

Where Have All the Young Men Gone? Using Data to Support Ex-Offender Reintegration and Community Building in Des Moines' Inner Cities

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Nationally, the number of people in state or federal prisons has quadrupled since 1980. At the end of 2002, the number of prisoners under state or federal adult correctional authorities was 1,440,655, compared with 315,974 at the end of 1980.¹ There are 2 million American children who currently have a parent in prison, and many more are touched by the corrections system at some time in their own growth to adulthood. Ex-offenders, and particularly those returning from prison, face substantial challenges in securing employment and in meeting family obligations. Too often, they do not succeed; recidivism and re-incarceration is almost the norm, rather than the exception. Further, the impacts of incarceration do not affect all neighborhoods equally. They disproportionately affect neighborhoods already struggling economically and socially.

Yet releasing ex-offenders back into communities and providing additional services to them can become politically charged activities. This report describes one community's efforts to develop more effective responses to returning ex-offenders, making use of neighborhood-based data both to emphasize need and provide direction on how to move forward as a community.

Des Moines and Making Connections: A Focus Upon Place, Employment, Family Strengthening, and Building Social Ties

Des Moines, Iowa's Capitol City, is its largest, with a population of 199,000, a little under 7% of the state's total population. According to an Iowa Kids Count report, Des Moines also has nearly one-quarter of the state's highest risk census tracts, based on a combination of educational, social, and economic factors.² Des Moines and its suburbs, as well as several other towns are in Polk County, with 374,000 people.

Des Moines also is 1 of 10 Making Connections sites that are part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 10-year neighborhood transformation and family strengthening initiative. That Initiative focuses on rebuilding poor and disinvested inner-city neighborhoods through three strategies:

- strengthening families;
- creating economic opportunity; and
- building social ties and connections.

¹ Harrison, P., & Beck, A. (2003). Prisoners in 2002. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*. NCJ200248.

² Child and Family Policy Center. (2003). *Where kids count, place matters. Des Moines, IA: Author*. In Iowa's 2003 Kid's Count Report, 10 indicators from the 2000 census were used to determine which census tracts in the state represented the highest risk for raising children. Tracts scoring high on at least six of the ten indicators were designated as being at highest risk.

The specific Des Moines Making Connections neighborhoods encompass most of the highest risk neighborhoods in the city and a population of 32,000.

One aspect of the Casey Foundation's support of local Making Connections sites involves data collection and analysis through a Local Learning Partnership. In Des Moines, that Partnership is led by the Human Services Planning Alliance (HSPA), a collaboration of business and government in Polk County to do planning and service coordination, and the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC), an organization with a mission of "linking research and policy on issues vital to children and families."

One of the first tasks the Local Learning Partnership assumed was to describe the employment needs for the Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods in Polk County. This included both an effort to determine the size of the "untapped workforce" and the characteristics of that workforce. The Local Learning Partnership was charged with making its data and analysis available and useful to neighborhood-based organizations and residents, as well as community organizations and government.

State Activities in Workforce Development: Recognizing the Untapped Workforce

When this work began, Iowa's economy was strong and unemployment rates were at historic lows, well below 4% both in Des Moines and the state overall. State economic development strategies had shifted from "smokestack chasing" to "worker chasing," with labor shortages cited as the major impediment to growth. State policies were being proposed to keep Iowa graduates in Iowa and to recruit workers from other states.³ At the same time, federal and state welfare reform policies were moving primarily single mothers with young children into the workforce, and some businesses were stepping forward to participate in programs to employ people leaving public assistance.

Working with the Iowa Business Council, which represents the 20 largest employers in the state, CFPC examined the size of Iowa's "untapped workforce" by gathering data on potentially employable persons in four categories:

- those receiving public assistance under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program
- those returning from prison or within the community corrections system needing employment
- youth (16-19) aging out of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems or not in school or working
- and persons with disabilities.⁴

³ Governor Thomas J. Vilsack established a special 21st Century Workforce Council to promote employment growth. In addition to keeping Iowa graduates in Iowa, recruiting employees from other states, and upgrading the skills of the Iowa workforce, there were recommendations to do more to expand employment among non-working Iowans, including those with disabilities, leaving welfare, seniors, and ex-offenders. Governor's 21st Century Workforce Council. (1999). *Growing a workforce for Iowa*. Des Moines, IA: State of Iowa.

⁴ The Child and Family Policy Center sponsored a conference, "Labor Shortages and Time Limits," in December 1998 that brought together state workforce development and political and business leaders to

That 2000 report, *Home Grown*.⁵ showed that the size of this untapped workforce was sufficiently large to meet many of the labor needs for Iowa's projected employment growth. While the estimates were based upon imperfect data, they showed that each of these populations could make a substantial contribution to Iowa's workforce needs, as shown in Table One. *Home Grown* also identified exemplary programs that had proved successful in recruiting, retaining, and offering career advancement opportunities for people from each of these groups. It suggested that there were dual benefits from developing workforce strategies for this untapped workforce, greater economic activity and reduced need for government services.

Table One: Iowa's Untapped Workforce Estimate		
Population Component Capable of but Not Working	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Persons Receiving TANF	10,000	15,000
Ex-Offenders	8,000	10,000
Persons with Disabilities	43,000	87,000
Disconnect Young Adults	27,000	34,000
Total	88,000	146,000
Official unemployment (March 2001 – 2.1%)	33,100	
Annual New and Replacement Worker Needs (Governor's 21 st Century Workforce est.)	54,600	

Source: Bruner, C., Kot, V., & Elias, V. (2000). *Home grown: Iowa's untapped workforce and its potential for meeting Iowa's employment needs*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center & Iowa Business Council.

Polk County and the Untapped Workforce: A Focus on Place and Ex-Offenders

Working with leaders from the HSPA, the Greater Des Moines Partnership (the metropolitan area's chamber of commerce), the Des Moines Community Foundation, and the Des Moines Area Community College, CFPC began to develop a similar LLP report for Des Moines and Polk County, with a special emphasis upon reporting data by neighborhood. The initial data showed that the ex-offender population represented a

examine promising approaches to recruiting, retaining, and developing career opportunities for people leaving welfare.

⁵ Bruner, C., Kot, V., & Elias, V. (2000). *Home grown: Iowa's untapped workforce and its potential for meeting Iowa's employment needs*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center & Iowa Business Council.

very substantial portion of the working age population within Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods in Polk County, so significant that serious efforts to rebuild those neighborhoods would necessitate much greater workforce participation from ex-offenders.

Table Two shows the most recent data⁶ developed on the working age population within Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods, in comparison with the population of Polk County as a whole. The data include census data and data from several administrative data sets (TANF data provided by the Iowa Department of Human Services, prison and community corrections data provided by the Iowa Department of Corrections, and jail data provided by the Polk County Jail).

Table Two: Making Connections, Inner-City, and Polk County Working Age and Untapped Workforce Population Characteristics

	<i>Making Connections</i>	<i>Inner-City</i>	<i>Non- Inner-City</i>	<i>Polk County Total</i>
Total Population	31,254	46,441	328,160	374,601
Adult Workforce (16-64)	17,071	22,227	188,734	210,961
Work-eligible TANF	760	1,070	1,270	2,340
Prison Population (18-64)	451	575	1,160	1,735
Probation/Parole (18-64)	1,205	1,726	5,375	7,101
Jail/Not Prison/Parole Violation	176	218	419	717
Total Justice Supervised Population	1,832	2,519	7,034	9,344
16-19 Youth Not Working/In School	374	501	834	1,004
16-19 Foster Care/Juvenile Placement	70	90	140	230
Total Disconnected Youth	444	591	977	1,234
TANF Families % WA	5.0%	4.8%	0.7%	1.1%
Corrections Population %	12.2%	11.3%	3.7%	4.5%
16-19 High Risk %	2.9%	2.7%	0.5%	0.6%
Total 3 Populations as % Working Adults	20.1%	18.8%	4.9%	6.2%
Working Adults as % of Total Population	48.2%	47.9%	57.5%	56.3%

Sources: U.S. Census 2000; Bruner, C. & Tirmizi, S.N. (2004). Corrections and Making Connections: The impact of incarceration on neighborhoods. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center and Neighborhood Learning Partnership.; Bruner, C. & Crawford, M. (2001). Polk County Learning Partnership data brief. Des Moines, Polk County, and inner-city population trends by age, race and ethnicity: 1990 and 2000 census data. Report 2001-1. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center.; Bruner C. & Marmaras, B. (2001). Polk County Learning Partnership data brief. Birth outcomes in Polk County by race, ethnicity, and geography: Analysis of 1996-1998 vital statistics. Report 2001-2. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center.; Bruner, C., & Crawford, M. (2001). Polk County Learning Partnership data brief. Des Moines, Polk County, and inner-city family structure and home ownership trends: 1990 and 2000 census. Report 2001-3. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center.

⁶ The original data used 1990 census data rather than 2000 census data, as the latter was not yet available. It was also based upon older prison and community corrections data, with subsequent work by the Child and Family Policy Center examining these populations for the 2001-year.

As Table Two shows, the ex-offender population under current criminal justice supervision is much larger overall than the TANF population or the population of disconnected youth combined, in Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods and for Polk County as a whole. However, this was in sharp contrast to the level of policy attention that the ex-offender group was receiving. Most of the policy activity and demonstration projects were being focused either on welfare reform, one disconnected, or for at-risk youth.

Further, ex-offenders, as well as TANF recipients and disconnected youth, represent a very significant and much higher proportion of the working age population in Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods than they do for Polk County as a whole.⁷ Collectively they constitute around 20% of the working age population of these neighborhoods, while representing less than 5% of that population in the rest of Polk County. Again, more than 1 in 10 adults, primarily men, from these neighborhoods are involved in the criminal justice system. While many of the ex-offenders hold jobs (often a condition of parole or probation), other data show that most of these jobs are entry-level, temporary, or low paying positions that need to be improved upon to provide economic stability for the ex-offender, and particularly need to be improved upon if they are to help in raising a family. Table Two also shows that the size of the working age population to economically support its residents is smaller in Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods, which are rich in children.

The LLP reports issued on this data also offered some additional implications of the figures to family strengthening and building social ties. The data showed that, since 90% of those incarcerated were men and the majority of those were young men (18-34), incarceration had an impact on families and child-raising, with these impacts particularly pronounced in Making Connections and other high-risk neighborhoods. As will be discussed later, the proportion of young men subject to criminal justice supervision is an even greater proportion of all young men than is reflected in Table Two, which does not break out the data by gender or age.

In terms of raising children, to give a rough estimate, as many as 1 in 12 children in these high-risk neighborhoods had a parent in prison.⁸ The LLP reports stressed the need to address ex-offender needs in order to achieve any of the three goals within Making Connections neighborhoods. The size of the ex-offender population was simply too substantial to expect the kinds of needed gains in employment and family

⁷ The figures cannot be simply added, as some individuals could appear on two systems, such as TANF recipients on probation or under the age of 19 and not in school. In fact, however, although there is some overlapping of populations, 90% of the TANF adult population is female, 90% of the ex-offender population is male, and at least 80% of the disconnected youth population is too young to likely be involved in the adult corrections system. Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate that an unduplicated count would be at least 85% the size of simply adding the three populations.

⁸ This estimate was made based upon the number of dependents reported by prisoners and assigning their home location to the prisoner's reported "home" (non-institutional) address. The Child and Family Policy Center is doing additional analysis of returning ex-offenders' family situations and responsibilities, including where the ex-offenders' children and spouses live.

strengthening to occur without improving the quality of employment, the degree of family support providing, and the reduction in recidivism and re-entry among this population.

Taking Action on the Data

The data became available at a propitious time. Different neighborhood organizations in Making Connections had begun meeting together to talk about addressing the needs of high-risk youth and youthful offenders, and the information provided further impetus to action. In the winter of 2000-2001, the U.S. Department of Justice released federal guidelines for a second round of grants for its Youthful Offender demonstration grant program, and several neighborhood-based organizations showed interest in applying for that funding. HSPA and CFPC coordinated a joint grant-writing effort to apply for that funding, with the Central Iowa Education and Training Center (CIETC), the local one-stop workforce center for Polk County, serving as the administrative lead. That grant focused upon at-risk youth and young adults within Des Moines' inner-city neighborhoods, using the data generated by the Local Learning Partnership. Des Moines was 1 of 5 sites nationwide to receive funding for this initiative.

In June 2001, the U.S. Department of Justice, in partnership with the Department of Labor and Department of Health and Human Services, announced a new federal funding initiative to work on re-entry issues, with the potential for \$3 million in site funding. HSPA and CFPC reconvened the original but added state-level and county-level representatives from the courts and the Departments of Corrections, Workforce Development, Human Services (including the division of mental health), and Health (including the division of Substance Abuse), as required in the federal guidelines. In addition to a variety of neighborhood-based organizations serving the inner-city, some with programs for ex-offenders, Des Moines Area Community College, faith-based organizations, and leaders from several ex-offender support groups joined the planning process.

This group of approximately 40 individuals met during six community-wide meetings over two months, with broad agreement on the importance of addressing re-entry both for reasons of community safety and for reasons of community building. A retreat in August 2001, employed case examples of returning ex-offenders to identify the types of services and supports needed for successful social and economic reintegration into the community. The case examples illustrated the need to help ex-offenders deal with the "culture shock of re-entry" and connect to social supports and assume or reassume personal responsibilities, as well as to receive professional services, be supervised, and meet employment and other parole-related expectations.

Polk County's approach — which included pre-release assessments and preparation that involved family and social as well as professional connections and emphasized reintegration that included employment, law-abiding behavior, and meeting family and community responsibilities — was incorporated into the state's overall proposal. Polk County's approach further focused attention and resources to the inner-city neighborhoods to which the ex-offenders would be returning.

While the data provided by the Local Learning Partnership was fairly basic, it provided compelling evidence of the need to take a place-based approach to addressing the ex-offenders' needs and the importance of examining the family implications in particular.

In November, 2001, the U.S. Department of Justice rescinded the initiative guidelines and made no grant awards, but instead modified and resubmitted similar initiative guidelines under the name *Going Home*, this time with an expectation that all states would submit and receive grants, in the order of \$2 million over three years. The state of Iowa resubmitted its proposal, with all the resources devoted to Polk County and its plan, which retained its initial focus. In particular, re-entry workers and a community accountability review board are key features of the initiative, both designed to support reconnection of returning ex-offenders with family and with community support systems.

Continuing Work in Des Moines and Polk County: Race, Place, and Criminal Justice Reform

Since the start of this work in Des Moines and Polk County, the overall economic picture has changed. While Polk County unemployment remains relatively low, at 3.4% in July 2004, that is substantially above the rate of 1.9% in 1999, when the re-entry work began. Still, leaders in Polk County have recognized that this represents a long-term issue that must be addressed for Polk County to prosper, not a short-term cyclical one to examine when times are good and labor shortages may emerge.

While the *Going Home* grant proceeds, community leaders have recognized that, while significant for learning purposes, it represents a relatively small-scale demonstration project. The challenge will be to incorporate its lessons and its successes into the supervision, treatment, and support of the full criminal justice population.

A new Community Coalition headed by CIETC and the Directors' Council (a collaboration among nonprofit organizations working in Des Moines' inner-city neighborhoods) was established in March, 2004. Their explicit focus was increasing employment in Making Connections and other inner-city neighborhoods and an initial emphasis upon ex-offenders and a recognition that race plays a major role.

In 2001, Governor Tom Vilsack established a Governor's Task Force on the Overrepresentation of African Americans in Prison. While Iowa has a relatively small minority population, the incarceration rate among African Americans is the second highest in the country, 15.7 times the rate among Whites.⁹ While the Task Force report recommended a number of actions at the state level, very few were introduced, let alone enacted, by the General Assembly. Still, the report shed additional light on the need to examine corrections' policy and populations by race. Polk County represents one of the most diverse counties in the state, and the Making Connections and other

⁹ Governor's Task Force on the Overrepresentation of African-Americans in Prison. (2001). *Report of the Governor's Task Force on the Overrepresentation of African-Americans in Prison*. Des Moines, IA: State of Iowa. Note: These are 1999 figures.

high-risk neighborhoods have among the largest concentrations of minorities in the state. These are shown in Table Three.

Table Three		
Young Adult (18-34) Imprisonment by Race and Gender: Making Connections Neighborhoods and Polk County		
	<i>Making Connections</i>	<i>Polk County</i>
Total		
Resident Population	4,752	46,545
In Prison	278	1,037
Prison as % Resident Population	5.8%	2.2%
White		
Resident Population	2,275	38,325
In Prison	112	630
Prison as % Resident Population	4.9%	1.6%
African American		
Resident Population	796	2,281
In Prison	129	318
Prison as % Resident Population	16.2%	13.9%
Hispanic		
Resident Population	1,053	3,462
In Prison	24	64
Prison as % Resident Population	2.3%	1.8%
Source: Bruner, C. & Tirmizi, S.N. (2004). <i>Corrections and Making Connections: The Impact of incarceration on neighborhoods</i> . Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center and Neighborhood Learning Partnership.		

The Local Learning Partnership continued its analysis of Polk County's justice-supervised population, with additional analysis both by race and place. In doing so, the Partnership examined the data first in terms of the prison population of young men (18-34) as a share of the total population of young men in the community — the general age range for young fathers. Making Connections census tracts contained nearly 3 times the percentage of its young men who were in prison (5.8%) than did Polk County as a whole (2.2%), but this overall figure masked huge differences by race. Young White men's rates were 4.9% in Making Connections census tracts, compared with 1.6% in the county as a whole, an even larger disparity in ratio. Young Hispanic men were less likely to be incarcerated than Whites in Making Connections neighborhoods (2.2%), and slightly more likely for the county as a whole (1.8%). African American men, however, had 3 times the rate of their White counterparts when from Making Connections

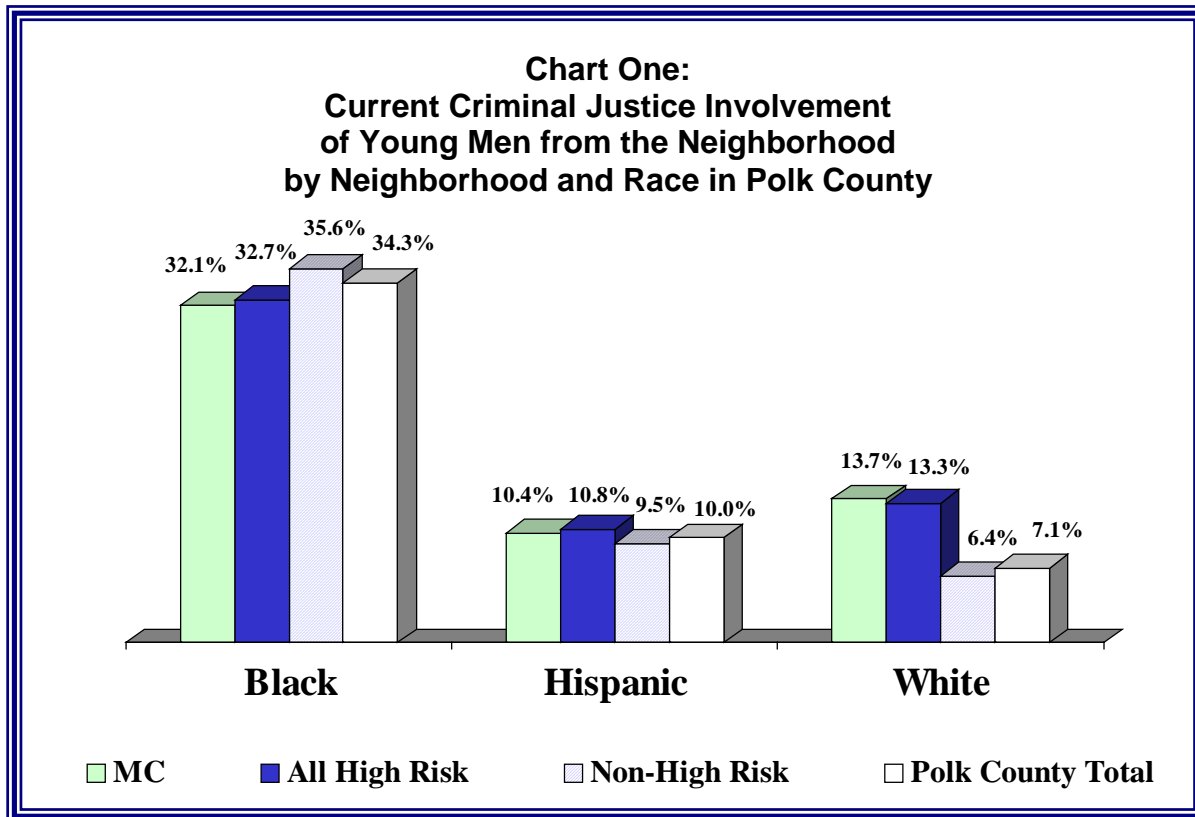
neighborhoods (16.2%), and 8 times the rate in Polk County overall (13.9%).¹⁰ This represents more than a decimation of the African American young male population. That Local Learning Partnership report spoke only to the prison population. A second report examined young males' current criminal justice system involvement as a proportion of the young male population. It examined the prison, probation, parole, and non-parole jail populations in two ways. First, it looked at the number of young men **in** the neighborhood (on probation, on parole, or in jail from non-parole offenses) as a percentage of all young men in the neighborhood (as represented by the census). Second, it looked at the number of young men **from** the community (on probation or parole) as a percentage of all young men from the community (as represented by the census, plus the prison population). Again, the rates of current criminal justice involvement of young men were nearly three times greater in Making Connections and other high-risk census tracts than for Polk County as a whole. About 1 in 5 young men **in** the Making Connections neighborhoods were currently involved in the criminal justice system (19.5%), and about 3 in 10 young men **from** the community were so involved (29.7%) (see Table A-1 for detailed information).¹¹ Again, the message from this data was clear: It is not possible to ignore the population involved in the criminal justice system as needed participants in working to strengthen families, build social ties, and improve economic self-sufficiency in these neighborhoods.

Chart One offers the racial dimensions of these disparities, showing the rate of current criminal justice system involvement of young men **from** the neighborhood by both race and neighborhood.

As Chart One shows, about one-third of all African American young men in Polk County are currently involved in the criminal justice system, and it does not make a difference whether they live in high-risk or other neighborhoods. Only for young White men, does residence matter. Clearly, these data raise disturbing questions regarding the criminal justice system, including questions of institutional racism and racial profiling. Further, the high rates suggest that criminal justice system involvement is much closer to the social norm among young African American men than anyone would like to think, particularly when it is considered that these figures only represent those young men currently involved in the criminal justice system. An additional portion have felony records, but have completed their probation or sentences.

¹⁰ Bruner, C. & Tirmizi, S.N. (2004). *Corrections and Making Connections: The Impact of incarceration on neighborhoods*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center and Neighborhood Learning Partnership.

¹¹ Bruner, C. & Tirmizi, S.N. (2004). *Justice system involvement of young men in Polk County: Implications for family strengthening*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center and Neighborhood Learning Partnership.



The Community Coalition has used this data as a basis for reviewing its own strategies for helping ex-offenders secure employment, with greater attention to the particular impacts on the African American community.

In addition, the Community Coalition has established a working group, including representatives of state agencies, to examine policy barriers that ex-offenders face as they seek to become integrated into society. CFPC completed a policy scan for the Annie E. Casey Foundation on state and federal policies which establish special restrictions on persons with felonies or create special barriers to those re-entering society from prison. Separate reports were completed for each of the states with Making Connections sites. Iowa's report showed that statutory or administrative policy barriers existed for ex-offenders in: securing employment in an array of different occupations, qualifying for public housing, meeting the requirements for other forms of public assistance (SSI, Medicaid, and TANF), obtaining student grants or loans or other educational assistance, re-establishing voting rights, and even securing a drivers license and basic identification. In addition, ex-offenders often face large child support arrearages due to incarceration, have substantial fees to pay for their own costs of supervision while on probation or parole, and have restitution obligations — which together, create major barriers to meeting basic financial needs. Ex-offenders have to navigate multiple systems, with complicated administrative and reporting requirements. Each system was largely unaware of other system's restrictions and special rules regarding ex-offenders, but collectively they created additional challenges for meeting

basic needs at almost every turn.¹² The matrix developed by CFPC on these barriers is currently being used by a subgroup of the Community Coalition to identify ways to assist ex-offenders in surmounting these barriers and producing policy changes to eliminate some of them.

Discussion and Implications

Polk County is not unique in needing to address issues of incarceration, criminal justice involvement, and re-entry. While Iowa has a high rate of incarceration of African Americans, this population is relatively small and Iowa's overall incarceration rate is below that for the country as a whole. The challenge is to develop community processes—and state responses—that can move forward on these issues in all states, including ones that pay special attention to their impacts upon poor and disinvested neighborhoods.

These are issues that have grown, rather than diminished, in our country. Criminal justice policy and welfare reform have changed the landscape of poor, minority neighborhoods, in particular. Over the last three decades, incarceration rates in the United States have more than tripled, while welfare policies have reduced the number of families with children receiving basic income supports by one-half (and inflation and the absence of increases in benefits have eroded the value of those payments in meeting basic needs by more than one-half).

Poor, minority neighborhoods have been particularly hard hit. The data presented here for Polk County is similar to other census tract level and neighborhood data analyses being conducted about ex-offenders.¹³

The impact is both race-based and place-based, and the two must be addressed together. In 1965, the so-called Moynihan report from the U.S. Department of Labor, *The Negro Family in America*, created a controversy because it suggested that the breakdown of the Negro family, if not addressed, would make securing equality of opportunity for African Americans impossible.¹⁴ As stated for 1962 in the report, the percentage of non-White families with children of a single parent female head of household was 23.2%, compared with that for Whites of 8.6%. According to the 2000 census, the percentage of families with children with a single parent female head of household was 17.6% for White, 1.52% for non-Hispanic families, and 52.1% for African American families.

In his classic sociological and demographic analysis, using 1960 through 1980 census data for Chicago's neighborhoods, William Julius Wilson sought explanations to the rise

¹² Bruner, C. Cheek, D., & Tirmizi, S.N. (2004). *Home ownership and poor neighborhoods: Challenges for Polk County*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center and Neighborhood Learning Partnership.

¹³ The Urban Institute is supporting a re-entry-mapping network of 10 urban partners conducting similar analyses around the country. Lawrence, S., & Travis, J. (2004). *The New landscape of imprisonment: Mapping America's prison expansion*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center.

¹⁴ Office of Policy Planning and Research. (1965). *The Negro family: The Case for national action*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Labor.

in single parenting and the persistence of poverty within the African American population. He identified the absence of young African American male employment (and thus "marriagability") as a reason behind the continued impoverishment of poor, minority inner-city neighborhoods.¹⁵

In the 25 years since Wilson's 1980 census tract analysis, the number of incarcerated young African American males (25-29) has quadrupled to 10.4% of the male African American population.¹⁶ Meanwhile, during the same period time, declining real wages have meant that family economic self-sufficiency is now more dependent upon two parents, with a doubling in the proportion of families of even very young children where both parents in two parent families work outside the home.¹⁷

The trends, particularly within the African American community and particularly within the poorest neighborhoods where a disproportionate number of African American families live, are crippling to community building efforts of the type Making Connections is seeking to achieve. Young men have moved outside the home and even outside the community. The answer to the question, "Where have all the young men gone?" when applied to the African American community, is "Gone to prison, everyone." This further impoverishes themselves, their families and children, and their neighborhoods' ability to regenerate.

The work in Polk County represents one community's effort to begin to address this major social issue, one which may be the key to rebuilding inner-city communities. In this work, neighborhood-based data has played a role in making clear the dimensions of the challenges and the need to tackle them.

¹⁵ Wilson, W.J. (1987). *The Truly disadvantaged: The Inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁶ Harrison, P., & Beck, A. (2003). Prisoners in 2002. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*. NCJ200248.s

¹⁷ U.S. Census 2000