



Council on Crime and Justice

# The Collateral Effects of Incarceration on Fathers, Families, and Communities

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**Prepared by the Council on Crime and Justice**

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## Executive Summary

In 2003 the Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ) received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to study racial disparities in the Minnesota criminal justice system. Seven studies were conducted in total. Some of these studies were aimed at defining racial disparities within the criminal justice system, while others examined the collateral effects of such disparities. The following study fell into the latter category. The purpose of this study was two fold: first to examine the effects of imprisonment on the family relationship from the perspective of the fathers, along with these men's strengths and struggles during incarceration and reentry into the community; and second to examine the community dynamics and resources within a neighborhood experiencing a high concentration of prison mobility (i.e. residents either leaving for or returning from prison). The Hawthorne neighborhood in North Minneapolis was chosen for our study because of its racial diversity and high prisoner mobility. An analysis of the neighborhood was conducted from the resident's perspective in order to better understand the physical and social environment to which many previously incarcerated fathers return.

Three sets of interviews were conducted with each of the following groups: (1) previously incarcerated fathers who had minor children but did not live with their children prior to or after their release ("fatherhood interviews"); (2) previously incarcerated fathers who lived with and returned to their families after their release ("family interviews"); and (3) community members from the Hawthorne neighborhood in North Minneapolis ("community interviews"). Using thematic content analysis the follow key findings emerged:

- These formerly incarcerated fathers lacked male role models, experienced unhealthy family dynamics growing up, had children at a young age, and had limited resources which later served as barriers to effectively parenting their children.
- Despite these challenges, these fathers wanted to be actively involved in their children's lives and often took great joy from their relationship with their children.
- Fathers were very aware of the impact that their imprisonment had on their children and partner/spouse in terms of increased financial burden, emotional distress, social alienation/stigma, and relationship strain. These fathers were especially cognizant of the continued negative effects of imprisonment on their lives and the lives of those around them.
- Fathers faced further challenges by returning to transient neighborhoods, such as Hawthorne, where there was a lack of job opportunities and community support.

- Although Hawthorne residents felt that social services in the neighborhood were adequate, commercial industries were lacking as businesses, such as Target, have withdrawn from the community.
- The lack of commercial businesses, job opportunities, high rates of crime, and low home ownership negatively impacted the individual residents' involvement and investment within the neighborhood which served to ultimately decrease community solidarity. These factors limited the neighborhood's ability to effectively receive ex-offenders back into the community.

These results serve to challenge societal assumptions concerning previously incarcerated fathers and provide in-depth information from the fathers' perspective of the aftermath of incarceration on both the family and local community.

These fathers repeatedly discussed the need for three primary interventions to occur: (1) men's support groups for formerly incarcerated fathers, (2) parenting classes that include "hands-on" parenting opportunities and specifically address the changing developmental needs of children, and (3) increased opportunities for felony-friendly employment and continued education. Community members had suggestions for strengthening their neighborhood, many of which concerned the neighborhood's physical appearance. Residents interviewed were empathetic towards those that returned from prison and were especially cognizant of the struggles that they face. Therefore, many of their concerns revolved around decreasing recidivism in order to protect the area from further victimization and minimizing the transient nature of the neighborhood. Recommendations concerning these needs are further discussed throughout the report.

As many of the recommendations that resulted from interviews with formerly incarcerated fathers involve visitation rights and increased family involvement, it is important to note that these recommendations are solely intended for those situations where contact is appropriate. This study is not advocating for increased family privileges to be provided to all offenders. Rather it explores the possibility of increasing inmates' rehabilitative assets by allowing increased family contact during imprisonment when appropriate.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The prison population in the United States has experienced a four hundred percent increase in the last twenty-five years alone (Beck, Karberg, & Harrison, 2002). This mass imprisonment has been identified as one of the most startling changes in U.S. culture during this time period (Pattillio, Weiman, & Western, 2004). The overall consequences of such high levels of imprisonment remain largely unknown and are of great interest to both academics and policy makers. In particular, the effects of imprisonment on families and communities have more recently become a focus of research. With literally hundreds of thousands of prisoners annually returning to various communities, the aftermath of imprisonment and the reentry process are of particular interest (Hairston, 2002). For instance, recent research indicates that the rise in incarceration rates has led to an alarming increase in broken homes and disenfranchised communities (Dyer, 2005). Therefore, further research on the process of reentry into both the family and community is needed in order to fully comprehend the extent of the consequences of mass incarceration.

### **Collateral Effects of Incarceration**

The concept of “collateral effects” refers to the unintended negative consequences that result from an offender’s conviction and incarceration. It is based on the concept that the collective costs of imprisonment are paid on many levels, both direct and indirect. Negative effects are directly experienced by offenders, their families, and their children. These effects are persistent and pervasive and can include personal, social, financial, emotional, psychological, and physical concerns. Social and economic structures of communities are affected as well, especially in areas where many residents are continually entering and exiting the criminal justice system. Concentrated crime and imprisonment, within communities, diminishes human capital (individual skills, knowledge), physical capital (infrastructures, material improvements), and social capital (social good embodied in relations) (Watts & Nightingale, 1996; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Rose, Clear, & Scully, 1999).

Researchers argue that the removal of offenders from communities might do more harm than good, especially in communities of color (e.g., Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Rose, Clear, & Scully, 1999). Imprisonment disproportionately impacts people and communities of color and they have been identified as the hardest hit by incarceration (Watts & Nightingale, 1996; Clear, Rose & Ryder, 2001). This disparity is evident here in Minnesota as it has led the nation in

racial disparities in imprisonment rates between African Americans and Whites (Department of Corrections, 2001).

### Collateral Effects on the Individual

Human capital is a method of defining an individual's skills and abilities as used in employment or other contributions to the economy. It also provides a measure of what assets an individual brings to their community. Human capital is not merely in the possession of the individual, but is also held by the surrounding community. For some, incarceration increases human capital, as it may provide the only viable opportunity to complete a high school education, gain a college-level education or occupational skills, and abstain from chemical use (Watts & Nightingale, 1996). However, most often a decrease in human capital occurs for incarcerated individuals. Exposure to prison subculture makes it extremely difficult for offenders to transition into normally functioning environments. Additionally, many offenders face stigma in the form of distrust from community members, impacting their ability to reintegrate into healthy community networks and find employment. Watts & Nightingale (1996), report that as many as 60% of ex-offenders are not employed within one year after release. This is in part due to the limited availability of felon-friendly employers. In addition, Watts and Nightingale reported that many incarcerated offenders lack marketable job skills, are not able to effectively network within the working population, and do not have past employment experience or employment references.

### Collateral Effects on the Family

It is extremely difficult to estimate the number of incarcerated fathers within the United States, as prisons do not often collect this information and often fail to include non-nuclear family members and/or non-biological children within their figures. Therefore, the most widely used estimates within the academic literature are drawn from the 1991 Bureau of Justice statistics which indicate that at least 1.5 million children have an incarcerated parent and 3.5 million have a parent on parole/probation (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005). As these figures are dated and very conservative we can reasonably assume that the actual number is much higher than reported. In any event, it is apparent that millions of families nationwide are affected by the imprisonment of a parent.

Incarceration can have both positive and negative effects on a family. If offenders have had a negative influence on the family, removal of these individuals and their problematic behaviors may ultimately result in improvement of the family's situation. For instance, in domestic violence situations, the removal of an offender can serve to beneficially affect the family in that abusive behavior will cease; however the family may be negatively impacted financially and socially. Therefore, the consequences of imprisonment on the family are complex in that they can not merely be characterized as positive or negative. Additionally, it has been found that many fathers view the transition back into the family as an opportunity to "start over" and become a responsible parent (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005). As Healy (2000) points out:

"Although the prison environment is often destructive to family relationships, it can also provide a window of opportunity for change. National and international research indicates parents in prison are often motivated to use this period to reflect on their relationships with their children and to improve their capacity to parent."

However, the negative impact of incarceration on families has also been well documented (Howard, 2000). For example, it is extremely difficult for the parent-child relationship to grow and develop while the parent is incarcerated. Research shows that many inmates do not have contact with their families. More than half of all fathers in state prisons report no personal visits with their children (LeBlanc, 2003).

This limited contact is in part due to the fact that it is difficult to visit incarcerated individuals. Many prisons are located hundreds of miles away from families making travel inconvenient and costly. Additionally, there are long waits, little food, limited activities to do with children, poor visitation facilities, severe time limitations, and a multitude of policies that are difficult for families to comply with (Council on Crime and Justice, 2006; Hairston, 2002). In many cases, when the father is incarcerated, the caregiver or mother of the child is hesitant or uncooperative in facilitating any visitation due to various strains in the parental relationship (Clarke et al, 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005). The strains include having broken up, infidelity, financial concerns, and resentment toward the offender for having been incarcerated. As incarcerated fathers are by circumstance already disenfranchised from the family, this "gatekeeping" on the mothers part often adds to feelings of powerlessness (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005).

Experiencing separation from their family limits a father's ability to remain connected and maintain a parental role. This is especially unfortunate as the father-child relationship is immensely important for the child's development (Hairston, 1998 & 2002). Research suggests that a strong father-child relationship is not only preventative of the father's recidivism, but may also protect the child from future involvement in criminal activities (Bilchik, Seymour, & Kreisher, 2001). However, merely insisting that children are transported to visitation facilities more frequently is inadequate as it has been found that a significant stress is experienced by mothers and caregivers when trying to organize visitation opportunities (Council on Crime and Justice, 2006).

In many cases, when the father is imprisoned, the family's income is seriously affected (Hairston, 2002; Howard, 2000). Families are further impacted because offenders are often unable to financially contribute after release due to difficulty obtaining a job as a result of social stigma, statutory restrictions on employment options, and limited job skills. Additionally, it has been found that stigma is not limited to the incarcerated individual, but rather affects the entire family and may negatively impact their social status (Hairston, 2002; Clear, et al 2001). In some cases children become isolated from schoolmates, landlords refuse to renew leases, and neighborhoods withdraw from involvement with the family (Council on Crime and Justice, 2006; Hairston, 2002). This isolation serves to further worsen the family's difficulties as they lose community resources and social networking capabilities.

The impact of incarceration on families must also be understood through a cultural context. While the incarceration of some offenders may have the strongest impact on the individual's nuclear family, for others the impact may be more encompassing. For instance, Moore (1996) notes that an individual's incarceration often impacts several households in African American and Latino communities due to the prevalence of extended family networks. Furthermore, with African Americans and other racial minorities experiencing elevated rates of imprisonment, there is a concern that incarceration will become a culturally normalized behavior (Dyer, 2005; Hairston, 1998). While this concern has been discussed within the literature, research from CCJ indicates that children experience a heightened "awareness of the social stigma that is associated with having a parent in prison" (Children of Incarcerated Parent Study, 2006, p. 17). Our study found that a child's firsthand experiences with social stigma and isolation were particularly traumatizing and in no way served to normalize imprisonment.

## Collateral Effects on the Community

The negative stigma of incarceration also extends to neighborhoods and communities that experience a high rate of prisoner mobility. This stigma may result in communities gaining bad reputations, deterring new businesses and residents, and ultimately inhibiting economic development (Clear et al, 2001). This type of stigma impacts the community's social capital, the resources of a community that make it healthy and whole. As communities facing poverty are the most affected by incarceration, the financial impact on these areas is even more devastating as these families and communities already struggle to get by. Moore (1996) discusses the tertiary effects of imprisonment on communities, "which impinges on a community's capacity to control its own problems". Parents face raising their children in neighborhoods with low social control. An increase in policing and the resultant negative interaction (e.g. traffic stops, searches, arrests for low level offenders, etc.) leads to an ambivalence toward law enforcement and public authority. Overall, communities eventually become alienated from the larger community context. This alienation serves to reinforce both social and political isolation of the residents.

In focus groups conducted in communities with high incarceration rates, Clear, Rose & Ryder (2001) found that whole communities lose their sense of self-worth and suffer the loss of positive role models, resulting in a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness. Furthermore, the presence of crime and incarceration can influence community members (particularly youth) to develop negative attitudes about work and responsibility. Criminal activity then becomes a social norm and incarceration becomes a part of life (Clear, et al. 2001; Moore, 1996). In addition, the Community Concern Decline Model (Conklin, 1975) argues that fear of crime is due to concern over community decay; that fear is heightened when local social ties are weak. Previous research supports the findings that strong family, extended family attachments, and community/social ties are vital for the stability of the community. However, given that high rates of incarceration lead to community disempowerment, it appears that it is difficult to restore community faith and leadership.

Researchers have suggested that the removal of large groups of men from neighborhoods can destabilize social networks, and further cause financial hardships (Visher & Travis; 2003). The difficulty that ex-offenders have in gaining employment directly impacts the community's economic standing and recidivism rates. There is substantial evidence that criminal involvement

increases when people are unemployed (Edin, Nelson & Paranal, 2004). Therefore, communities that experience a significant decrease in social networking capabilities become disenfranchised by neighboring communities. Furthermore, these communities become politically disempowered and often continue to experience high rates of incarceration as recidivism rates grow due to unemployment (Edin, Nelson & Paranal, 2004).

### **Family Involvement as a Protective Factor**

Within the research that examines incarcerated fathers; one predominant theme is that families are rehabilitative assets in that familial ties may help to decrease recidivism (Petersilia, 2003). Petersilia and others have found that those males who assume responsible parenting roles after incarceration experience lower re-offense rates than those who are not involved parents (Petersilia, 2003; Hairston, 2002; Howard, 2000). Additionally, emotional attachments to family appear to have a direct impact on the choices an ex-offender makes after release from prison (Bazemore & Stinchcomb, 2004).

One possible explanation for this is that families uniquely allow an offender to see themselves as a normally functioning individual, rather than merely an institutionalized criminal (Hairston, 2002; Howard, 2000). This notion corresponds with the sociological theory of labeling, which argues that individuals define themselves in terms of how others view them (Cote, 2002). According to this theory, being part of a family provides the offender with an environment in which they may escape the damaging effects of labeling. In others words, within the family they are not limited to being a criminal, but can exist more freely within other social realms and other roles (such as father, son, and partner).

Both researchers and practitioners have argued that including family members in various treatment programs for offenders may be beneficial (Hairston, 2002). Researchers have suggested that the criminal justice system and social service agencies should focus on helping maintain and strengthen the family attachments of inmates. After release from prison, the process of returning to their families is difficult and involves both recovering from the experience of prison and adapting to former roles within the family (Hairston, 2002).

However, it has been found that the policies of correctional institutions often do not facilitate the father-child relationship (Hairston, 1998). Given these findings, it is extremely important that we examine the role of fatherhood and family in incarcerated males' lives in order to further prevention methods. This line of inquiry is imperative for those men who return to their

families, in order to further learn how to facilitate the family-inmate relationship and identify what resources are needed to accomplish this goal.

### **Gaps in the Existing Literature**

As discussed previously, research concerning the effects of incarceration on the family and community has grown in last the few years in response to heightened interest. However, this research has primarily focused on women offenders and the role of motherhood. Literature on incarcerated fathers is extremely limited (Hairston, 1998). Men have been overlooked by the literature due to the damaging assumption that incarcerated fathers are not actively engaged nor interested in parenting. This misguided expectation of incarcerated fathers as absentee and unengaged is in part due to key differences between public perceptions and the reality of parenting as a prisoner (Hairston, 1998). For instance, much of the public's perception of incarcerated fathers is directed by the media, which often depicts "deadbeat dads who produce children for whom they care little and provide nothing" (Hairston, 1998, p. 619). In light of these findings, it is evident that the role of fatherhood for incarcerated individuals warrants further research, such as this study.

Additionally, much of the research concerning the impact of incarceration on families does not examine the aftermath of prison, but rather evaluates the immediate consequences in that participants are often interviewed during their imprisonment. In contrast, this research study hopes to provide a more comprehensive analysis in that we interviewed fathers during their reentry into the community in order to obtain information on the aftermath of imprisonment. Furthermore, given the academic literature it appears that it is also important to examine the communities that these incarcerated fathers are returning to in terms of assessing their ability to effectively integrate and support ex-offenders. Therefore, research examining the impact of incarceration on fatherhood, the family and the community is greatly needed.

## **METHODS**

Our study consisted of three types of one-time interviews: (1) fathers recently released from prison who had children but did not live with them prior to or after their release (“fatherhood interviews”), (2) fathers who lived with their minor children prior to incarceration and returned to live with them when they were released (“family interviews”), and (3) interviews with Hawthorne community residents (“community interviews”). Data from the two types of father interviews were used to identify and gauge the effects of imprisonment and reentry on families. Data from the community interviews were used to assess neighborhood dynamics and resources within communities that experience a high level of prisoner mobility. These three sets of interviews were used to expand upon each other and give context to the overall situation. Together all three types of interviews were used to assess the needs, challenges and strengths of fathers who return from prison and the ability of neighborhoods to accept ex-offenders who are fathers back into the community.

### **Design & Sampling**

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to capture the overall perspectives of the participants, as well as the subtle nuances of their individual experiences. The interviews used with both sets of fathers were created using an ethnographic interviewing method. Specifically, open-ended questions were asked for the purpose of fully understanding these father’s experiences. For instance, fathers were asked to describe their relationship with their children’s mother and the challenges they faced after returning from prison. Community interviews were structured and consisted of closed-ended questions regarding neighborhood safety and the quality of services in the neighborhood. For instance, community members were asked to rate the quality of property in Hawthorne community. Below is a description of each type of interview along with sampling methods.

#### **Fatherhood Interviews**

The purpose of the fatherhood interviews was to examine the effects of incarceration on fathers and families. Specifically, the effect of imprisonment on parenting and the participants’ relationship with their children was the main focus of the interviews. As these fathers did not live with their families after release, we were uniquely able to examine how continued separation from their children both affected their ability to parent and reentry.

To be eligible for the fatherhood interview, the participants had to have been released from prison within the past 12 months (from the time of recruitment) and have at least one child under the age of eighteen. Offenders were not considered for participation in the study if they had been incarcerated for an act of domestic violence, sexual offense, or an offense against a child. We excluded these offenders because these types of crimes present a different set of unique challenges. To recruit participants for the fatherhood interviews, flyers were posted at businesses and social service agencies. These flyers explained the study and provided contact information. For a more comprehensive list of all flyer locations see Appendix A.

### Family Interviews

Similar to the fatherhood interviews, the purpose of the family interviews was to examine the effects of imprisonment on parenting and participants' relationships with their children. Additionally, the process of reentry not only into the community, but also into the family was discussed within the interviews. Fathers, who lived with their minor children prior to incarceration and returned to live with them when they were released, were asked about their experiences with parenting before, during, and after their imprisonment.

To locate eligible interview participants, the research staff first obtained contact information for recently released offenders from the Department of Corrections files. Project staff conducted a review of files to identify eligible participants. In our original recruitment efforts, offenders were identified and contacted when they met the following criteria: released in the past 12 months (from the time of recruitment), lived with prior to and returned to their families after incarceration, and currently live in the Hawthorne neighborhood. Similar to the fatherhood interviews, offenders were not considered for participation in the study if they had been incarcerated for an act of domestic violence, sexual offense, or an offense against a child.

Those individuals that were eligible were then sent a letter by mail. The letter included information on the purpose of the research, the methodology to be used, and the requirements of and compensation for participation. The letter also informed the offenders that a researcher would be making a follow-up phone call to them in the following two weeks. During the follow-up phone call fathers were screened to ensure they meet the remaining criteria for participation. The remaining criteria were that they understood and spoke English and that they had at least one child under the age of 18 in their household.

This recruitment effort did not yield any eligible research participants. Due to difficulties experienced with recruiting, the research team expanded the recruitment area to include all of North Minneapolis and the East side of St. Paul, because of the high rate of prisoner mobility in both of these areas. In the second phase of recruiting, flyers were then posted at businesses and social service agencies. These flyers explained the study and provided contact information. However, many callers who responded to the flyers were declined due to not meeting the research study criteria. Flyer locations were the same as those used in the fatherhood interviews (for a list of flyer locations, see Appendix A).

### Hawthorne Community Interviews

The purpose of the community interviews was to assess a neighborhood's (with both high ethnic/racial diversity and high prisoner mobility) ability to receive and support the large population of ex-offenders. In addition, community relations, criminal activity, and neighborhood solidarity were examined in order to fully understand the environments in which many of the interviewed fathers were returning to.

To recruit participants, advertisements were distributed at community organizations (such as the Urban League, Village Social Services, and the Employment Action Centers) and events. These organizations posted the flyers at their agencies and handed out flyers to individuals that they felt would be interested in the study. To be eligible for the Community interviews, the participants had to have lived in the Hawthorne neighborhood for at least one year and had to be at least eighteen years of age. After participants contacted the research team and were identified as eligible, interviews were scheduled.

### **Data Collection**

The interviews were conducted wherever individuals felt most comfortable such as the person's home or at the North Regional Library in North Minneapolis. Whenever possible, interviewers were sent in pairs to conduct the interviews; one interviewer would ask the questions while the other took notes. To ensure all of the information was captured, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. At the end of the fatherhood and family interviews, participants were provided with a current list of resources that covered a wide array of services, support, and aid that were offender-friendly. To view interview questionnaires for the three types of interviews completed see Appendix B, C, and D.

All participants were compensated for their time and information. Family interviewees and community member interviewees were given \$40 per interview. Fatherhood interviewees received a \$40 dollar gift certificates to Target.

### **Analysis**

Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyze all three sets of interviews. A team of researchers read each of the interviews and independently analyzed the transcripts for reoccurring themes. The research team then collectively grouped similar themes that were found throughout the interviews. The interviews were then further analyzed using the software program NVIVO. This program was used to isolate and organize quotes from the interviews that provided support for the identified themes. Once themes were agreed upon and there was demonstrated evidence that examples of it existed in multiple interviews, it was retained for the report.

After preliminary analysis on the three types of interviews was completed, the initial findings were presented to the Collateral Effects Advisory Board in order to obtain additional feedback and expand upon the research teams recommendations. For more comprehensive information concerning the Advisory Board see Appendix E.

### **Limitations**

As with all research, this study has limitations and it is important that they be taken into consideration when reviewing key findings. One of the primary limitations of the study is its limited generalizability. For all three types of interviews conducted, the sample sizes are small and may not be fully representative of the greater populations. However, this is a finding in itself. This finding is particularly poignant given the extensive recruitment efforts used (i.e., extracting information from DOC files, flyers, radio ads). The difficulty we experienced in locating eligible participants has implications for future research, as well as providing services to this population.

It should also be noted that a self-selection process may have been operating. For instance, those fathers who were more interested in the topic of this study may have been more likely to participate and may not be representative of all fathers returning from prison. However, the research team felt that all of the interviewees nonetheless provided a unique perspective, not often found within the literature. Additionally, in qualitative research it is not uncommon to

conduct in-depth interviews with a small number of individuals in order to gain detailed information on a given topic. As Ambert, Alder, Alder, and Detzner (1995) state:

“First, qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth. Instead of drawing from a large, representative sample of an entire population of interest, qualitative researchers seek to acquire in-depth and intimate information about a smaller group of persons. Second, the aim of qualitative research is to learn about how and why people behave, think, and make meaning as they do, rather than focusing on what people do or believe on a large scale (pg 880).”

Therefore, while these samples are small they are nonetheless significant in that they present in-depth information on this specific population of previously incarcerated fathers and Hawthorne community members.

## **FATHERHOOD INTERVIEWS**

As discussed previously, these interviews were conducted with previously incarcerated fathers who did not return to their families after their release from prison. Topics included participants' childhood, family dynamics, parenting experiences, and reflections on imprisonment. For instance, many of the questions within the interview focused on the participant's family life and childhood as it is important to understand where these men come from in order to fully comprehend the context of their reflections on the criminal justice system and the impact of prison on their parenting. For a more comprehensive list of questions please see Appendix B.

Ten fatherhood interviews were conducted. Of the ten interviewees, seven were African American, one was Asian, one was Native American, and one was Caucasian. The age of the participants ranged from 28 to 50. The majority of the sample identified themselves as single, while two participants were currently married. Only one participant had been divorced. The majority of the sample had three or fewer children although one respondent had ten. Seven of the interviewees were currently unemployed. When asked what type of employment they would be qualified for most participants listed various manual labor positions. Overall, these demographics are representative of the general incarcerated male population as they are predominantly African American, unemployed, have children, and do not have traditional nuclear families (Weinman, Smith, Buzi, 2002; Mumola, 2000).

The following themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of these fatherhood interviews.

- ***Family Dynamics While Growing Up***
- ***Becoming a Father***
- ***Impact of Prison on Parenting***
- ***Relationship with Mother of Child(ren)***
- ***Limited Support Systems***
- ***Societal & Cultural Views***
- ***Importance of Fathering***

## **Family Dynamics While Growing Up**

Many of the participants interviewed stated that they grew up in homes where their father was not present and did not play an active role in raising them. Additionally, it was almost always the case that the mother and father of the participants did not marry or live in the home together. This is not uncommon for many children growing up today.

“One out of every three children in America will go to be in a home absent their fathers...40 % of children who don’t live with fathers haven’t seen their father during the past year. And one-half have never set foot in their father’s home” (Horn, 2002).

However, growing up without a father in the home is thought to be even more common for the incarcerated population. For instance, one participant, who was raised by his grandparents until the age of twelve due to his mother and father’s drug use and inconsistent parenting, noted:

“You see my father never really...he never really took the time you know and try to spend time with me...and do the things that a father and kids are supposed to do. He never did that, you know.”

Those who had some contact with their father or stepfather reported that they were abusive and their involvement was sporadic. For example, one interviewee commented about the abuse that he received growing up.

“When I was growing up ...I had some helluva discipline. I got my ass kicked, I mean literally got my ass kicked til my nose bled you know...”

Most of the participants stated that they wanted to parent differently than their own fathers. One participant, for instance, eventually joined Alcoholic Anonymous in order to avoid parenting like his father, who he described as an alcoholic who was emotionally unavailable to him. After this participant was able to address his drinking problem, he was able to become a more actively involved parent. As he described:

“...alcohol addiction deprived me from what I really wished at that time, what I could do, what I could be with my children because I knew I didn’t want to be like my father. My father was an alcoholic too at the time. I wanted to be different from him.”

Similarly, another interviewee, the father of a nine year old son, stated how important it is for him to tell his son that he loves him.

“I tell him all the time that ‘you know I love you’ and he says ‘I love you too dad’. And, that’s something that my biological dad never said and as I was growing up as a kid my stepfather never really said that.”

Almost all of the participants that did not have contact with their fathers growing up did not have contact with their father as adults. However, some nonetheless still wanted a relationship to develop with their father. One participant reflected on how never having a relationship with his biological father hurt him.

“We still don’t have a relationship, you know, and that was one of the hurtful things that ever could’ve happened to me. You know, I’m a grown man now and I still want that relationship with my father.”

When asked what a challenging aspect of being a father was, many of the men were able to identify that not having an active father figure in their lives made it challenging to be a father as they had no male role model to look to for guidance. For instance, one participant, the father of three small girls, discussed the lack of male parenting role models.

“Not knowing how because I never had a father, I know how a mother will raise a child but I don’t know how a father will, or what a father is supposed to do.”

Overall, the lack of a stable relationship with their parents, most particularly their fathers, seems to have made parenting difficult for these fathers. However, as they frequently discussed the need to parent differently than their own fathers, it appears that they have taken it upon themselves to end this unhealthy cycle of absentee fathering.

### **Becoming a Father**

For all of the participants, becoming a parent was an immensely emotional experience. Many of the men were concerned about being good parents and were unsure of their abilities. While these thoughts and concerns are typical for all men who first become fathers, these incarcerated males were often in unstable family situations which tended to exacerbate their fears of fatherhood.

The majority of the sample was under the age of twenty-one when they first became a father. This is not surprising as young fatherhood has been found to be significantly correlated with criminal activity (Weinman, Smith, & Buzi, 2002). Many participants recognized that they were too young to take on the responsibility of parenting because they were not well educated,

financially unstable, and not developmentally prepared to assume the parental role. As one participant stated:

“I was terrified. I was terrified because at the time I wasn’t working. I was in high school and so I was like okay well you got to make a decision now, this is for real you got to become a man now because you’re going to be a father so its time to take care of your responsibilities...I was scared nervous. I didn’t know what to do.”

Many participants described similar experiences, in which they suddenly felt as if they had to quickly become responsible in order to live up to the expectations of fatherhood. This sudden change in expectations and life paths seemed to greatly affect these fathers. For instance, one participant expressed that he was unsure of what to expect from being a father.

“I went through [a] not being able to provide for them stage. You know, I was scared but at the same time I was excited and I was like how easy it was for my father to walk away. I was like it don’t be that easy for me to walk away. I was mostly scared you know. I didn’t know what to expect.”

In contrast, a few men felt changed by the birth process and viewed their first experiences of fatherhood as having provided a new perspective on life.

“I was changed by the great experience there [at the hospital]. That’s great to see a child born and it’s your child, you know, not matter what situation you might be in it’s great.”

### **Impact of Prison on Parenting**

Fathers discussed the impact of prison on their ability to parent both while they were imprisoned and afterwards. While the participants’ responses varied, the struggle that these fathers faced when attempting to maintain a relationship with their children was consistently discussed.

### **Little Contact during Incarceration**

All of the fathers specifically discussed that they had very little contact with their children during incarceration. In fact, most of the fathers never had their child(ren) visit. When contact was made it was often in the form of letters, photographs, and occasional phone calls. The participants’ comments presented three main reasons for having such little visitation, in addition to the logistical difficulties of visitation, as discussed in the literature review.

First, many fathers discussed the pain of seeing their children and then having them leave. One father described his yearly visitation with his children below.

“[It was] emotional because of the loss I felt going away and then having them see me in a place like that.”

This particular participant’s situation was unique as the mother of his three children began to see someone else during his three year incarceration. Therefore, the mother did not actively continue to facilitate a father-child relationship (although after imprisonment he became very involved in the day-to-day activities of his children).

Second, fathers expressed fear that the prison environment would in some way negatively affect their child(ren). One father described his hesitation in allowing his child to visit.

“I just was like no I can’t let my child come to places like this because I don’t want that to rub off on him or anything like that. [So,] the second time when I was in prison I didn’t see him the whole time because he knows what prison is and it’s a bad place.”

This father ended up substituting frequent phone calls and letters as an alternative method of staying in contact.

Third, many fathers did not want their families to see them as prisoners. Incarcerated males have been found to be extremely concerned about how their children perceive them as fathers (Hairston, 1998). Therefore, it is understandable that many fathers would isolate their family members in an attempt to avoid becoming permanently associated with criminal activity and imprisonment.

Additionally, a few of the fathers even lied to their child(ren) in order to conceal the fact that they were in prison. For instance, one father told his young son that he was working in another city and would be gone for awhile; he described his reasoning below.

“When you are incarcerated the last thing that you want your children to know is that you’re incarcerated... it’s a shame thing and that’s not of a human nature, to be ashamed. Guilty yes, but to be ashamed is something totally different. If we can start teaching our children the difference between guilt and shame, we’ll all have a better world... [so] I just recently told my son about how many times I have been incarcerated.”

These three findings are important in that within the literature the lack of contact between incarcerated fathers and their children is generally attributed to logistical difficulties involved with visitation (Day, Acock, Bahr, & Arditti, 2005). However, this study suggests that the logistical difficulties of visitation alone are not the sole explanation for lack of visitation. Rather, these logistical difficulties coupled with the fact that many fathers have various

hesitations about visitation, the pain of seeing their children, fear of the prison environment negatively impacting the children, and concern about their children's perceptions of them as an inmate, may serve to provide a more comprehensive understanding of limited family contact during incarceration.

### Prison Changed How They Parented

The majority of the fathers felt that prison negatively affected their relationship with their children, both in the short and long term. However, similar to what was discussed in the literature review section, a few fathers felt that prison had provided a sort of reality check which motivated them to become more responsible parents. For instance, the following excerpt depicts personal growth that occurred during incarceration for one father who was incarcerated for thirteen months while his three girls were all very young. Missing them grow, learn to walk, and say their first words seemed to drastically change his priorities.

“You know to cherish everyday before I went to jail. My life was about me you know, but now I love my kids more than I love life itself you know. I missed them like crazy when I was in the, you know, prison. It really opened my eyes. It [prison] turned me into a man. You know, I was 21 when I went in there but I was thinking like a 17 year old you know. It showed me, you know, they got some guys who are going to die in there you know who have kids out there. So you know, it just made me want to be more responsible and be a part of my babies' lives.”

Another participant, the father of ten children, shared a similar insight:

“It made me a better person and a parent, without a doubt, without a doubt. Let me tell you since I know I learned how to not have limitations when you come into my family. Stop putting myself before them. We're very selfish as human beings, you know, very selfish. I can tell you how much I love you, I will feed you, I will clothe you, but guess what...what is my motive to doing it? Is it, am I really doing it out of love, am I really sacrificing you know, am I really sacrificing?”

In contrast, most of the other fathers indicated that prison negatively affected their parenting due to separation from their family and the normalization of prison subculture. For instance, one participant discussed the difficult transition back into his family environment.

“I'm not used to being around kids, my kids, other kids. I'm used to my own space, small space that is, and the difference is now I prefer to be alone, but that doesn't mean I don't love my kids. I still pick them up and we still go places but part of me still feels uncomfortable around them.”

This participant in particular felt that it was extremely difficult to “fit in” with his family after release. He described how prison subculture had become part of his parenting methods and the difficulty he had with changing his behavior.

“It’s like my daughter (name) got in a fight with a I can’t remember a 13 or 14 year old. My first instinct was to go over there and whip their ass. So, I gave the neighbor kid a little ten dollars to go whip her ass...it made me feel better. It was dumb you’re right, but that’s the prison part of me still there...eye for an eye, I regret it...I’m very vengeful, I learned to be that way in prison and I just got to find a way to get out of that.”

Prison changed how these men parented. Although some felt that imprisonment provided a wake-up call, others talked of the harmful emotional and social impacts that prison had on their parenting. However, the fact that these fathers continued to desire contact with their children, despite these struggles, is hopeful.

#### Parenting Classes Provided in Prison

Many of the fathers participated in various parenting classes provided by the correctional facilities. Some felt that the classes provided them with a new perspective on parenting (as described below) while others felt the classes lacked relevant material.

“Well actually I took a couple parenting classes while in prison and that changed some of my views on disciplining my child. I know if I need some [resources] I know where to get them. I believe all parents should take a parenting class period because we were taught a certain way and we’ve been living that way for so long and its like, I know I was taught not to cry you know and I found out its okay to cry you know and (the idea) boys don’t cry you know that’s beyond me and that’s been around for years.”

This particular father felt that one of the most influential moments he experienced in prison was during a parenting class in which he realized that in order to love your child you must first love yourself.

Although one father did not have a good experience in parenting classes, he was able to use informal supports to help another father in prison. As he expresses here, he felt the parenting class did not go far enough in terms of providing the type of “hands on” support and resources that fathers in prison need.

“They don’t have enough, they don’t have no programs in there really to help fathers, a parenting class but I mean that’s so B.S.... I mean they don’t offer no programs for fathers, they don’t offer help you know. I mean there’s a lot of fathers in there [prison] that want to see their kids, even if it’s to get pictures

taken, or if their baby's mom don't have transportation, or one of my cell mates not to ramble on, but one of my cell mates, I know he loved his kids, he was a border line suicidal 'cause his female wasn't letting him see the kids. So, I got a hold of one of my female friends and they picked her up and the kids up and they drove them all the way down there [to the prison].”

Overall, it appears that the effectiveness of parenting classes during imprisonment was varied, depending on the individual experience.

### Aftermath of Prison and Separation

Throughout the interviews it became apparent that separation from their children consistently remained a struggle, as most of these fathers did not live with their children either before or after incarceration. While initially this would appear to be no different from the struggles that divorced parents face, there is contextually a very big distinction to be made. These fathers have very little legal representation, no financial stability, lack transportation options, and have fewer resources made available to them in order to better cope with these circumstances. In essence, previously incarcerated fathers are not in the same position, as other father may be, to effectively manage these challenges. For instance, one father discussed the difficulties of being separated from his nine year old son after incarceration:

“Him not living with me makes it hard...during the week I don't see him and so I hear about all the stuff he does on Friday and its like okay well I don't have enough time to get all that stuff out and talk to him about everything he's done during that week and so its kind of hard but we get through it.”

Similarly, one respondent felt that the continued separation from his two children was the hardest aspect of life after imprisonment. He stated:

“Not seeing them wake up in the morning, not giving them breakfast...it's the little things that I miss the most.”

This pattern of continued separation from children raises an interesting question. What is the aftermath of prison and the continual isolation from children? While this question cannot be fully discussed within the realms of our current research it is nonetheless apparent that separation from children, both during incarceration and afterwards, is problematic to the development of these men. As one participant stated:

“Its hard to adjust back into the streets, you know, and your kids they're not going to do exactly what you tell them to do when you first start seeing them but in due time, love and mentally they'll come back. Just be patient and keep on trying.”

This particular father eventually moved to the same neighborhood as his children, in order to try to ease some of the day-to-day separation that they previously experienced when he was in a half-way house far away.

These father's experiences would indicate that the father-child relationship does not merely pick up where it left off after the fathers' release, but rather remains tainted long afterward.

### **Relationship with Mother of Child(ren)**

One theme that consistently emerged was that these fathers had a good relationship with their children's mother. We know from previous research by ourselves and others that this is a critical factor in the parent-child relationship (Council on Crime and Justice, 2006; Hairston, 1998 & 2002). In many cases, mothers or caregivers act as "gatekeepers" in terms of the relationship men can have with their children while incarcerated. This is in part due to the fact that there is generally no one else to arrange visitations or telephone calls. When asked about their relationship with their child's mother, a typical response was one such as this father who stated:

"Actually we have a decent relationship you know. As far as my kid you know, we talk as parents and that's all we can do um just respect one another"

The fact that this father had an amicable relationship with the mother of his son further allowed him to have more contact with his children during incarceration as he was not negatively affected by the mother's gatekeeping.

These father-mother relations even seemed to transcend difficulties experienced in the relationship and having multiple children with different mothers. For instance, one father with three children, all from different mothers, stated:

"My relationship with them is we all have an understanding and we all want to be good role models for our kids you know and um my relationships with their mommas is real good, even though I cheated on the two at the beginning. They forgave me for that and its real good right now."

Although many of these men have been able to negotiate their relationship with their ex-wife/partner in order to maintain contact with their children, this is not always the case as exhibited by previous research. Research has found that many previously incarcerated fathers are unable to have relationships with their children because of strained relationships with caregivers/mothers (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005). Therefore, this

theme may be unique to the sample in that selection bias has occurred and the relationships that these men have with the mother of their children may not be representative of the overall population. For example, as these men desired to have a relationship with their children, they may have recognized that in order to have access to their children they must maintain a cordial relationship with the mother. In contrast, those men that do not have an interest in maintaining a relationship with their children would perhaps not feel the need to work on forming a healthy relationship with the mother of their child(ren).

### **Limit Support Systems**

When asked what type of support they had as a father most men reported having limited family support or none at all. For example one father stated:

“Oh well that’s very little you know. You know um my sister and her boys, you know my sister she was a single parent as well so you know that’s basically who my family has been is single parents, but as far as the brothers I am the oldest brother so...”

Another stated:

“Um social support systems, my mom she’s in my corner. She backs me up a lot. I’m her baby boy so whatever I need she’s got for me but she’s also real demanding on me that I get my life right. So, my Mom is my support, you know, my support system. ....I have no men I feel like I could sit down and really talk to about things like this.”

A few men did report support from formal programs:

“Um, Mad Dads, um that father resources you know I call that, what’s that, information 211. First call for him. They got good resources. That’s why I found Mad Dads”

When asked what resources would be helpful for themselves and other fathers in the same situation, many respondents were able to immediately identify their needs. For instance, one father states:

“A father crew. Something that would help the transition [back from prison]....Adjusting myself back within, interacting.”

This respondent was unable to use his own father as a role model and/or support system due to his abusive alcoholic nature and felt that he would appreciate this sort of social network that could fill in as a substitute support group. Another father had a similar suggestion:

“Like any kind of program with other dads who just got out of the penitentiary and they’re trying to start over, and you know I don’t need no women in my class, I need to be with men”

Many fathers articulated this need for male centered resources that were geared towards previously incarcerated men.

### **Societal & Cultural Views**

Interviewers asked the participants what they thought were the cultural expectations for being a father. They were also asked about how they felt fathers were portrayed in the media, such as, through music, movies, and television. These questions were asked to get a sense of whether cultural or media outlets influenced or shaped the ways in which they parented.

Almost all the respondents who answered the questions about cultural expectations of fathering were African American. These fathers felt that in the African American culture they were expected to be strong role models who supported their children and families because today’s society can be a challenging place to raise a child. One African American respondent, stated:

“You have to be a strong role model for your kids now, for your kid nowadays you know, and that’s why I try to keep a grasp on my son you know, to steer him in the right direction.”

Another participant, when asked what it means to be a father in his culture stated:

“In my opinion, it means a lot to be a father you know. You got to stand up to the plate you know and nurture your child and watch them grow and help them grow...you know being available 24/7. No matter what, whether you all live together or whether you all don’t.”

Another African American man stated that in his culture it is important that fathers have love and understanding for their children. There is also an expectation within his culture and family that men will be responsible for their children.

“Well, it’s responsibility, trying to understand the child; you can make a child to be a certain way by how you raise a child no matter what anybody else says. Just love and understand the child and aspects of raising children, spirituality, you have to teach them right from wrong...”

One of the respondents in the sample had different expectations about what it meant to be a father in their culture. Growing up, the expectations of fathers were low and fathers were not expected to succeed. The respondents stated:

“Well, I’m led to believe that, you know, everybody who grows up goes to jail. You know, black man say, you know, we keep the business going for the generations...”

Many of the men thought that the media portrayed African American fathers negatively. They felt that through music and movies fathers were shown as being absent. The father of a four year old girl, stated:

“In my own opinion, that’s a bad portrayal, it’s not real good portrayal, you know. You don’t hear them talking about a lot of brothers that’s really trying to be with their children. All we do is see them and you hear about people who say, ‘well this man isn’t trying to do nothing for his child’. You never hear about the one’s that’s really trying [to be a good father]”

One respondent who asked how fathers are portrayed through the media stated:

“Well, they drop the money off every once in awhile, you know in the movies and video it’s like ‘that’s just my baby’s momma’ you know. A lot of guys aren’t talking of no kids; they’re not talking about going home and being home with their babies...”

Another participant stated that he does not let his son watch a lot of movies because of the negative portrayal of African American fathers.

“It’s a lot of negativity out there and that’s why I don’t allow my son to watch a lot of TV...and he watches movies, PG movies that I say it’s okay to watch a certain movie...I think it’s a lot of negative stuff out there. Especially for young kids to even open their eyes or ears to listen...so, it’s negative.”

Despite the lack of role models of healthy parenting, many of these men recognized the need to be a role model for their children as essential to their parenting role and responsibilities. This is further shown as many of the fathers discussed their responsibilities in providing supportive care for their children as discussed in a previous section.

Overall, it appears that these men are subject to conflicting messages. The African American cultural expectations seem to predominantly involve being a supportive and loving parent. In contrast, it appears that the media often portrays African American fathers as absentee and uninvolved. While this conflict interferes with the healthy development of a father’s understanding of their parental role, it is important to note, that the study participants did not directly discuss these conflicting images as providing difficulties in their being a father.

## **The Importance of Fathering**

The role of being a parent was extremely important to the participants. For instance, all of the fathers could clearly identify their expectations of themselves as parents. They actively desired to be better parents. This provides a direct contradiction to the prevailing social stereotype that men in prison are merely convicts - not fathers (Hairston, 1998). Many of the fathers talked about how having their children look up to them gave them a sense of pride and social acceptance. For instance, when asked to identify the number one thing that he liked about being a father, the father of two small girls stated:

“Pride, the joy of saying yeah that’s my girls, Daddy’s girls!”

Another father said:

“The love, how my kids look up to me like daddy is like super man to them, you know. It’s just the love and attention that I get from them, the warmth, you know. They make me feel real good when I am around them.”

This theme is significant because it indicates that the role of fatherhood makes these men feel good about themselves. This notion is supported by research on recidivism (Hairston, 1998), which found that the emotional well-being of previously incarcerated males is often directly related to the father-child relationship. This father-child relationship may prove to be a protective barrier against further criminal activity and should be facilitated by the criminal justice system when at all possible.

When asked about what the role of parenting involved, participants unanimously identified being supportive as their primary responsibility. One participant, a recovering alcoholic, felt that it was so important for him to be emotionally present for his children that he stopped drinking altogether. He discusses his love of being involved in their lives below:

“I go support them whatever they’re doing in school functions. Just last weekend, my daughter had her dance recital and she’s been in dance four years now and three of the years I wasn’t there because I was incarcerated and since I’ve been out, I’ve been able to start going to these functions with them. That makes me feel really good inside. And it makes them feel that much better too because I can see the glow in their face when I showed up.”

The fact that this sample overwhelmingly desired contact with their children is of great importance. Recent research has shown that “children of incarcerated parents are six times more likely than their peers to become criminally involved” due in part to lack of parental involvement

(Bilchik, Seymour, & Kreisher, 2001, p.109). Therefore, having previously incarcerated fathers actively involved with their children, as this sample is, may be an important prevention method (for both the fathers *and* the children).

### **Key Findings & Recommendations**

Overall, the formerly incarcerated fathers lacked male role models, experienced unhealthy family dynamics growing up, had children at a young age, and had limited resources for effectively parenting their children. Fathers reported that the relationship with their child(ren) was often negatively impacted by the prison experience. For instance, many fathers reported that after experiencing separation from their children it was extremely difficult to resume a healthy parental role. Despite these challenges, these fathers wanted to be actively involved in their children's lives and often took great joy from their relationship with their children.

#### Visitation Opportunities

To state the obvious, imprisonment provides a key opportunity for intervention, specifically with regards to parenting and becoming (or remaining) an active father. However, prison parenting programs must be relevant and provide education as well as skill building opportunities. It is critical to provide these fathers not only with information, but hands on experience that they can use to become more effective parents. Given that many of these fathers were reserved about having their children visit during incarceration and often felt that being a parent had become a foreign role, facilitating the father-child relationship (for those fathers who want contact and for whom contact is appropriate) during imprisonment would provide inmates with some of the hands on experience that they desire and alleviate the strain of continued separation. This could be encouraged by providing more welcoming visitation facilities in which men could be seen as fathers, rather than merely inmates. Fathers may benefit from such increased efforts that encourage the development of a healthy parental relationship during incarceration in that it may lessen the struggles and barriers faced after incarceration.

In order to further encourage the father-child relationship, transportation services should be afforded to the families of those incarcerated, (as was also recommended in CCJ's Children of Incarcerated Parents Study, 2006). A regular, free bus service that transports families to prisons for visits could accomplish two goals: (1) allow for parent-child visits, and (2) provide an opportunity for families with parents in the same prisons to meet and communicate with each

other. This service did exist for a time, with bus services provided by the Council on Crime and Justice. Unfortunately, the program ended due to funding cuts.

### Communication & Relationship Counseling

In addition to providing more parenting opportunities many fathers identified the need for communication training. This training would specifically serve to educate fathers on the developmental needs of their children and appropriate communication techniques (as already implemented at CCJ with the use of creative communication building activities such as crossword puzzles designed by the inmates and mailed to children of a young age). This type of program may also serve to form healthy communication practices within the mother-father relationship and alleviate the stress of conflicts. These efforts would be preventative in that the more engaged a father is the less likely he is to re-offend, as discussed previously in the literature review (Bahr et al, 2005; Petersilia, 2003; Hairston, 2002; Howard, 2000).

These findings also speak to the need for family-based intervention services to ensure that the father-child relationship is facilitated despite the relationship between the parents (such as family therapy and mediation). For instance, relationship counseling may help to prevent the severing of ties with shared children. Additionally, it may also be beneficial to establish an incarcerated parent's bill of rights (as was also recommended in CCJ's Children of Incarcerated Parents Study, 2006). This bill may include basic rights, such as visitation with children, child friendly visitation facilities, the ability to show basic physical affection during visitation (such as hugging), and so forth. These rights would be established with the hope of protecting the incarcerated parent and their child from unwarranted and unnecessary gatekeeping.

## **FAMILY INTERVIEWS**

These interviews were conducted with previously incarcerated fathers who returned to their families after imprisonment. As discussed previously, many of the interview questions centered around the impact that prison had on family relationships and interactions. From the father's perspective each family member had difficulty with the transition when he left for prison as well as when he returned home. To see a more comprehensive list of questions see Appendix C.

In all, six men participated in the interviews. Of these six men, four were living in Hawthorne and two were from other north Minneapolis neighborhoods. One interviewee was Caucasian, one was Asian and the other four were African American. In addition, all six participants had at least one child.

The overarching topics that emerged from the analysis of the interviews were:

- ***Impact of Prison on Mothers/Caregivers***
- ***Impact on Prison on the Father-Child Relationship***
- ***Support Systems & Resources***
- ***Systemic Perpetuation of Racism***

## **Impact of Prison on Mothers/Caregivers**

We specifically asked these fathers how their personal interactions, conflicts, and financial situations within their family changed due to imprisonment.

### Financial Burdens & Stresses

One theme identified in every interview was the financial burden that incarceration caused these families. This financial strain was experienced while the fathers were in prison, as well as when they returned to their families. Each ex-offender was acutely aware of the financial strain imprisonment had on the family that they left behind.

“We went [from] a two income house, to a single income. I was working and I got locked up and she was on her own. You know she had to move. She moved here while we were... 'cause we were at another place. So that was a big financial struggle.”

In three of the six families interviewed the mother and children had to move because they could no longer afford to live where they were without the income of their father. One father reflected on the strain it put on his relationship with his partner when she lost her house.

“She (his significant other) had a lot of problems with trying to find her a place because she lost her house and took out a loan so we argued; you know what I’m saying? She would get frustrated and argue to me about that. You know talk about, if you was here, I wouldn’t be going through this and this and that. Things like that.”

The impact of incarceration was deeply felt by the mother/caregiver of the children in other ways as well. With their partners in prison, mothers had to take on more responsibilities and in some cases another job in order to ease financial stress.

These fathers also recognized that the impact of their imprisonment went beyond just financial. As one father stated:

“She (his children’s mother) assumed both male and female, counselor and... she assumed so many things in regards to the children.... To which I should have shared with her, had I been there. I know we been through some of these experiences before, but had we been... I mean that’s what made us partners.... Now she’s filling roles she not prepared to fill.”

Not surprisingly, many of the men felt their role as a provider was important. Therefore, the stress of not being able to provide for their family took a toll on these men psychologically. They expressed shame, embarrassment and the feeling of losing their standing in the family

because of not being financially supportive while incarcerated. Unfortunately, this did not end after their release, as many fathers in our study reported great difficulty finding jobs after incarceration and/or finding jobs comparable to their previous employment.

“Economically, I can’t find a job. That’s the biggest change. I don’t know if its wishful thinking in the back of your mind to think when I get out here ‘I am going to make things better’. Then you get out here, and there is no way in hell I mean no matter what you do, you can’t make it better. And that is extremely frustrating. That’s what I find very strange about it all because [there is] a great deal of pressure to not only get a job but to be successful in whatever you do. You just want to get a chance to do it. When you been on several interviews and you looked as hard as I have looked. I used the example of shoveling manure in a zoo, but you can’t even get a job doing that. Then there is warehouse jobs, but you can’t get a job doing that. Somebody tell me what is it then. You not asking for some specific discipline, I’m coming in here, this is a warehouse, you want someone to lower boxes and work on the dock, I think I can do that. And then we’ll do the background check and comes back, thanks for your interest and all that. I got a whole folder for thanks for your interest. But I don’t got a job.”

These fathers also expressed fear that lack of work might force them back into illegal means of making money as a way of supporting and contributing to their family. In fact, several of the fathers we interviewed stated they had occasionally resorted to illegal activities to ease financial stress. Additionally, many of the men noticed they had more arguments with their wives/partners about money because of the strain of going from two incomes to one while they were incarcerated and the difficulty in finding a job once they returned home.

### Impact of Prison on Intimate Relationships

The intimate relationships of all the men we interviewed were also impacted by incarceration. Few can argue that a loving relationship would not be changed by the partners being separated for an extended period of time. Many of the men we interviewed talked about missing the day-to-day contact with their wife/partner.

“You miss that mental connection; that emotional connection with your wife. I mean you always have that physical connection, good morning, with that physical contact. But when I’m not there you miss the voice, you miss the way they’re baking in the morning.... It’s the little things. It’s just different. I can’t say it’s just different. You just miss their presence.”

In most cases, the men described situations where their partner was always angry with them for reasons they did not understand. They thought their partners may have been harboring

resentment for having to assume extra responsibilities while they were away. Several of the men talked about trying to make things better or avoiding conflict altogether.

“Since I’ve been out, I think it’s just been a little different, um, trying to make things, make wrong things right or not even make them right but try to you know what I’m saying, cover them up, so it’s kind of sort of right, I think it’s just in that area of dealing with them on a more positive level. I try to talk and you know whatever that conflict, whether it be with children or with my wife, whatever, I try to sit down and talk it out first and then if you know it can’t get talked or whatever then I just shut down so I don’t really too much care.”

As discussed earlier, the females left behind had to assume more responsibility as parents. However, their role as a partner was also affected. For instance, most of the men interviewed expressed deep concern that their wife or girlfriend would leave them while they were in prison. As a result, men desperately tried to keep the lines of communication open.

“...my wife is an extremely beautiful woman. And I am in here and she’s out there. She’s going through problems. And all these things go through your mind. Okay you got problems out there, you got stress on you, you got the kids with you. You got the bills piling up. You don’t know how you are going to keep a roof above your head. Yeah, it’s a trust issue. I mean she reassured me, but it’s just that it was a stage...I don’t want to say it was just a stage. It was a system of thinking that you fall into when you are not around somebody and then that’s coupled or multiplied by they’re out there and you are in there.”

Several men stated that communication with their partners changed in that they argued more both when he was incarcerated and when he returned home. Men talked about the fear of losing their wife because of arguments.

“The fact that I am not there and I am incarcerated and she’s not. I wanted to incarcerate her too, basically. Mentally, not physically. I just wanted her to be what I wanted her to be. And that would provoke arguments.... Still, I never wanted to provoke arguments about where I was goin’. She got on with her life rather than waiting for me.”

Several men also stated that arguing with their wife/partner had increased since they returned from prison.

“We argue. Seems like she’s not listening to what I’m sayin’. Or she hears me, but she don’t want to follow instructions. I guess that’s probably because she been doin’ whatever she been doin’ for two years so, um...why does she need to give me the control? I never thought about that ‘til now.”

Most of the men we talked to stated that the level of trust in their relationship changed while they were incarcerated and when they returned from prison.

“I trusted her, but you hear so much talk behind the wall, your girl gonna have to get somethin’ from somewhere. There were times durin’ my [incarceration]...that I thought she cheated. Maybe she did you know. We’re not married, but it would still hurt you know.”

Another man discussed the impact of his wife’s infidelity while he was incarcerated.

“...I don’t really have that trust and respect for her. I still love her but what she did, man, she dogged the mess out of me while I was in jail so it’s kind of hard for me to come back and you know still look at her the same way and you know that’s something I deal with everyday.”

This lack of trust went both ways in that some men experienced their partners not trusting them when they returned home.

“I can’t even walk to the park by myself. Basically everywhere that I go, she tries to [go] with me because she don’t trust me no more.”

Despite an increase in strain and arguments, several of the men stated that their partners were extremely supportive to them while they were in prison and after they were released. That support seemed to keep them going. One man talked about the importance of the support he received in the form of visitation while he was in prison.

“My wife been there. She did the time with me for five years. We got closer, cuz it was hard on her. She was there for me. Every week or every two weeks for the last five years.”

These men recognized the importance of having support while going through the difficulties of imprisonment as well as during their transition back to their home and community.

“You would lose your mind if you didn’t have that kinda support. Because that alone, you are either going to end up back in there, or dead trying to get something else. Without that woman, you gonna go crazy.”

### **Impact of Prison on the Father-Child Relationship**

The fathers we interviewed identified various ways in which their incarceration impacted their relationship with their children. They frequently discussed the pain they experienced from missing out on the day to day activities with their children during their incarceration.

“I wasn’t there for school activities. I wasn’t there for you know, home activities, to talk with. There was isolation from them. The ‘I let you down’ type thing.

That was something you just can't reinforce with words in a letter. And you sending these words of encouragement, but it's not the same as a hug."

Fathers talked about the difficulty their children experienced with their transition back into the home. This difficulty came out in a number of ways through either changes in mood/attitude or distancing themselves from their father.

"They just kind of distance themselves; it was like you were here but now you're gone and now you're back here, you know, so it's kind of, I guess, a hard adjustment for them so I think they just have to protect their feelings or whatever."

For some of the children, the fathers reported poor performance and other difficulties in school. One father described his son's school performance as "like a roller coaster ride". Other fathers discussed things such as fighting and other discipline problems at school.

The fathers we interviewed also talked about their children taking on more responsibility for things such as supervising younger siblings or feeling that they had to protect the family.

"They all became more independent, but more so would be my son...because I wasn't there, he felt the world on his shoulders and that he had to run the house. My oldest daughter became extremely independent."

This caused difficulties later when fathers returned home and attempted to resume their role as parent. In other words, some children assumed more of a parental role while their father was gone and this change often made the transition home difficult for the entire family. Fathers reported that the children often felt anger toward them when they tried to resume their role as parent. One father expressed the difficulty he had reintegrating back into his family.

"Like I said 'I need you to cut the grass and pull up those weeds.' 'Dang Dad, you been gone for two years now and you want to come back in my life and tell me what to do'."

### **Support Systems & Resources**

The fathers we interviewed also reported changes in relationships with extended family members as a result of their incarceration. In some cases, family members became more supportive.

"We are more of a family. We are more supportive of one another. It's kinda like going through the fire. It's like you guys threw me a life line. I am eternally grateful. We more cohesive and stronger now than we've ever been."

In addition to emotional support, men also talked about receiving financial support from extended family members:

“Yes that goes under them helping with rent, and they still are, because if it wasn’t for their help we couldn’t afford it. And if we will pay it back, I’ll never know.”

On the contrary, when asked about how their friendships were impacted by incarceration, most of the men interviewed stated that their friends were also incarcerated or that they were avoiding them because they were a bad influence. One stated that his friends showed no support while he was in prison, and discussed how the importance of family support increased as a result.

“Friends disown you, so called friends, when you go away like that; you know you find out...that’s why family’s so much more important. I know that for a fact. I mean, I think what if I had more than like two years. Friends should stick with you through thick or thin, you know. They...I didn’t get no letter, send no money, go by my sister’s house see if she needed anythin’, or how you doin, nothing. You know, but the second you get out they jump in you face like we glad you back home.”

The men interviewed were also asked about the resources they received while in prison. Specifically, they were asked whether they were offered assistance with mental or chemical health issues. About half of the men interviewed said they attended AA or NA groups while in prison because of a chemical dependency problem. Several men mentioned that they received spiritual guidance in prison. In addition, the men were asked if they were offered any assistance with parenting skills or relationship problems. None of the men interviewed reported that they were ever offered assistance with relationship issues; however, one interviewee mentioned that he attended a parenting class in prison. Many felt there should have been an increased availability of more comprehensive programs such as “hands-on” parenting classes, relationship classes, and a financial management class.

The men interviewed were also asked if they received any assistance from the community, and whether this help was from a neighborhood organization, a government agency, and/or support from the community at large. Four of the six men stated they received no support whatsoever from the community when in prison or when released. Of the two fathers that did receive support, one reported receiving food from a church. The other father was involved in Hennepin County’s Prisoner Reentry Project, Project SOAR, and as part of the program he received assistance from the Salvation Army and Amicus.

When asked what would have been helpful for them and their families, the men talked about helping ex-offenders find employment and being able to contribute to their family's well-being.

“Best thing to do is kinda like, not knowing all the facts, but get them back to work as soon as possible. Get them back to contributing to his family, her family again. Making a difference in his or her community. Give them back their sense of pride because they been stripped of that long enough. Having someone telling them when to eat, where to sleep, what to do. Give them back that sense of dignity that they use to have.”

Surprisingly, none of the fathers said that anyone in their neighborhood offered assistance of any kind to them or their families.

### **Systemic Perpetuation of Classism**

The men interviewed were especially cognizant of the social consequences of imprisonment. For instance, one father spoke extensively about how prison perpetuates classism in our society.

“When you incarcerate someone not to rehabilitate them, but to sit there and restrain them. Then they come out, and what's left? There's been no mental development outside of you taking your own initiative to read a book.”

The theme of creating a “permanent underclass” resonated with many of the fathers we interviewed. As discussed previously, many were not able to secure employment upon release and as a result, could not contribute to their families. As one father succinctly described:

“I just want to become self-sufficient again. That's all I want for my family. To walk with some form of dignity as a man and as a father. That's all I want, because you are stripped of that. You are no longer identified as who you are. You are identified as what you've done. You're not identified as what you've accomplished, it's where you been. And to me, that's the worst of it all in this land of quote unquote opportunity.”

As the phenomenon of mass imprisonment disproportionately effects people of color, particularly African Americans, it is arguable that the perpetuation of classism (as identified by the interviewees) has racial connotations as well as economic.

## **Key Findings & Recommendations**

These fathers were acutely aware of the increased financial burden on their family due to the loss of their income (both while they were incarcerated and when they returned home). The financial stress was such that many of these families had to relocate after the father was incarcerated as they could no longer maintain their rent. These families often faced homelessness and/or relied heavily on extended family. Having these families move during this time is damaging in that much needed community ties and possible support systems are lost. Furthermore, the fathers we interviewed also discussed the difficulties that they experienced re-integrating into their family. For instance, they recognized increased arguments with their partners, in part due to financial stress. Often their children were angry or resentful as these men struggled to resume their parental roles.

### Family Involvement

While there exists many similarities between the experiences and needs of those fathers who returned to their families and those who did not, there are nonetheless apparent differences that must be addressed specifically by any interventions that take place. For instance, while there has been increased interest in services provided to offenders, there has been little discussion on working with offenders *and* their families as an entire unit. Interventions, such as family counseling, family budgeting courses, and increased family visitation opportunities would serve to provide a more comprehensive approach to the re-entry transition. As these men specifically talked of the difficulties of having had minimal contact with their families during incarceration (and the shock of suddenly returning to the family home and re-establishing their now foreign parental role), it appears that services involving the family *during* incarceration may lessen difficulties associated with re-assimilation into the family environment. Family involvement would of course be encouraged only when found appropriate.

### Parenting Classes

Parenting classes provide an excellent opportunity for encouraging the development of increased family communication without involving the family members themselves. However, given that these men had mixed feelings concerning the content and curriculum of existing parenting classes it appears that there is room for further development. For instance, the

establishment of two different curriculums concerning how to parent from within prison verse how to parent after release may be helpful to these men.

Implementing these two parenting classes within prison has many benefits (as identified by CCJ's prison parenting class educators). First, it would serve to address the diverse needs of incarcerated fathers. Currently, those men who have multiple years left to serve and those that are being released within the next few months are attending the same class. This not only makes it extraordinarily difficult for class teachers to address the wide spectrum of needs presented, but it also leads to emotional conflicts within the group. For instance, as is currently set up, fathers who have many years until their release emotionally watch as fathers who are soon to be released excitedly anticipate resuming their parental roles. Therefore, to alleviate this stress, two separate classes should be provided where requirements for enrollment would be based on the offenders' date of release. In essence, those that have many years to serve would enroll in "Parenting from Within Prison" classes, while those that are to be released within the next year would be placed in "Parenting After Release" classes.

"Parenting from Within Prison" classes could address gatekeeping, visitation struggles and opportunities, and the developmental changes that children go through during the father's incarceration. In contrast, "Parenting After Release" classes could begin by preparing fathers for the reality of returning home to children/partners who have changed and/or may be resentful. The class could then progress to discussions of the process of slowly resuming a more authoritative parental role within the family.

### Resource Networking

The above mentioned recommendations would serve to address the apparent differences in the needs of those offenders who return to their families and those who do not; however, there are some recommendations that have resulted from all of the interviews with previously incarcerated fathers. These more generalized recommendations (in terms of whom they are intended to target), would collectively serve to increase the network of support that returning offenders have, along with increasing their knowledge of social services and resources. First, an all-encompassing resource database for previously incarcerated individuals has yet to be developed. Given the plethora of resource manuals that have been developed for various populations (such as victims and immigrants) it only seems reasonable that a similar manual of resources be compiled for individuals that are exiting the prison system. This compilation of

services would include felony-friendly housing, employment, healthcare options, counseling centers, shelters, food banks, children services, and educational opportunities, etc.

Dissemination of this information would be provided in two main sources. First, a user-friendly website would be developed through which an ex-offender may search for services based on their given need. Through networking with agencies that serve the offender population and provide computer access, this site could become the default for internet use (meaning when ex-offenders go to agencies, such as the Employment Action Center, to use the internet, a Felony Friendly Resource Website would immediately appear). This website could also be used by case workers and counselors in order to provide referrals and better educate those who work with this population. Secondly, as many previously incarcerated individuals do not have regular access to the internet other methods of dissemination must be implemented. It is possible that transition coordinators (prison workers who assist offenders in preparing to be released) could hand out pamphlets outlining the main services provided, contact numbers, and the website address. Additionally, this pamphlet could be made available for distribution at parole agents' offices, prison parenting classes, and employment assistance centers.

A final recommendation involves increasing the social networking among soon-to-be released offenders. Members of the Advisory Board felt that a program similar in structure to the Alcoholics Anonymous "buddy" system may increase the support that these men receive, both while preparing to be released and afterwards. In particular, an "Exiting Support Group" comprised of those men who are to be released from prison within a few months could meet regularly to discuss their struggles, fears, goals, and hopes. After release, these connections would not merely dissolve but would rather be encouraged to continue. This would allow previously incarcerated men, who have formed relationships (no matter how minor) with individuals that are in the same situation, to contact one of their fellow group members in order to problem solve and share frustrations. While some men may not fully take advantage of this opportunity, those who do would benefit from having a social support network formed before release. Implementation of such a program may require a change in Department of Corrections policies concerning terms of release and ex-offenders associating with other previously incarcerated individuals (as of now many ex-offenders are limited by their terms of release in that they may not socialize with other ex-offenders).

## **COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS**

Hawthorne community residents who participated in the interviews were very eager to discuss, not only the issues and concerns they had, but also the positive aspects of the neighborhood as well. Participants were asked to rate social service agencies, law enforcement relations, and neighborhood safety. Open-ended questions were asked in order to acquire a sense of neighborhood dynamics and resident involvement within the local area. To see a more comprehensive list of questions see Appendix D.

Of the eighteen interviews that were conducted with residents of Hawthorne, ten were completed with females. The ages of the interviewees ranged from age 20 to 67 years. Fourteen interviewees identified as African American, two as Caucasian, and two as Hispanic/Latino. Fourteen of those interviewed were renters in the Hawthorne neighborhood, while the other four owned their own homes. Half of the sample were unemployed and over a third reported a yearly income between \$20,001 and \$30,000. Approximately half of those interviewed had children living at home.

Listed below are the central themes that emerged from the community interviews.

- *Housing Concerns*
- *Criminal Activity*
- *Law Enforcement*
- *Neighborhood Involvement*
- *Community Resources*

## **General Neighborhood Characteristics**

Using 2000 Census data the following descriptive statistics are provided. Overall, the Hawthorne area is predominantly African American (55%). The neighborhood unemployment rate is 19.91%, nearly six times higher than the national rate of 3.7%. Additionally, the median household income is \$21,865. Approximately 22% of the neighborhood households are on public assistance and a substantial 35% of families live below the poverty level. This is significantly higher than the national average (9.2%). The quality of housing is low as nearly 3% of all homes lack plumbing facilities (n=45), 4.5% lack complete kitchen facilities (n=85), and over 7% do not have any telephone services (n=140). This low quality of housing is further reflected by the median value of housing, which is markedly lower than other areas in Minneapolis at \$63,800.

Criminal activity within Hawthorne is also high when compared to other Minneapolis neighborhoods (Minneapolis Police Department Data). For instance, in recent years the Hawthorne neighborhood has had the seventh highest overall crime rate out of the eighty-five Minneapolis neighborhoods for which data is reported. Additionally, it is important to note that when initially locating a suitable neighborhood for this study, prisoner admissions and releases were geographically mapped throughout the Twin Cities in order to locate areas experiencing high prisoner mobility. It was found that in 2000 the Hawthorne neighborhood had at least thirty-five individuals either leaving for or returning from prison. This equates to approximately one person for every three blocks. Hawthorne's rate of prisoner mobility is comparable to adjacent neighborhoods. For instance, the Folwell community had thirty-six individuals either leave for or return from prison. To view detailed maps of prisoner mobility for Hawthorne and neighboring communities see Appendix F.

## **Housing Concerns**

Several people in the sample who rented houses or apartments said that the rent was too high given the quality of the properties. Rental houses and apartment complexes were described as "run down" and many landlords were seen as not putting forth much effort to keep the properties clean and kept up. One respondent stated,

"A lot of houses are rundown, trashed...they want a high price for a run down building."

Many of the interviewees felt that some landlords do not care about the neighborhood and are not selective in who they rent to.

“The crappy landlords are going to attract crappy people and they just can’t turn down the money when somebody hands you money...”

Another interviewee also commented:

“I see a lot of houses where grass isn’t growing on the lawn anymore, trash everywhere. I don’t know, people don’t clean up after themselves a lot.”

In our sample, 54% of the participants identified local rental properties as being of low quality (0% classified it as of high quality). This is of importance as almost 80% of the sample rent their place of residency. Several interviewees recognized the difficulty of getting decent renters and homeowners to stay in Hawthorne when the properties were in such bad condition. Overall, these residents did not feel invested within the Hawthorne neighborhood due partially to the low quality of housing. In fact, a considerable 80% wanted to move out of Hawthorne.

Some interviewees also commented that one result of the high rental prices and poor quality of housing is that people in the Hawthorne neighborhood are transient. According to interviewees, it is not out of the ordinary for one house to have several renters occupying it over the course of a year.

“Rentals are hard to monitor because people are moving in and out. I think the landlords just do the minimal, if a property gets called on (by police) too many times then the owner just sells it.”

Additionally, some of the residents felt that there were too many vacant properties not being rented. One resident complained about the windows and doors being kicked in on vacant houses. Therefore, in an effort to keep good residents in Hawthorne, interviewees felt that residents would have to be more responsible for the maintenance of homes and yards. Residents did mention that some parts of Hawthorne were starting to improve. Nonetheless, it is a challenge to find people who can afford higher rent and mortgages for higher quality properties, especially when parts of the neighborhood are not kept up as many Hawthorne residents were previously incarcerated and have little economic stability. As discussed repeatedly in the interviews with previously incarcerated fathers, it is extremely difficult to find a job, much less afford a house. As one community member recognized,

“They build those houses and who’s going to pay \$92,000 in that area? They build up houses and fix them up. And people over there, the guys over there break the windows and go in, kick the doors in, sleep in them and everything. So...it really is...it needs to be cleaned up over there. It really does and it would be a good neighborhood.”

### **Criminal Activity**

Residents reported that the Hawthorne neighborhood has a significant amount of criminal activity ranging from low level livability crimes (i.e., lurking, loitering) to serious and violent crimes. In particular, those interviewed for this project talked extensively about low level livability crimes, such as loitering or disorderly conduct. Among those interviewed, these types of crimes were a greater source of frustration than other more serious crimes such as theft, burglary, or assault. Another frustration expressed by community members was that loiterers and drug dealers are not from the Hawthorne neighborhood; rather they come in from outside the neighborhood to sell drugs to people living in Hawthorne.

“The loiterers and dealers don’t live around here. They live somewhere else and just come here to do their thing. Loiterers are the ones that have broken the bright street lights that were put in, these lights are needed.”

As one interviewee explained, many of the much needed community resources are being affected by the actions of those who have idle time and are loitering. Many of the interviewees felt that the lack of available jobs contributed to idleness and loitering. People want to work, but there is no opportunity for them to do so. As a result, community residents recognized that for some selling drugs becomes a necessity to pay rent, put food on the table, and support a family. Interestingly, some interviewees understood why people are tempted to sell drugs and they had sympathy for those that struggle to get by; they could identify with the need to survive.

“I think there needs to be more jobs and then they need to start giving these teenagers jobs at 16, around 15, well, 13 and, you know, so they can get work that’s all they want to do is work, you know, they need money and their parents don’t have any money to give them. You know they got bills to pay, you know, like my kids I don’t have any money to give them.”

This increased understanding for those that commit certain offenses in order to merely survive is unique. It is important to note that this may be the result of selection bias; however, it nonetheless is evident that these residents are acutely aware of the pressure that offenders face upon return from prison. As described previously, many of the incarcerated fathers discussed the temptation of committing crimes in order to make easy money during hard times. Hawthorne’s

high crime rate may also place these fathers at a heightened risk of re-offending as the environment to which they return to is riddled with criminal activity. As one resident stated:

“There is a lot of shooting, both random and directed at people. About once a week, there are gun shots.”

Despite perceived high levels of crime and frequent gunshots, there was surprisingly little mention of gang activity or violent crimes within these interviews.

These community members’ increased understanding towards those that commit offenses due to financial stress may also be due to the fact that the entire community’s economic growth is undeniably stunted. For instance, almost 50% of the participants were currently unemployed, and of those who were employed only 50% were full-time (in other words, only 25% of the sample was employed full-time). Additionally, 41% reported that their gross household income was below \$ 20,000 a year. This figure is remarkably low considering 54% of the participants lived in homes that housed over six individuals. This income is considerably below the state average. For example, the United States Census Bureau estimates that in Minnesota the median income for households with six individuals is \$ 67,326 (2000). Given these findings it is evident that economic strain places this neighborhood at an increased risk of experiencing heightened criminal activity, as the previously incarcerated fathers also discussed during their interviews.

As expected many respondents had been victims of crime. For example, 25% of the sample had been personally victimized while living in Hawthorne. Those that had been victims experienced mainly low level crimes, such as vandalism. However, many interviewees feared being the victim of a violent crime, such as a shooting. Those who had not been victimized considered themselves lucky but said that eventually everyone becomes a victim of crime in their neighborhood. A simple activity such as walking down the street to go to the corner store was difficult due to fear of getting harassed by drug dealers. Both males and females reported being harassed by loiterers and people selling drugs.

“I loves to get out and walk, but I will not walk in this neighborhood by myself. Period. You’ve got the guys going up and down the streets in the trucks, you know? I don’t feel comfortable. Making me think that I am outside to be picked up.”

Fear of victimization was a constant concern expressed in interviews. Many respondents felt safer during the day, with the exception of some female interviewees. Female interviewees reported they are fearful of being alone during both the day and the evening. Interviewees were

afraid of the increased activity during the evening hours. People reported a “different crowd” came out later in the evening:

“Unless people have to work, or are looking to buy drugs, they stay off the streets at night.”

The safety of children is also a major concern in Hawthorne. Children are generally not allowed out at night and adult supervision is considered to be necessary during the day. According to the some interviewees, children also have their own safety concerns. One mother explained that her son is constantly watching the back door when he is outside in the backyard playing, in case he has to make a dash inside.

“If my kids go outside he’s out looking at the back door. My neighborhood is dangerous; I don’t ever like to stand on my front steps.”

Many parents did not feel safe letting their children play outside for a variety of reasons. Some were worried about serious crimes while others worried about safety regarding the amount of vehicle traffic that runs through the area. Many were not able to pinpoint just one fear for not letting their children play outside, rather it was a general concern that something could happen based on the type of neighborhood they live in.

## **Law Enforcement**

Respondents had mixed feelings about the police. Some felt that the police are doing all they can, considering the resources they have available. As one community member stated:

“I heard they cut out a lot of things at police department, you know, like the robbery unit, the auto theft unit, those are the units that got cut out and those are the units that they need.”

Similarly, some community members felt that law enforcement’s hands were essentially tied. As one member commented on loiters:

“Twenty dollar ticket doesn’t matter to someone loitering- they’re making a lot of money. They need to come up with a plan; increase ticket fees. First time it’s \$20, then its \$50.”

In contrast, some respondents think the police are not doing enough and that they do not care about Hawthorne. The local police station was viewed as providing a low quality of service by 30% of the participants. This was a much higher rate of disapproval then for any of the other

agencies ranked by participants. Some participants felt that even if police see a crime taking place some of them would not even do anything about it.

“We get a lot of shootin’ back here and guys up on the corner, 'cause I can see them right out my window here, you know the drug dealers and all. And I see police pass right by them, they’ll keep on going.”

In addition, quite a few residents in our study believe that police officers are prejudiced. They feel that they are treated differently because they live in Hawthorne and because many Hawthorne residents are people of color.

“Um the police have what I believe a lot of racial profiling going on. I believe the police have been trained in certain ways. If the person looks a certain way, they suspect that that so called person is a drug dealer or gang banger just cuz the clothes you wear or the quality you have, but that’s not necessarily true. But I think there is a lot of racial profiling going on in the neighborhood.”

Most prevalent in these interviews was the sense that these community members had a rather tentative relationship with the police department, as also discussed within the literature (Clear, et. al. 2001; Moore, 1996). This is significant in that these sentiments mirror feelings of discrimination expressed in the incarcerated father interviews, as discussed previously.

Community members seem to be immensely aware of the concerns that the previously incarcerated population faces, as the residents were also able to identify the relationship between financial stress and re-offending. It appears that although Hawthorne residents are discontented with the criminal activity within their neighborhood they are not merely holding ex-offenders responsible, but are also remarkably aware of the plethora of socio-economic factors that contribute to neighborhood decay.

### **Neighborhood Involvement**

A small percentage of the participants were involved in neighborhood events. These few attended neighborhood activities and meetings on a consistent basis because they felt that this was a way to make the neighborhood better and contribute to the Hawthorne Community. They felt that getting the whole community involved in events brought residents closer together. Community involvement included things such as: attending neighborhood picnics or block parties, community organizing events, or just getting together and visiting with neighbors. The respondents who said they were involved in the neighborhood stated that they participated in a

neighborhood event at least once a month, if not more. One participant, when asked how many times they had someone from the neighborhood visit their home, responded:

“Once every two weeks. We switch around like that. If they know you cooking they come and eat so you know you try to cook earlier...you know you can have something to eat...you know I’d say about once every two weeks.”

Another woman talks about her involvement with block clubs,

“Well, I think our block club has done a really good job over the years of helping to reduce crime because we know each other. We attend meetings. We look out. We call...”

In contrast, a majority of those interviewed responded that they had not attended any neighborhood events or even socialized with anyone in the neighborhood. For instance, almost a third of the participants knew none of their adult neighbors by name and an additional third knew only a few. Over 56% had never had anyone from the neighborhood visit their home for any reason. This may be due to that fact that 60% of the participants had one or no close friends within the area. Moreover, when asked if they had ever asked anyone in the neighborhood for help (like getting a car started, borrowing an item, or watching children) more than 70% responded that they had never done this.

This lack of socialization within the community indicates that participants did not feel personally involved with other residents. A few reasons for this lack of socialization were provided by the participants. Many stated that they were unaware of events taking place in the neighborhood. Others did not care for the people in their neighborhood; they did not want to associate with them because they felt distrust towards them.

### **Community Resources**

Interviewees were asked about the quality of different businesses and social service agencies in the Hawthorne community. For the most part people were satisfied with many of the organizations. For instance, participants generally found community organizations, such as Village Social Services and the Salvation Army, as providing medium to high quality services. In addition, the local library, family health clinic, and park were viewed positively. Specifically, many of the respondents that rated the North Regional Library high or medium quality were happy with resources such as the computers and activities that the library provided. Several thought the library hours could be extended and have a larger selection of books.

The Citgo Gas Station was overwhelmingly rated as low quality by those who participated in the survey. Many felt this gas station was not a safe place. Some referred to the Citgo Gas Station as “murder station” due to all the shootings that have taken place there in past years. Many would like to see that gas station closed because of all the incidences.

“They call it ‘murder station.’ I don’t like it all. Really I don’t even go there...and when they do go, I want to hurry up and leave. It’s over-crowded. There’s guys standing out there, drug selling, whatever else they have going on out there...the owners are letting this happen. And something really needs to be done about it. And its not...there was a lot of killings and stuff up here last year and the state gated it off, but they’re still there. So I don’t think that it should be there at all.”

People had mixed feelings about Fairview Park. Several people felt that the park was unsafe but that it offered a lot of activities for children.

“I used to take my grandson there in the summer-time, over there to the thing they have for the kids in the summer, the luncheon and stuff like that, but there has just been a lot of shootings up there too on the park...”

Many people were unhappy with the Metro Transit bus services in the Hawthorne neighborhood and felt that buses are not convenient and do not run frequently enough. As one participant stated:

“Quicker bus service to, you know? Steady every hour, on the hour, it should be like half an hour; during rush hour it should be every 15 minutes.”

Additionally, many residents felt that they were lacking commercial businesses in the Hawthorne Area. At the time the survey was conducted many residents stated they wanted a grocery store that was closer to home. People were upset because they had to travel to Robbinsdale to shop for groceries (now there is a Cub Foods on Broadway and people do not have to travel as far). However, many were disappointed that Target decided to close the store on Broadway Avenue.

“I wish Target didn’t leave though. Like a Target or a Wal-Mart, I have to go pretty far to find those stores.”

In addition to being inconvenienced by the closing of commercial businesses, employment opportunities within the area become diminished. This is a major concern, especially for youth and those that have been previously incarcerated.

“I think there needs to be more jobs and then they need to start giving these teenagers jobs at 16...so they can get work, you know that’s all they want to do is

work, you know they need money and their parents don't have any money to give them.”

As discussed in the incarcerated father interviews, without work opportunities many men are left with no means of providing for their families. This lack of available jobs, for both youth and the previously incarcerated population, can only be seen to perpetuate high crime and neighborhood decay.

## **Key Findings & Recommendations**

Although Hawthorne residents felt that social services in the neighborhood were adequate, commercial industries were lacking as businesses, such as Target, have withdrawn from the community. Overall, the lack of commercial businesses, job opportunities, high crime rate, and low home ownership negatively impacted the individual residents' involvement and investment within the neighborhood which served to ultimately decrease community solidarity. These factors additionally seem to have limited the neighborhood's ability to effectively receive ex-offenders back into the community.

### Neighborhood Revitalization

Using these residents' concerns as a foundation to build upon, general recommendations involve building community solidarity and physically repairing the neighborhood. For instance, the implementation of a program similar to Adopt-A-Highway may be beneficial to the neighborhood. For instance, an "Adopt-A-Block" program, in which organizations and/or commercial businesses sponsor a given block radius and routinely clean up streets, side-walks, and even front yards (upon residents permission) may improve solidarity within the Hawthorne neighborhood. This may also increase community involvement as neighborhood organizations, such as the Hawthorne Area Community Council, could participate in this program and encourage residents to become involved. Additionally, corporations or commercial businesses may be recruited by using possible advertising space as an incentive (similar to the Adopt-A-Highway program).

As the community members themselves identified the physical state of the neighborhood as one of their primary concerns, any steps toward improving this would be representing their interests. Therefore, we also recommend that actions be taken to increase communication between city and county resources with the hopes of addressing problems of a non-criminal nature. As police-community relations appeared to be weak, actions steps must be taken that involve other official agencies, such as housing and health authorities.

### Community Driven Family Support Groups

As many residents in the Hawthorne area have family members who are, or have been, incarcerated the formation of family support groups may be beneficial. This type of program would serve to not only provide a space where families could express their feelings and resource

network; it may also serve to increase healthy interactions between residents. Such a group would not consume much in the way of resources and expense, as it could eventually be maintained by the families themselves. For instance, a possible paradigm to look to for consulting would be the military's formation of family support groups. These groups have been shown to be tremendously successful and eventually require little expense as they evolve to become self run by the families themselves. While there are key differences in the experiences and resources of the incarcerated father population and those that are deployed for military service, the needs themselves are surprisingly similar.

## **OVERALL SUMMARY**

As imprisonment rates steadily grow it is necessary to evaluate the consequences of displacing so many individuals, particularly mothers and fathers. As we begin to learn more about the collateral effects of imprisonment it becomes apparent that all facets of an inmate's life are affected by the experience. It is evident that our comprehension of who is being punished by imprisonment is severely limited.

The implications of family involvement in the lives of incarcerated fathers are hopeful as possible prevention opportunities become evident. Ideally fathers would return to neighborhoods and communities where there is support, low crime, job opportunities, affordable housing, and social solidarity. However, as communities faced with absorbing the ever growing population of ex-offenders become politically disenfranchised, lose commercial investment, and develop a transient nature, this ideal is not currently tangible. Therefore, our major recommendations (involving job opportunities and facilitating the father-child relationship) would serve to address the fact that employment opportunities and the father-child relationship seem to be fundamentally intertwined as fathers are emotionally and psychologically affected by being unable to contribute financially to their family.

## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations, speak specifically to the strengths and concerns shared by the participants in this study. The following recommendations presented here are distilled from the vast compilation of ideas from as many relevant sources as we could explore. We have further selected a core set of recommendations that we believe to be the most valuable and outlined some key action steps toward these ends.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Population Served</b>
<b>Felony-Friendly Resource Manual and Website:</b> Created to better empower this population and form a formal network of resources.	Research and identify all felony-friendly resources and employment opportunities, within the Minnesota area (including counseling, educational opportunities, health care, and support groups). Place collected information on a user-friendly website and compile a manual. Advocate for Correctional Facilities to provide all released offenders with the resource manual. In addition, transition coordinators could be afforded with brochures for distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previously Incarcerated Individuals</li> <li>• Providers</li> </ul>
<b>Community Based Family Support Groups:</b> Formed to increase their network of support and provide them a means to be heard.	Initially instigated by social service professionals with the hopes of becoming self sustainable within communities. Advertised within local community centers and prisons to begin initial outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families &amp; Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Adopt-A-Block:</b> Established in order to physically clean the Hawthorne area up and improved general livability.	Seek out potential commercial sponsors and agencies, using free advertisement opportunities in the neighborhood as an incentive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation for Prison Visits:</b> Regular free bus services to transport children and caregivers to prisons during visitation times.	Seek funding to re-instate the bus service Meet with key stakeholders who may support such services. Advertise the service to reach CIP families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incarcerated Parents &amp; Children</li> </ul>
<b>Exiting Support Groups in Prisons:</b> Established using AA principles in order to provide re-entering offenders with a network of peers.	Advocate for such service to be provided in Correctional Facilities and establish basic group structure using professionals from AA as potential consultants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previously Incarcerated Individuals</li> </ul>
<b>Updated Parenting Curriculum:</b> Create two types of parenting classes in order to address the different needs of incarcerated fathers.	Advocate within the DOC for the implementation of two parenting classes. Create specific curriculum for CCJ's parenting classes: "Parenting While in Prison" and "Parenting After Release: Re-entry into the Family" (currently in discussion at CCJ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incarcerated Fathers</li> </ul>
<b>Incarcerated Parent's Bill of Rights:</b> Formed in order to protect parent's rights during their incarceration with the hopes of facilitating relationships with their children.	Lobby state legislature and advocate for correctional facilities to adopt policies that are more sensitive to parental rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incarcerated Parents &amp; Children</li> </ul>
<b>Address Housing and Property Issues:</b> Place much greater attention on non-criminal quality-of-life issues by using housing and health inspectors, along with other non-police services.	Enhance communication among community, police, and other city/county resources so that the most appropriate services are used to address problems of a non-criminal nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Future Research:</b> Further examination of the effects of criminal records on employability and housing within Minnesota in order to better understand the struggles and limitations faced by previously incarcerated individuals' seeking employment.	Meet with community leaders and academic experts to establish links to help refine research questions and assist with sampling/data collection. Prepare a proposal for funding (already completed and currently in review by NIJ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potentially all populations effected by incarceration and/or a criminal record.</li> </ul>

The above recommendations have been identified as the most valuable; however, a multitude of recommendations were discussed throughout this research study and while they have not been noted as key recommendations they nonetheless deserve attention (please refer to Appendix E for additional Advisory Board recommendations and discussions). Furthermore, the great difficulties that these men faced with finding reasonable employment were repeatedly discussed and we believe that actions must be taken to alleviate this stress in order to increase the overall employability of ex-offenders. CCJ is currently in the process of implementing two key initiatives with the hopes of addressing this issue (as they are already in progress we have therefore not discussed them as possible recommendations).

CJJ has recently received funding to operate a full-time expungement clinic targeting low income individuals who have demonstrated in some way that they have changed their lifestyle and successfully avoided criminal activities. This clinic seals individuals' records so as to prevent discrimination based on past criminal involvement. It is currently in expansion, due to high demand, and now has two locations. Additionally, CCJ has drafted a proposal to reduce public accessibility to criminal records (including certain arrest information: acquittals, dismissals, and petty misdemeanors) which will be presented this legislative session. Together these initiatives will serve to create much needed opportunities for ex-offenders (not limited to employment, but also including housing, federal loans/grants, voting, and so forth). There is nonetheless great need for additional employment opportunities (discussed further in Appendix E).

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Flyer Locations**

For both the fatherhood and community interviews flyer were sent to various community organizations and events, in addition to social service agencies and resources that serve the previously incarcerated population. Below is a list of the agencies that participated in our recruitments efforts and following that is one of the flyers that was used.

#### **Community Meetings and Resources**

Hawthorne Huddle Meetings

Minneapolis Urban League

North Point Health and Wellness Center

Feed the Feast

Minnesota Workforce

BIHA: Black, Indian, Hispanic, and Asian Women in Action

Various Local Churches

#### **Community Events**

Festival of Fathers

Increase the Peace!

#### **Internal Forums**

CCJ's Low Level Offense Forum

CCJ's Healthy Educational Lifestyle Program Summit Event

#### **Government Offices**

Hennepin County Probation Supervisors and Officers

#### **Broadcast Radio**

KMOJ

## Appendix B: Fatherhood Interview Questionnaire

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (interviewer) \_\_\_\_\_ from the Council on Crime and Justice. The Council on Crime and Justice is a non-profit organization that has no connection to law enforcement or the criminal justice system. We are interested in learning about the impact of prison on your experiences as a father. As part of the research study, we are interviewing fathers who have recently returned from prison. We would like you to take part in the study to help us learn about your experiences with fathering and how prison affected your fathering.

Under the topic areas are suggested questions you do not need to ask them all.

### Topic Area 1: Childhood

- What was your father like?

### Topic Area 2: Now

- How many children do you have now?
- Where do your children live now?
- What is the child (ren) age? How does their age affect how you father?
- *If more than one kid*, do the kids have the same mom?
- Explore their relationship with the child (ren) mother(s)
- Any step children, nieces or nephews that you are taking care of or are close to?
- What are some things that make it difficult for you to father your child (ren)?
- What are some things that you enjoy about fathering?
- What type of support systems do you have?

### Topic Area 3: First Fatherhood Experience

- What emotions/beliefs did you experience right before you became a father?
- What was that first fatherhood experience like for you?
- What has your experience with your other children been like?
- Explore if there are any daughter/son differences in parenting
  - o How did you parent your daughter vs. son?

### Topic Area 4: Reflection (if necessary)

- Reflect about your father and on how you father.

### Topic Area 5: Incarceration

- What was fathering like while in prison?
- What contact did you have with your child (ren) (phone, letters, visits)?
- Did the way you fathered in prison change, if so, how?
- How did prison impact the way you fathered?
- How has being in prison helped your parenting?

### Topic Area 6: View on Cultural Norms

- What is expected as a father in your family?
- What are the expectations of parenting in your cultural?

### Topic Area 7: View on Societal Norms

- What do you think it means to be a father?
- What is the media's (TV, movie, music) view of being a fathering?

Topic Area 8: Advice to other fathers' in similar situations

- What resources do you have to help you with parenting?
- What resources would be helpful?
- What advice would you give to fathers' who are going through similar situations?

Demographics and Closed Ended Questions

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your race? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you Hispanic or Latino? Yes or No
4. What is your marital status?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Single, never been married
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Married
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Partnered
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Separated
5. How long have you live in Minnesota? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What city do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your place of residence?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Apartment building
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Single family house
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Duplex/Triplex
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Townhouse
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Home
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other
8. Do you own \_\_\_\_\_ or rent \_\_\_\_\_ your home?
9. How long have you lived in your home? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?
11. Are you currently employed? Yes or No
  - 10a. *If yes, full or part time*
  - 10b. *If no, how long have you been unemployed? \_\_\_\_\_*
12. What kind of work do you do now (*or did you do if unemployed*)?
13. What kind of transportation do you use (car, bus, light rail, walk)?
14. If you have your kids, do you stay in your neighborhood for activities or would you go elsewhere?
15. What kind of activities do you do with your kids?
16. Where would you go for healthcare needs?
17. Do you have anything that you want to ask that we did not cover in this interview?

## Appendix C: Family Interview Questionnaire

First, I want to thank you for agreeing to take part in our Collateral Effects Project. We are interested in learning how families are affected when a family member leaves for prison and then returns from prison. I have questions I want to ask you about your experience in prison and the impact of your imprisonment and your release from prison on your family's life. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. As I mentioned, the reason we want to talk to you is to find out how your time in prison and return from prison has affected your family's life. Please think back to when you were still living with your family.

1. Who was living in your home at the time and what was their relationship to you?
2. Were any of the people in your household under the age of 18 years old?
  - a. (If yes) who?

### *Family Adjustment During Imprisonment:*

Now I want to talk about how your family life changed when you went to prison.

3. Did your family's communication, how often you argued or what you talked about, change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
4. Did your family change the way they dealt with conflict?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
5. Did your family's financial situation change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
6. Did anyone in your family's health change – including sickness or a change in drug and/or alcohol use?
  - a. (If yes) How did your family member's health change?

Next I want to ask you how the child(ren)'s attitudes and behavior changed.

7. Did [child's name] become more or less independent? (Go through questions 7 – 13 for each child)
  - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s independence change?
8. Did [child's name] become more or less aggressive?
  - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s aggressiveness change?
9. Did [child's name] become more or less emotionally needy?
  - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s emotional neediness change?
10. Did [child's name] become more or less willing to follow rules?
  - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s willingness to follow rules change?
11. Did [child's name]'s mood change?
  - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s mood change?
12. Was [child's name] in school?
  - a. (If yes) Did [child's name]'s school performance change?
    - b. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s school performance change?
13. Were there any other changes in [child's name] attitude or behavior?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?

(If he was living with a spouse or girlfriend, ask questions 14 – 17. Otherwise skip to Question 18) Now, I'd like to ask you about changes in your relationship with [partner's name].

14. Did your communication, how often you talked or argued or what you talked about, with [partner's name] change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
15. When you faced a conflict with [partner's name], did the way you both dealt with the conflict change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
16. Did you and [partner's name]'s trust in each other change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
17. Were there other changes in your relationship with [partner's name]?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?

Now I want to ask you about changes in your relationship with other family members.

18. (If he lived with an adult that was not his spouse or girlfriend) Were there changes in your relationships with other adult family members who lived with you?

a. (If yes) How did your relationship change?

19. Were there changes in your relationship with adult family members who did not live with you?

(If yes) a. Who was the relationship with?

b. (If yes) How did it change?

20. Were there changes in your relationship with the child(ren) in your family who lived with you?

(If yes) a. Who was the relationship with?

b. (If yes) How did it change?

21. Were there changes in your relationship with other child(ren) in your family who did not live with you?

(If yes) a. Who was the relationship with?

b. (If yes) How did it change?

22. Were there changes in your relationships with your friends?

a. (If yes) How did your relationship with your friends change?

23. Were there any positive changes for your family when you went to prison?

a. (If yes) what were the positive changes?

24. What were the worst changes for your family when you went to prison?

25. Were there any other changes for your family when you went to prison?

a. (If yes) what were they?

*Offender's Resources During Imprisonment:*

Now let's talk about what kind of support you had and needed while you were in prison.

26. Did you receive any help with your education including vocational training while you were in prison?

(If yes) a. What type of help did you receive?

b. How helpful was it?

c. Did you have any problems or concerns with the help you received?

27. (If he was living with a spouse or girlfriend) Did you receive any help maintaining your relationship with [partner's name] while you were in prison?

- (If yes) a. What type of help did you receive?
- b. How helpful was it?
- c. Did you have any problems or concerns with the help you received?
- 28. Did you receive any help with parenting skills while you were in prison?
- (If yes) a. What type of help did you receive?
- b. How helpful was it?
- c. Did you have any problems or concerns with the help you received?
- 29. Did you have any issues related to drinking or drug use when you went to prison?
- (If yes) a. Did you receive any help with these issues?
- (If yes) b. What type of help did you receive?
- c. How helpful was it?
- d. Did you have any problems or concerns with the help you received?
- 30. Did you receive any help with financial problems such as keeping money on the books, taking care of your financial debts, or supporting your family?
- (If yes) a. What type of help did you receive?
- b. How helpful was it?
- c. Did you have any problems or concerns with the help you received?
- 31. Did you receive any other help while you were in prison?
- (If yes) a. What type of help did you receive?
- b. How helpful was it?
- c. Did you have any problems or concerns with the help you received?
- 32. (If he received more than one type of help) Of the different help you received, what was the most important?
- 33. What kind of help did you need but not receive?
- 34. What kind of help would be the most useful for a person in prison with a family at home?

*Family Adjustment After Imprisonment:*

Now I want to talk about how your family life changed since you were released from prison. We're going to talk about how your family life changed from when you were in prison to now that you are back with them.

- 35. Did your family's communication, how often you argued or what you talked about, change?
- a. (If yes) How did it change?
- 36. Did your family change the way they deal with conflict?
- a. (If yes) How did it change?
- 37. Did your family's financial situation change?
- a. (If yes) How did it change?
- 38. Did anyone in your family's health change – including sickness or a change in drug and/or alcohol use?
- a. (If yes) How did your family member's health change?

Next I want to ask you how the child(ren)'s attitudes and behavior changed.

- 39. Did [child's name] become more or less independent? (Go through questions 39 – 45 for each child)
- a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s independence change?
- 40. Did [child's name] become more or less aggressive?
- a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s aggressiveness change?

41. Did [child's name] become more or less emotionally needy?
    - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s emotional neediness change?
  42. Did [child's name] become more or less willing to follow rules?
    - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s willingness to follow rules change?
  43. Did [child's name]'s mood change?
    - a. (If yes) How did [child's name]'s mood change?
  44. Was [child's name] in school?
    - a. (If yes) Did [child's name]'s school performance change?
      - b. (If yes) How did child's name]'s school performance change?
  45. Were there any other changes in [child's name] attitude or behavior?
    - a. (If yes) How did it change?
- (If he was living with a spouse or girlfriend, ask questions 46 – 49. Otherwise skip to Question 50)

Now, I'd like to ask you about changes in your relationship with [partner's name].

46. Did your communication, how often you talked or argued or what you talked about, with [partner's name] change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
47. When you faced a conflict with [partner's name], did the way you both dealt with the conflict change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
48. Did you and [partner's name]'s trust in each other change?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?
49. Were there other changes in your relationship with [partner's name]?
  - a. (If yes) How did it change?

Now I want to ask you about changes in your relationship with other family members.

50. (If he lived with an adult that was not his spouse or girlfriend) Were there changes in your relationships with other adult family members who lived with you?
  - a. (If yes) How did your relationship change?
51. Were there changes in your relationship with adult family members who did not live with you?
  - (If yes) a. Who was the relationship with?
    - b. (If yes) How did it change?
52. Were there changes in your relationship with the child(ren) in your family who lived with you?
  - (If yes) a. Who was the relationship with?
    - b. (If yes) How did it change?
53. Were there changes in your relationship with other child(ren) in your family who did not live with you?
  - (If yes) a. Who was the relationship with?
    - b. (If yes) How did it change?
54. Were there changes in your relationships with your friends?
  - a. (If yes) How did your relationship with your friends change?

55. Were there any negative changes for your family when you returned from prison?
  - a. (If yes) what were the positive changes?
56. What were the best changes for your family when you returned from prison?
57. Were there any other changes for your family when you returned from prison?
  - a. (If yes) what were they?

*Family Resources After Imprisonment:*

Now I want to talk to you about help you and your family have received since you have returned from prison.

58. Have you or your family received any government resources or help?
  - (If yes) a. What type of help have you or your family received?
  - b. How helpful was it?
  - c. Are there any problems or concerns with the help you receive?
59. Have you or your family received resources or help from neighborhood organizations or groups?
  - (If yes) a. What type of help have you or your family received?
  - b. How helpful was it?
  - c. Are there any problems or concerns with the help you receive?
60. Have you or your family received help from your neighbors or other neighborhood residents?
  - (If yes) a. What type of help have you or your family received?
  - b. How helpful was it?
  - c. Are there any problems or concerns with the help you receive?
61. Have you or your family received help from family who do not live with you?
  - (If yes) a. What type of help have you or your family received?
  - b. How helpful was it?
  - c. Are there any problems or concerns with the help you receive?
62. Have you or your family received any help from friends?
  - (If yes) a. What type of help have you or your family received?
  - b. How helpful was it?
  - c. Are there any problems or concerns with the help you receive?
63. In addition to the above, have you or your family received help from other people or organizations?
  - (If yes) a. What type of help have you or your family received?
  - b. How helpful was it?
  - c. Are there any problems or concerns with the help you receive?
64. (If the family received more than one type of help) From all the different help and support you and your family have received, what was the most important?
65. What help or support did you need that you are not receiving?
66. What kind of help and support would be the most useful for families who have a person who has recently re-entered the family from prison?

Finally I want to ask you a couple of questions about how your family's life has changed from before you went to prison to now.

66. What were the worst changes for your family?
67. What were the best changes for your family?

## Appendix D: Community Interview Questionnaire

First, I want to thank you for agreeing to take part in our Collateral Effects Project. We are interested in learning about the Hawthorne community. I have questions I want to ask you about Hawthorne and your experiences living here. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

Now, I am going to read you a list on institutions or resources located in the Hawthorne neighborhood. For each, please tell me how high or low the quality of services offered is. Your choices are high quality, medium quality, or low quality. If you have any additional comments on the quality of the institution or resource, feel free to tell me. If you don't know the quality of the institution or resource, you can answer, "I don't know."

1. How would you rate the quality of Nellie Stone Johnson school?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

2. How would you rate the quality of US Bank?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

3. How would you rate the quality of UAFP North Memorial Family Practice clinic?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

4. How would you rate the quality of the 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct police department?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

5. How would you rate the quality of the Citgo gas station on Broadway and Lyndale?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

6. How would you rate the quality of Village Social Services?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

7. How would you rate the quality of the Salvation Army Social Services?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

8. How would you rate the quality of Farview park?

High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

9. How would you rate the quality of North Regional library?  
High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

10. How would you rate the quality of rental property in Hawthorne?  
High quality      Medium Quality      Low Quality      Don't Know

Comments:

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your experience living in Hawthorne

11. First, please rate how satisfied you are with living in Hawthorne? (Read choices)  
Very Satisfied      Satisfied      Unsure      Unsatisfied      Very Unsatisfied

12. What three things do you like most about living in Hawthorne?  
13. What three things do you like least about living in Hawthorne?  
14. Would you move out of Hawthorne if you could?  
15. How trusting are you of people in your neighborhood?  
16. How do people in your neighborhood get along?  
17. How safe is it to use streets and parks during the day in this neighborhood?  
18. How safe is it to use streets and parks during the evening in this neighborhood?  
19. How safe is it for kids to play outside without an adult in this neighborhood?  
20. How comfortable are you asking your neighbors for help if there is an emergency?  
21. How comfortable are you asking your neighbors for help if you need help but it isn't an emergency?  
22. How likely is it that one of your neighbors would do something if:  
a. They see kids fighting?  
b. They see someone breaking into a house?  
c. They see someone selling drugs in plain sight?

As you answer the next few questions, try to estimate numbers, based upon your experience living in Hawthorne:

23. How many of your adult neighbors you know by name?  
24. How many children (not including your own) live in your neighborhood?  
25. How many children (not including your own) who live in this neighborhood do you know by name?  
26. How many good friends do you have who live in this neighborhood?

During an average month last year, how many times have you:

27. Had a person from this neighborhood to visit your home or visited their home, for example for coffee, dinner, or just to talk?  
28. Attended a neighborhood event?  
29. Asked help from a person in your neighborhood, like getting your car started, borrowing an item, or asking to watch your kids?

Now I want to ask you some questions about law enforcement and city and state officials:

30. How well are local legislators, such as the City Council representative and the Mayor,

addressing the needs of the Hawthorne community?

31. How well are state legislators, such as the Governor and Minnesota's U.S. senators and Congressmen, addressing the needs of the Hawthorne community?

32. Do you feel local and state legislators care about the Hawthorne community?

33. How well are the police addressing livability crimes (low-level crimes such as loitering, lurking) in Hawthorne?

34. How well are the police addressing drug crimes in Hawthorne?

35. How well are the police addressing violent crimes in Hawthorne?

Now I want to ask you some questions about crime in your neighborhood:

36. How many times you have been a victim of crime while living in this neighborhood?

37. How many persons from this neighborhood do you know that have been a victim of crime?

38. How many times have you seen or heard about a physical fight, violent argument, robbery or mugging, or assault in this neighborhood?

39. How many times have you seen or heard about a theft or burglary in this neighborhood?

40. How many youth do you know of that are involved in drug trafficking?

41. How many people do you know from this neighborhood that have been arrested?

42. How many people do you know from this neighborhood that are or have been in jail or prison?

43. What new institutions or resources would you like to see added to the Hawthorne community?

44. How might we encourage good neighbors to stay in Hawthorne longer?

45. How do you think that livability crimes (low-level crimes such as lurking and loitering) might better be dealt with?

46. How do you think we can reduce crime in Hawthorne?

47. How might convicted offenders, as part of their sentence, contribute to the community?

*Respondent Demographics:*

48. What is your gender?  Male  Female

49. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

50a. What is your race?

African American/Black

American Indian

Asian

White/Caucasian

Other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_

51b. Are you Hispanic or Latino?  Yes  No

52. What is your marital status?

single

married

partnered

divorced

widowed

separated

53. How many persons live in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

54. What is your place of residence?

- apartment building
- townhouse
- single family house
- duplex/triplex
- mobile home

55. Do you own or rent your home?  Own  Rent  Other (Specify \_\_\_\_\_ )

56. How long have you lived in your home? \_\_\_\_\_

(If less than one year) How many times have you moved in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_

57. Was your last residence in Hawthorne?  Yes  No

58. Are you currently employed?  Yes  No

(If yes) Are you employed:  Part-time  Full-time

59. What is your total household income before taxes for 2001?

\$0 to \$10,000

\$10,001 to \$20,000

\$20,001 to \$30,000

\$30,001 to \$40,000

\$40,001 to \$50,000

\$50,001 to \$60,000

\$60,001 or higher

\*Note: There was a different interview guide for those interviews conducted in East Saint Paul; however, the overall questions were generally identical

## **Appendix E: The Collateral Effects Advisory Board**

The Collateral Effects Advisory Board was formed for the purpose of expanding upon the research team findings by presenting the data to a more diverse and all encompassing population. The Board was presented with a thirty five minute presentation that outlined the general findings of the interviews. Each finding was supported by participants' quotes, which were read out loud by a staff member. After the results were presented, the Board was split into three groups of approximately seven individuals and a discussion of the findings was facilitated by a member of the research staff. After the small group discussions were completed all of the Board members came together to share their concerns and thoughts. Throughout this process, all four members of the research staff transcribed the dialogue that took place.

The Advisory Board was comprised of various Council employees, volunteers and consultants. Overall, there were fifteen members along with four representatives from the research team. Five members were previously incarcerated African American fathers who used their personal experiences to elaborate on some of our key findings. Additionally, one member had previously been incarcerated for drug offenses while struggling to parent her two teenage sons (she is now a criminal sociology PhD candidate). Her experiences provided us with the opportunity to examine a few thematic differences between incarcerated fathers and mothers. There were also two representatives from our victim hotline unit, who provided unique insight into the balancing of victim and offender needs. Two prison parenting teachers were also present and were able to provide information concerning what services were available to inmates during imprisonment. Overall, the Advisory Board was able to provide fresh insight and new perspectives on the available data. From the transcribed notes the following general recommendations were compiled:

- An Increase in Collaborative Social Services
- Increase in Public Involvement & Awareness
- Improved Correctional Facilities Procedures & Policies as they Relate to Education and Visitation
- Family Services that Involve Immediate & Extended Family

## **Collaborative Services**

As the issues that have been brought up by this study are multifaceted and complex many felt that a collaborative community and social service movement was necessary in order to fully address the problem. In particular, Board members felt that agencies should come together to provide the following interventions:

- Physically clean up the Hawthorne community so residents are proud to live their and more willing to further invest within their neighborhood. Agencies should involve local community members in order to encourage neighborhood participation and interaction. This program could perhaps be a sort of Adopt-a-Neighborhood.
- Post-release programs need to be in effect in order to ensure that jobs are obtained in that employment encourages self-development and dignity (and alleviates financial stress on the family).
- Members were struck by the great need for male parent educators. Men teach men how to parent, because men teach men how to be men. This intense need for male role models could perhaps be addressed both within prisons (by increasing parenting classes and resources) and the community (by providing support groups for families).
- The creation of a Fathers' Bill Of Rights was discussed in terms of providing fathers with basic rights concerning visitation and involvement with their children. These would not apply to those offenders that should not be around their children due to the nature of their criminal activity, i.e. sexual abuse...). It is the hope that these rights would not merely dissolve due to imprisonment and would provide fathers with a protection from unreasonable "gatekeeping" as discussed in the literature review.
- An increase in restorative justice approaches that involve making reparations available to victim and communities that are affected by crime was also mentioned in order to alleviate stresses and facilitate healing.

## **Public Involvement**

Increasing public awareness was repeatedly brought up by the Board. They felt that it was important for the public to be informed of the challenges that incarcerated men, their families and the communities that they return to, face in order to increase public support for the neighborhood and perhaps reduce the social stigma/misconceptions that many have concerning

ex-offenders. In particular, it was agreed that involving the neighborhood may also serve to empower the victim population.

- Many felt that the public must be aware that this criminal cycle will continue and communities will end up losing more fathers if they don't provide the much needed help and support. In this way, individuals are aware that in becoming involved they are not just helping a previously incarcerated father, but they are actively preventing further criminal activities and victimization.
- Members felt that a forum in Hawthorne should be held, outlining the information within this study and encouraging public involvement. It was suggested that one method of educating the public on these issues is by using audio clips of the particularly articulate and emotionally engaging quotes. These could be presented at a forum.
- Finally, many felt that the Hawthorne neighborhood needed to advocate for corporate investment within the community. Obviously this would require involvement of social service agencies and other advocacy organizations, as the local residents may feel as if they alone have no voice.

Overall, the primary motivation for increasing public knowledge was to encourage involvement within the community and increase compassion for those that are affected by incarceration.

### **Correctional Facilities Procedures & Policies**

Given that the father-child relationship seems so instrumental in decreasing chances of re-offending, many of the Board members felt that correctional facilities need to take a more proactive response in encouraging this relationship throughout men's incarceration. Additionally, many felt that we must take advantage of the fact that while in prison these fathers are a captive audience and that special attention must be given to providing these men with educational and employment opportunities. In particular, the Board recommended certain changes be made as discussed below.

#### Education and Employment:

Many of those Board members that had previously been incarcerated felt that although low pay in prison is a humbling experience (it provides them with a reality check and made them learn *how* to go to work every day), such low pay is only acceptable as long as doing this work ensures that a job will be available after release (such as a trade of some sort). Given these sentiments they recommended the following:

- Teaching offenders a specific trade
- Having representatives from felony friendly trade organizations come into the prisons in order to recruit new employees with the hopes of providing a smoother transition.
- Facilitate and encourage education through correspondence schools, computer training, and so forth.
- In addition, money management classes should be provided in order to provide these individuals with the necessary tools to plan for the future financially.
- Facilitate a Job Fair where various employers come into the prisons. This experience would educate offenders on the types of employment opportunities that are available and give organizations the chance to personally meet potential employees. Inmates could attend resume workshops beforehand in order to fully take advantage of the opportunity. This could potentially be co-managed by members from Job CORE.

Fostering the Father-Child Relationship:

A few of the members felt that it was ironic that women are given the opportunity to see their children (but in their cases it is assumed that they know how to be a mother so parenting classes are rarely provided). In contrast, men are given parenting classes but not allowed to have any hands on experience with their kids while they are in prison. Either way the parent-child relationship is kept from developing in any healthy way by the incarceration experience. Given this, the members recommended the following:

- There is a great need for men's prisons to facilitate fathering opportunities without so much supervision and regulations. Any steps that can be taken to encourage this relationship must be evaluated for implementation.
- Counseling and parenting classes should be provided for inmates regularly. Furthermore, the involvement of community organizations and guest speakers may serve to provide a more comprehensive and diverse perspective on parenting.
- Many Board members felt that there was a great need for education that extends beyond employment skills. In particular, communication training should be provided for inmates in that this may serve to help maintain families' relationships and help the reintegration process. In addition, communication training may serve to help offenders present themselves in a positive fashion to possible employers.

- Inmates need therapy to process the guilt that they have as an offender. If they do not process this guilt while incarcerated it may stunt their ability to move on.
- Many members discussed that facilities transfer people so frequently that you are unable to keep track of where family members are much less plan to visit them. Therefore, there is a need to place offenders near their families and avoid frequently transferring these fathers in order to provide some type of consistency.
- Need to start support groups. In particular, all of the offenders who are close to being released could get together to talk about their plans, problems solve and share their frustrations. This group could continue on after release (similar to AA were there is a buddy system set up) so that when someone is having a tough time they have a person to go to who is sincere, personally knows them, and is going through the same transition.

It is important to note that Board members felt that many prisons already offer the types of classes discussed above, but that they fail to meet the high demand (i.e. these classes were seen to be provided sporadically). Therefore, there was much discussion concerning the need to consistently provide classes and ensure that everyone who wants to attend is provided with the opportunity.

### **Family Services**

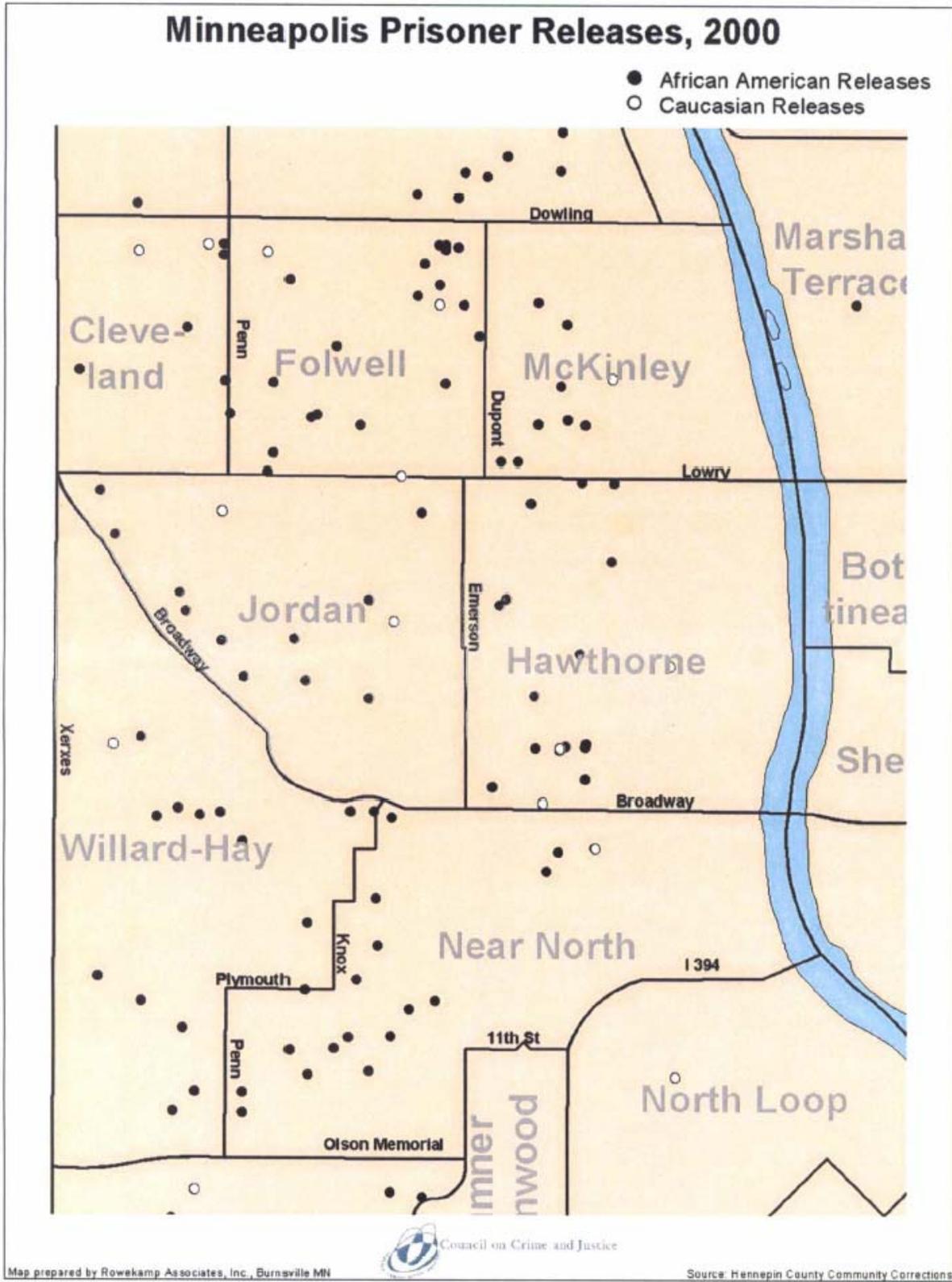
As much of the report examines the tremendous challenges faced by the families of incarcerated men, the Board identified a few key interventions that directly addressed the family. Many of these recommendations revisit concerns brought up previously, but they are nonetheless important. They are as follows:

- Members felt that families needed to be provided with counseling in order to prepare them for the fact that ex-offenders often go back to their family feeling like a burden, not a provider. This humbling experience was seen by certain Board members are often causing emotional strain and tensions to develop within the family. While the obvious intervention would be to provide offenders with greater employment opportunities as discussed above, we must also realistically address the immediate concerns of the family.
- Members were struck by the apparent desire for relationship counseling. This may serve to diminish tensions within the family, increase communication and encourage the development of healthy coping mechanisms.

- In order to provide a somewhat smoother transition, families need to communicate on a more regular basis. Again, correctional facilities and other social service agencies need to facilitate the family relationship as much as possible. In particular, transportation to prisons should be provided by social service agencies (as the Council did in the past).
- Need to help families deal with their anger (along with the offender). Perhaps forming a group setting with other parents and kids going through this would be beneficial to everyone involved.

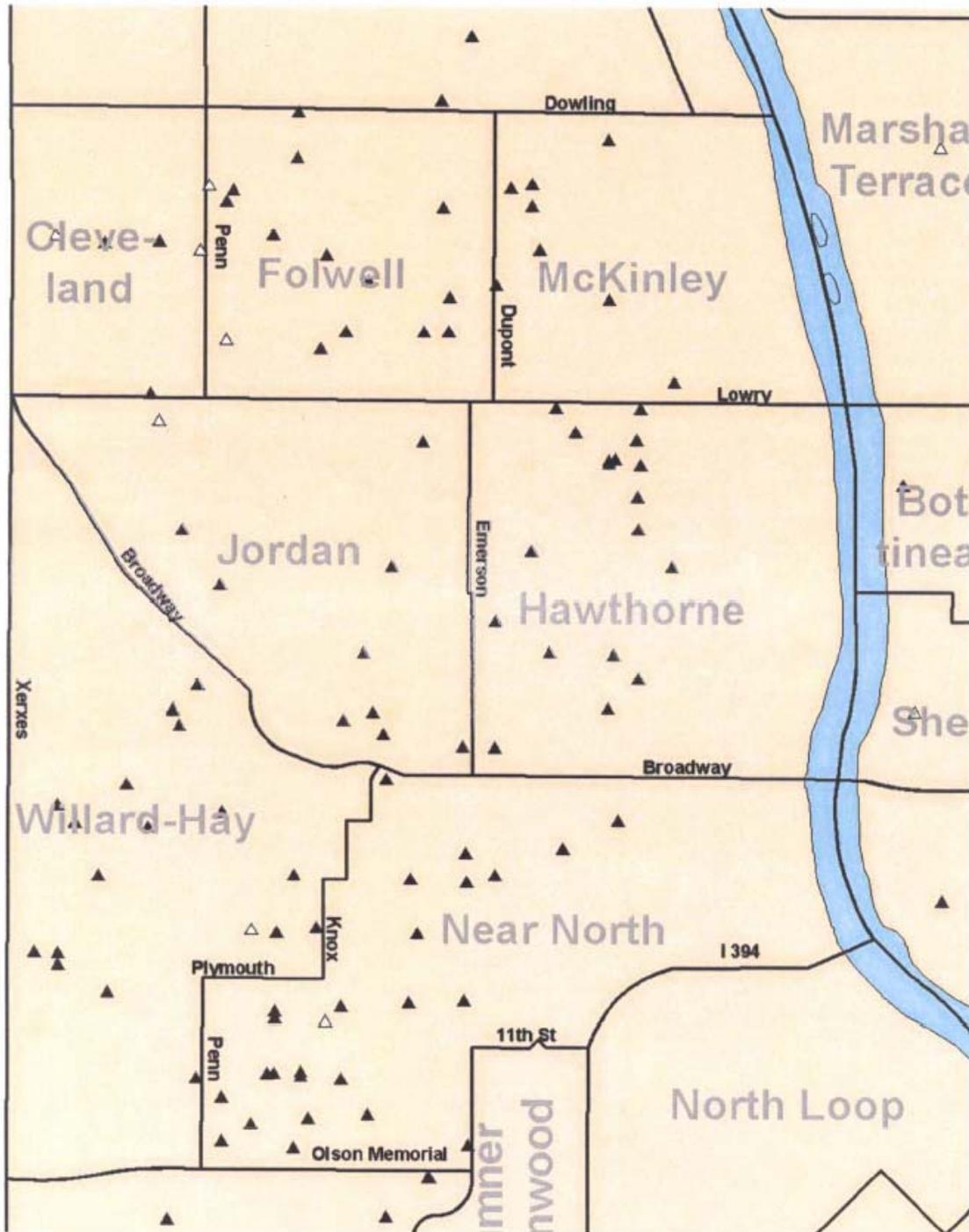
In addition, one member noted that when you are release from prison your family is glad you are back, but mad that you have been gone. Offenders need to learn to not try to justify why they were in prison to their family members (this just increases their anger); they need to own it. Counseling both during incarceration and afterwards may serve to alleviate this tension.

Appendix F: Prisoner Mobility Mapping



# Minneapolis Prisoner Admissions, 2000

- ▲ African American Admissions
- △ Caucasian Admissions



 Council on Crime and Justice

Map prepared by Rowekamp Associates, Inc., Burnsville MN

Source: Hennepin County Community Corrections