how ex-offender’s social networks have encouraged or discouraged reentry into an ex-offender’s community.

1. Who are your best friends now that you’re out of prison? Do your best friends encourage you to stay out of trouble, or do they sometimes suggest participating in some illegal activity?

2. Do you have a place to stay? Where (what neighborhood) and with whom are you staying? Do you know how many other people are living in that house? How did you find a place to stay if you had to look for one once you were outside of Brooke House? Did you have to stay in an emergency shelter at any time?

3. Do you have a job? If you have a job, what are you doing and how did you find it? If you haven’t found a job, are you searching for one? If you are looking for one, why do you think you haven’t found one yet? What kind of job do you think that you would like to do?

4. Are you active in any civic organizations? For example, church, sports team, neighborhood group, etc. Has being a member of this organization(s) helped you obtain any services that you need, like housing, a job, or health services? Are there other organizations in your community that you would like to join?
Wrap-Up

1. Was the outside like you expected it to be?

2. Do you think that you’re on a roll – are you going down the right path?
Appendix 3: The Reentry Model

Incarcerated

Community-Corrections
- Pre-release
- Women’s Resource Center
- Suffolk County Community Correctional Center
- Young Adult Offender Program

Non-Incarcerated

Probation

Social Service Sector
- Mental/Physical Health
- Housing
- Education
- Job Training
- Substance Abuse Counseling

Community
- Family
- Friends
- Social Organizations
- Religious Organizations

Prison

Parole

1 2 3 4
Appendix 4: Institutional Relationships of the Brooke House

Community Resources for Justice
Adult Residential Services

Bunker Hill Community College
The Work Place One-Stop Employment

Offender Reentry Program: Education Focus

Ella J. Baker House Mentor Program

Life Skills Classes
Academic Classes

Employment:
Various Employers

Office of Community Corrections at the Suffolk County Courthouse:
Substance Abuse Focus

Housing (Post-Release):
- CREO
- Various Sober Houses
- Pine St. Inn
- Cardinal Medeiros SRO

Life Skills Training:
- Department of Revenue

Health Care:
- Boston Medical Center

Suffolk County House of Corrections

Mental Health:
- Mass General
- Mt. Auburn Hospital
- Dimock

Narcotics Anonymous & Alcohol Anonymous
Appendix 5: The Reentry Panel

The Suffolk County House of Corrections

Inmates selected to participate in the Suffolk County House of Corrections

- Community Resources for Justice
- Boston Community Centers
- The Work Place
- Dept of Revenue
- Harrison Ministries
- 10-Point Coalition
- Youth Opportunities Boston
- Ella J. Baker House
- Nation of Islam
- SPAN

- Probation
- Parole
- District Attorney
- Federal Prosecutor
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