The Possessive *Dis*-Investment in Goodness

Alexandra Walker

Most articles about parole, reentry, and the successful reintegration of incarcerated populations into their communities begin with a discussion of the unprecedented growth of the prison population, especially the number of inmates who have been released over the last thirty years. According to Lynch and Sabol, "…the volume of offenders released from prison increased dramatically from 1980 to 2000, from about 170,000 to 585,000, but the rate of increase has slowed during the 1990s while the prison population continued to expand" (2001). The literature and empirical data on harsher penalties for parolees is not promising with regards to reintegration, yet these policy initiatives continue to dominate within popular discourse. With increasing budgetary challenges states are faced with the realities of an increasing number of inmates, both in prison and out, and less financial resources with which to assist them. Numerous negative effects have been associated with longer sentencing practices including declining contact with family and other support systems, longer gaps in employment, changes in skill sets, and the increased reliance on preset structural constraints (Travis & Waul, 2003; Pattillo, Weiman, & Western, 2004). The compounding effects of incarceration along with the increase in individuals who are sent to prison have had a devastating impact on certain communities throughout the United States.

Parole, as a correctional practice, was designed to alleviate some of the negative consequences of incarceration by allowing those who do well in prison to be released early under the supervision of trained staff. Once on parole individuals are required to gain employment, find housing, pay back their restitution, attend treatment classes, etc. This process provides an opportunity for offenders to be productive members of society earlier in their sentence while ensuring public safety. Despite its seemingly obvious benefits, parole has come under attack several times since its inception in the 18th century (Caplan, 2006). Due to a small number of celebrated cases where parolees have committed heinous crimes against innocent and unsuspecting individuals, parole has been scrutinized as a risk to public safety, with many individuals and politicians pushing for its abolition. Although some states successfully dismantled parole, they soon realized that parole was necessary to deal with the overcrowding issues in many state prisons and therefore reestablished the parole system very soon after abolishing it.

Despite its necessity in most states, some scholars would argue that the issue with parole is less about public safety concerns and more about its implementation; "A fundamental failure of today's parole system is that success has not been adequately defined. What masquerades as success is the unobtainable standard of perfection, all the time" (Caplan, 2006:32). Individuals who have shown through previous behavior that they struggle to conform and, some would argue, have limited coping skills are placed under extreme stress to

complete all parole objectives, rather quickly after release, without any issues or digressions. Some studies have shown that prisoners who are released from prison without the requirements of parole have lower recidivism rates than those released under parole supervision. Of those individuals who are on parole, empirical data indicates that they are more likely to recidivate a result of technical violations (non compliance with parole regulations) as opposed to new crime violations (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). While the challenges of parole and reentry are not a mystery yet current practices, rules, and regulations persist.

In his book, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, George Lipsitz (1998) discusses the social construction of race as a way to secure the hoarding of opportunities and resources amongst certain groups of people. He argues that, "Conscious and deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States, not just through the dissemination of cultural stories, but also through systematic efforts from colonial times to the present to create economic advantages through a possessive investment in whiteness for European Americans" (1998, 2). The benefits associated with whiteness in contemporary society include the ability to maintain power and therefore the ability to regulate laws and widen the gap between resources that are available to different racial groups. Lipsitz goes on to argue the impact of the media in supporting the investment in whiteness as "good" and blackness as "bad". He argues that, "Media images and political discourse over the past two decades have hinged upon stories that connect crime, drugs, and family disintegration to nonwhite communities, while presenting whites as besieged" (Lipsitz, 112). The racial disparities discussed in his book are directly tied to those within the criminal justice system. In fact, the likelihood of being sent to prison for certain racial groups is simply staggering with 28.5% of all Black men born in 1991 entering prison in their lifetime compared to only 4.4% of White men (Bonczar & Beck, 1997).

There are many factors that can impact successful reintegration into the community which include the ability to access employment opportunities, housing, substance abuse, family support, health and mental health problems, peer pressure (Travis & Waul, 2003; Pattillo, Weiman, & Western, 2004). Many of these factors are explicitly linked to parole requirements in one way or another, whether it is the requirement to be employed, mandatory treatment classes, or requirements placed on the association with familial and other support networks. The purpose of this research is to use qualitative data to explore the link between the requirements of parole and the challenges experienced by parolees who may or may not have the social capital to follow through with those requirements. I will use the notion of the possessive investment in whiteness to expand upon the issues of race, challenging the institutionalization of "goodness" within our criminal justice system. In the sense that following one's parole requirements is considered "good" behavior, I will discuss how these expectations set up

parolees to fail due to a dis-investment in the capital required to successfully manage parole requirements.

There is a clear association between the challenges experienced by oppressed groups and populations caught in the grips of the Criminal Justice System. Although, as a social group, the imprisoned population has been able to obtain some basic rights through the legal system, their ability to rally together and fight for equality, especially in the realm of reentry, has been quite limited. I would argue that this is directly linked to the years following the civil war where as Abolition took hold in the U.S., the Criminal Justice System experienced an unprecedented growth which continues today. The movement towards corrections as an industry in this country has blatantly targeted certain ethnic and racial minority groups. Currently, African Americans are drastically overrepresented within corrections and the Latino population is the fastest growing inmate group within the prison population (Irwin, 2005).

Social movements have centered on issues related to life chances and opportunities. Sociological research on social stratification provides a method for examining how incarceration can impact one's life chances and therefore highlights oppression and inequality. Social stratification is ultimately concerned with the Weberian concept of life chances and how one's economic, social, and legal resources impact the distribution of power in society. This conception of social stratification has developed into empirical research on the impact of one's origin, skills, abilities, and resources on their ability to be successful in society. Of particular importance to the issue of inmates and their life chances post-incarceration is the issue of social mobility. Social mobility is defined as "…any transition of an individual or social object or value – anything that has been created or modified by human activity- from one social position to another" (Sorokin, 1959). As a mainstay of sociology, social mobility research examines the mechanisms involved in social stratification by explaining the rigidity or openness of the system, ultimately explaining levels of inequality within the system as a whole. Social mobility research attempts to explain how advantage or disadvantage is transmitted both intra-generationally and inter-generationally.

As citizens of this country we are told that if we choose to break the law there will be consequences. With the assurance of due process, our justice system has the responsibility to decide what an appropriate punishment should be for convicted populations. Similar to notions of the American Dream, people who break the law are provided with a socially constructed narrative which states that once the punishment is completed they will be able to resume productive lives within the community. The truth is, however, that being sent to prison is a mechanism for continued oppression and inequality, resulting in an "accumulation of disadvantage" (Western, 2002:542) for that individual and, in many cases, for their family and communities (Travis & Waul, 2003; Pattillo, Weiman, & Western, 2004).

The clearest examples of the direct influence of incarceration on life chances are in regards to employment opportunities. Employment is a necessary part of successful reentry and is linked to crime desistance (Western, 2002). If unable to find employment, a parole can be sent back to prison due to non-compliance. In a study by the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Service system, "In 2003, unemployed offenders under their supervision were revoked at a rate that was more than 500 percent higher than that for those who were employed. Eighty percent of the offenders who were revoked that year were unemployed" (Rakis, 2005:7). Several studies have shown that the mark of a criminal record has a direct impact on one's ability to obtain employment (Pager, 2003). Parolees are often forced to take on low paying, part time, or irregular jobs simply to meet requirements on parole. Western (2002) argues that these types of jobs may be associated with increased rates of crime after release from prison.

According to Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris, and Fisher, "When inmates are released they leave the highly structured environment of the prison to the unstructured world, where they must learn to make decisions and care for themselves" (2005, 244). In order to access the structure and benefits provided by employment many are in need of educational and vocational training. Effective reentry services have always emphasized the necessity of these types of programs however, in recent years, participation in these types of programs has been significantly reduced due to budgetary constraints (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). In fact, the rate of participation in these programs dropped in the 90s, "…only about 13 percent of the soon-to-be-released cohorts in both 1991 and 1997 reported participating in prerelease programs" (Lynch & Sabol, 2001,11). This translates into a large number of individuals being released each year with limited educational, vocational, and employment skills. As will be discussed later in this paper, these issues coupled with a lack of financial and interpersonal resources from family members and other support networks can have a devastating impact on one's ability to successfully reintegrate.

In addition to the link with mobility research, the literature on intersectionality can be particularly informative when discussing the paroled population. Interesectionality is a multidimensional approach to understanding inequality that allows for the inclusion of numerous mechanisms. This body of literature stems from the argument that the oppression experienced by white women in the early 1900s was quite different than the experiences of women of color during the same time, particularly because gender, as a mechanism of inequality, becomes compounded when race class, gender and sexuality is added to the equation. The prison population is rife with oppressed groups such as ethnic minorities, the impoverished, the under educated and under employed. These individuals come from poor communities with greater exposure to violence and environmental hazards, have low levels of educational attainment which are generally associated with disadvantaged school systems, and have poor access

to social resources including health care. The multiplicity of mechanisms of inequality experienced demonstrates the complex layering of domination that they endure.

The use of labeling through language to perpetuate oppressive paradigms can be seen amongst all marginalized groups. Labeling and propaganda has been used to skew the public's perception of reality. Similar to the argument made by Andrea Smith (2005) regarding women of color becoming dangerous to the world order, so too is the criminal population in our country. They too have experienced sterilization, experimentation, and destitution at the hands of their oppressors however many people see their treatment as deserved. This form of institutionalization of oppression often occurs with populations who are viewed by the general public as dangerous, lazy, and all together untrustworthy. It is for this reason that parolees struggle to find employment, housing, and to develop positive support networks, ultimately leading to their continued oppression.

The public's perception of incarcerated populations acts as a barrier, permitting disassociation from their lives as people and their basic needs as human beings. According to Jane Ward, "The production of professional knowledge about diversity has helped to solidify class disparities rather than to challenge them" (2008, 50). This could not be more true for the populations who are subjected to the production of professional knowledge about themselves and their lives which, as you will see below, acts to perpetuate their oppression.

Theoretical Orientation

For the purposes of this paper, I will use the theoretical framework put forth by Pierre Bourdieu to discuss both cultural and social capital and its value within the field of parole and reentry. Bourdieu views the social world as a dialectical relationship between objective and subjective characteristics. In his dynamic theoretical framework, society is stratified based on how individuals are positioned within social space according to the amount of capital they have in relation to others. He defines capital as, "…accumulated labor…which when appropriated on a private, i.e. exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy" (1986). For Bourdieu (1987), capital can be economic, cultural, social, and symbolic however economic capital is described as being at the foundation. Ultimately, an individual's capital can be amassed and converted into power in the struggle over resources.

Cultural capital has to do with the skills or talents that individuals develop over time. This can be educational abilities as well as things like "street smarts" but can have a significant impact on ones success within different fields throughout their life. Due to the mechanisms of inequality experienced by populations caught in the grips of the prison industrial complex, social capital is often stunted; meaning that significant portions of the incarcerated population

demonstrates nontraditional skill sets that are often not transferable or particularly valued in professional or "productive" arenas. Social capital is defined as, "…the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition…which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital" (1986). Social capital powerfully impacts the ability for the incarcerated to be successful after their release from prison as many of them have been estranged from their family and other support networks since their incarceration (Travis & Waul, 2003; Pattillo, Weiman, & Western, 2004).

According to Bourdieu, "…all behavior is situated within a field of action, which has its own system of valuation and practice" (Lareau & Horvat 1999, 39). Each individual within the field, defined as a place of constant struggle over the resources at stake in reproducing the hierarchy of power, has a habitus, or set of preferences, beliefs, and dispositions, which situates them within the field. One's habitus is historical in nature, described as an aggregate of one's life experiences, interactions, and knowledge base (Bourdieu, 198; Bourdieu, 1990). An individual's habitus defines the parameters of what is perceived as possible and impossible. It acts as a boundary, separating individuals into groups of commonalities and differences. Because each field may have a different set of rules, an individual's habitus could be viewed as a strength or a weakness in different settings. As explained by Lareau and Horvat, "…habitus can be understood only in light of the dominant practices in the broader society" (1999:39) and therefore those who have a habitus that is at odds with mainstream society can be relegated to positions of inferiority within certain fields. Viewing one's capital and habitus as having a particular amount of value within certain contexts is an important way of understanding the lives of incarcerated populations and particularly those who have been incarcerated for excessively long periods of time.

Due to the complex nature of Bourdieu's theoretical orientation it is important to consider these concepts in practice. Let us consider the field of parole, with its rules and regulations, its players, and its objective boundaries within society. Within the field of parole there are many players including parole officers, supervisors, treatment providers, and, most importantly for this paper, the incarcerated. The Department of Corrections, when hiring people to work in parole, are looking for individuals with specific characteristics including a certain level of education, a limited or non existent criminal history, and personal characteristics such as responsibility, trustworthiness, and discipline. One could argue that the habitus of parole officers and administrators includes inclinations towards accountability, responsibility, and an affinity towards the standards set by society in regards to success (employment, stable housing, etc). These individuals are identified as the agents of power within the field of parole and

reentry and they procure the ability to name and categorize what is considered "good" behavior and "bad" behavior within their milieu.

Parolees, generally speaking, have a very different set of cultural and social capital. As discussed earlier, empirical evidence indicates that "… the offender population has a high percentage of individuals with low education attainment, poverty stricken or working class origins, and unstable employment histories" (Travis & Waul, 2003; Pattillo, Weiman, & Western, 2004; Rakis, 2005). In addition, they are characterized as having defiant personalities, the inability to cope with stress and frustration, as well as problems with authority figures (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). These characteristics are in stark contrast to those demonstrated by those who are directly responsible for their future well being and life chances.

Methodology

This project included a diverse, collaborated team of Parole and Reentry staff from the Department of Corrections, faculty and researchers from two separate institutions, graduate research assistants, and administrative staff. Between May of 2009 and May of 2010, the team met occasionally to plan and conduct research. This research study consisted of a quantitative analysis of incarceration records, including demographic information, details about their conviction, program involvement both while incarcerated and after release, and outcome (recidivism/re-incarceration). From the quantitative data, four groups were developed for interview purposes. The four groups included those individuals who had attended the pre-release prison program while incarcerated, those who attended the orientation with reentry services upon release, individuals who had attended both programs, and those who had neither. Between September 2009 and March 2010, semi-structured interviews were conducted with approximately 15 individuals from each group. These interviews were most commonly conducted at the parole office, either before or after a scheduled meeting with their parole officer.

Two researchers, one faculty member and one graduate research assistant were responsible for completing the interviews. Development of the semi structured interview instrument stemmed from several collaborative meetings with Department of Corrections staff members as well as a review of the literature regarding reentry. Both interviewers had significant experience in criminal justice as practitioners and their personal experiences and knowledge was also used to help formulate the questions. For the purposes of this paper, the twenty four interviews that I conducted will be discussed.

During the interview, participants were asked to discuss their experience on parole to gain an understanding of what the expectations were, how they were handling themselves, and whether or not they were receiving any assistance. Insights into the success of individuals were related to issues of housing, employment, social support, participation in programming, physical and mental

health, and drugs and alcohol. Since participants were at varied stages in the parole process, they were asked to discuss the pros and cons of their experience on parole from within a timeline so that pressing issues in the first two weeks of parole could be disaggregated from issues at week 6, etc.

After explaining the purposes of the study, all participants were read the informed consent form and were asked to sign it. Interviews were digitally recorded and ranged from twenty minutes to one hour in duration. All interviews too place in a private office at one of several adult parole offices or in a correctional facility. Participants were not paid for their involvement in the study however many seemed relieved to be able to discuss their experiences.

For the purposes of this paper, the interviews were categorized into groups by parole requirements. I specifically looked at issues surrounding support, employment, housing, transportation, and social networks. Of the 24 interviewees, 11 reported being released homeless and unemployed, indicating that they had the least amount of support and the highest level of needs. The experiences of those 11 individuals are discussed in detail below.

Results

Due to the challenges associated with parole, the Colorado Department of Corrections implemented two reentry strategies: the pre release program which is a four to six week course taken prior to their release, and the John Inman Center, a community reentry services program which was designed as a one-stop-shop for reentry services upon release. These services were designed to provide individuals with information about available resources to help them develop a plan for parole as well as provide a continuum of care, helping individuals access specific resources upon their release. Although the challenges of parole and reentry were discussed by all twenty four respondents, eleven individuals reported experiencing more hardship than others. These eleven individuals were all released from prison as “homeless” and reported having limited social capital to rely on. One interviewee summed up their situation quite succinctly when she stated, “If family and friends could help payin’ for a hotel, then I’d be stayin’ with them.” Each interview that was conducted clearly demonstrated how the ability to rely on parents, siblings, significant others, or other friends and family not only provided a foundation for individuals to restart their lives but also alleviated a lot of the stress and frustration experienced by those without support. Due to their additional hardships and increased likelihood for regression, the experiences and suggestions provided by these individuals will be the focus of this section.

At the very core of the issues discussed by respondents is the additional financial burden that comes with being on parole. It seems clear that access to financial resources can be the mechanism of freedom for many individuals and many ultimately return to criminal activity just to make ends meet. Upon release

from prison, those who are on parole are required to pay for parole supervision ($20-$60 per month), for random and often bi-weekly urine analyses and breathalyzer exams to ensure sobriety ($10-$25 per test), required treatment courses ($25 per week), and pay off any restitution, back child support, and other bills that are associated with daily life. Although once individuals find employment this burden becomes easier, as the interviews below will demonstrate paying for parole is often a challenge throughout the reentry process and, for some, the inability to obtain employment to pay for parole is a constant threat of being sent back to prison.

> Q: What happens if you can't pay your classes?
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> R: I can't go. [laughs]
>
> Q: What happens then?
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> R: Pretty much my parole goes backwards. [laughs] I can either go back to prison or they can add more time. So instead of gettin' off of it, I'm staying on it longer.

The ability to pay for parole stems entirely from one's ability to secure employment. Although at this time the economy receives the majority of the blame for the scarcity of jobs, it is no secret that felons have been disenfranchised, relegated to low paying, entry level jobs or manual labor employment opportunities. Finding these jobs can be quite a challenge though. The following excerpt highlights the experience by most of the individuals, who were interviewed,

> R: [Finding a job] was difficult. Most places I applied, I'd be honest and tell 'em that I had a felony and had been to prison, and they didn't really accept that. So I came here and I talked to [the reentry specialist] and she wasn't the most helpful. I thought she was gonna set me up a lot better than what had gone on. She just gave me some websites and showed me how to look, which was already things I knew how to do, most of 'em I had already gone to. So I was just like, "OK."

For those individuals who are successful at securing employment, paying for parole often remains a source of constant stress. Parolees are often required to work low paying, entry level jobs in the service sector or construction. This work can often be temporary, part time, or be based on demand, leaving financial security a rarity.

> R: I think [parole] is kind of expensive. Since I've been out, I haven't paid any of my restitution. I owe, like, $3,300.
>
> Q: Why?
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> R: Because some of the working is kind of hard, 'cause some days I wouldn't…'cause we don't have a lot of work right now 'cause it's wintertime, and there's not a lot of work for the stuff that we do. So I haven't really been workin' all that much. So I don't get paid enough…

Interestingly, one of the most common criticisms of the reentry resource center was the type of help received. Many people talked about the challenges associated with a referral service, wanting more direct assistance which would "teach" them how to do specific things other than simply providing information. It was not uncommon for individuals to report that they were better off without the assistance of the resource center because it was too time consuming with little reward. One individual stated, "I stopped dealin' with John Inman and kind of found my own way, and it actually turned out to work out pretty good anyways." Several individuals however shared that the information that they had received in the pre-release program were not accurate or available for them once in the community. One individual who had received job lists from the reentry resource center stated that what he needed was,

> R: Like an up-to-date job list. All the places that I called on [the resource center's job list], they were all wrong numbers. All the numbers that were, like, you call this 800-number, and it says "disconnected." So that stuff was, like, an old packet. I did go through a lot of those numbers, and they didn't work.

Many individuals also shared how the resources discussed in the pre-release program while incarcerated were not available upon release.

> R: Actually, parole hasn't done anything for me…When I got out of prison, they told me, "there is a motel you can go to" so when I went to the motel they just looked at me like I was crazy. They said, "there's no such program."
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> Q: Who had told you about the program?
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> R: My case worker in the penitentiary. They signed me up for it, and when I went there they said they didn't know what I was

> talkin' about. So I was forced to go to the John Inman Center, and they helped me stay at [a shelter] for a while, and then that ran out, and I don't have any money, so that put me back on the streets.

In addition, many individuals stated that the services, especially as it relates to housing, were promised to them upon release, only to find out that there were processes involved in accessing services.

> Q: Those referrals, was there a chance that you would get referred to a shelter and then not get a bed?
>
> A: Yes, because you have to be there at a certain time, and when you get there, there's this long-ass line even before you get there. Even before the time was there, you're like – and then they might give you a voucher for a motel for a day. And one thing that I do know is that it is hard already being on parole because of something that I did, a bad decision that I made, and when I'm trying to do the right thing, it is hard to not know where I'm going to be sleeping that night. It was even hard to find a job, because I didn't know what location I was gonna be in or how I was gonna get there.

As mentioned earlier, of the twenty four individuals who were interviewed for this project, half were able to live with family members or other sponsors upon their release from prison. One individual was able to secure transitional housing services at a non profit program until he was able to secure his own housing. The other eleven individuals were released homeless, often required to sleep at homeless shelters or in motels if they were able to access motel vouchers. For most individuals, this experience was rather unpleasant.

> R: It sucked. A bunch of dirty people that don't care, all they want to do is drink and get high. They're not trying to do anything with their lives. It's kind of a morale-breaker, really, if you fall into that trap…if you had money, there's transitional housing that they could have helped you get into. The only money I was gonna have comin' out of DOC was the $100 gate check, no family, no friends. So I didn't have anybody to rely on to help me out with that. So it was the homeless shelter or nothin'.

For individuals with drug addiction and mental illness, the stress of reentry and homelessness can be very overwhelming. One woman discussed how the stress

associated with securing housing along with a fear for her safety, issues of drug addiction and her mental illness led her to prostitution.

> R: [The shelter] was bedbug-infested, there were roaches. It was nasty. I ended up with a rash of some kind… I went through some stuff where I was feelin' suicidal and goin' through some things because of the homeless situation… Because me bein' a recovering drug addict, those kind of places to me are dangerous, especially because the hotels are where they're at… I expressed the concern because a week prior to that someone got killed in that hotel and it was drug-related…[crying] Nobody wants to go to prison because they're homeless and the homelessness made them go to situations to go back to prison… I tried to commit suicide about a month ago because of goin' through this. [crying]…It's the pressure. I can't take it. If I don't have nowhere to stay, if I don't do this, I get sent back, and that was the worst place ever in my life. I don't ever want to go back there, ever… Drugs is what you turn to, it's a comfort. The drugs comes along with the dealers and they have somewhere to sleep when you need somewhere to go, you know what I mean? And that's the most horrible thing. I've been there. I've been there, where I had to be around men just to have somewhere to lay my head. [crying] Even since I've been home! That's the worst feelin' ever! Havin' to degrade our bodies as a woman just to have somewhere to lay. It's degrading. And it's hard. It's like, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't.

Unfortunately, this story is not uncommon. Several individuals discussed feelings of hopelessness and the desire to go back to prison. One individual in particular talked about how after a long stint in prison that is where he felt most comfortable. Upon release after a 24 year sentence he stated that, "…nothing in my life had prepared me for life up to that point, and all of a sudden I'm trying to work." After doing well for some time, this individual described how the medical issues experienced by his sponsor became overwhelming, ultimately leading to the loss of his job and his relapse into drug use. At one point, he described knowing that he was headed back to prison.

> R: I figured, "I'm goin' back to prison *where I belong* (emphasis added)." …That was my identity. It was in prison, but I worked hard. When I got out, I just—I tried being in business, and I don't know what I'm doing… But when I went back in, it was just not there for me any more.

In addition to issues of employment and housing, transportation was one of the most frequently discussed challenges associated with parole. Many individuals either had access to a vehicle or had found employment opportunities that would require them to drive. Several individuals discussed how the driving restriction placed on them by parole was an additional source of stress. For individuals who must use public transportation, the use of bus tokens as opposed to a bus pass can be challenging.

> R: …if I'm actively participating in the program then you guys should be givin' out bus passes or something, because bus tokens, the bus costs $2 to ride there and back, providing you get a transfer. And then you have to worry about the transfer expiring…I can get around on the bus and do everything I need to do. And then they refer you to other places that have bus tokes, and I know that I've been to the Gathering Place, and they give you eight tokens, and eight tokens is gonna give me one ride. So what about when I need to get back?

Parolees are often required to spend a significant amount of time "chasing" down tokens from one non profit to another. This experience can be an additional impediment to finding housing and employment.

> R: Because when you are job searching and trying to figure out where you're gonna stay for the night, you don't have that opportunity to go sit for three or four hours and fill out all this paperwork and hope to be seen.

Ultimately, several individuals discussed how they struggled with feelings of giving up.

> R: It is [a rat race]…Like I said, I got myself in the situation with me getting in trouble. I own that. I take that responsibility. However, I think that the objective of prison is, besides punishment, is also to rehabilitate you, whether you only have five months or five years. I believe the purpose is to rehabilitate you, and you can't possibly be rehabilitated, or you might have changed while you were in there, have a different mind frame, and then you get out and you see how hard it is to find a job, find housing, all of these programs that say, "We have this, that, and the other," but you have to do this, that, and the other, and your parole officer is telling you you have to do this in order to stay out on parole, and it's just a lot. And it makes a person say, "Well,

> maybe I'll go sell drugs again because that's quick money. These people aren't willing to hire me. These people aren't willing to help me get a place. I have to get money somehow, so maybe I'll go rob somebody, or sell drugs or do this to get money, so that way I can pay my UAs, I can pay for a place to stay." Things like that. I do feel like it is a rat race and it is unfair to people who have done some time and who are honestly willing to make a change and they get out and there's not a lot of resources. And then, like I said, the resources tend to be dead ends.

Feelings of frustration are also commonly experienced.

> R: I needed help. I need help… I went [to John Inman] for an orientation and kind of talked about doing a resume and stuff like that. I'm interested in going back to college, and I really wanted help in figuring out how to go back to school, but that didn't happen… They really didn't tell me something new that I did not know anyway.

Ultimately it was individuals who were able to tap into their social networks and develop a support system that were successful at navigating parole, obtaining employment, and finding a place to live.

> R: …it was one of my acquaintances that I was in prison with [who helped with employment], and he caught up with me and he told me…"There's a job opening," blah-blah-blah, and you need a flagger's certificate test. I was like, "OK, where do I go get that? I don't know." All those places where I went, they never even told me stuff like that. So he was like, "I'll try to find a way to get that, call me back and I'll try to help you get a job."

Conclusion

This study provides clear evidence of the impact of social and cultural capital on one's ability to be successful on parole and in the reentry process. Individuals who do not have access to familial and other support networks experienced high levels of stress and frustration in their attempts to comply with the rules and regulations that were set forth by their parole officers. Due to low levels of education and a lack of financial resources, many were at the mercy of the system, completely reliant on the accuracy of their information and ability to provide services. It is for this reason that parole and reentry need to step back from being a referral source, moving towards being a direct provider or services

and support. Without this level of involvement the reality of recidivism for individuals on parole seems irreparable. All of these issues support the notion of incarcerated populations as an oppressed group, one in need of their own revolution!

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