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Oh Baltimore: Incarceration and Re-entry in Marginalized Communities

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Abstract

After years of decay, Baltimore City's urban poor face disparities within an economic and political climate that demands austerity and personal responsibility. This qualitative research project aimed to identify the impact of deindustrialization on the socioeconomic changes within the community, the subsequent disparate incarceration rates, and burden on affected individuals, communities, and organizations. We also theorized the best practices for advocacy and community organizing. The findings suggest that in many communities, the nature of social capital has transformed in relation to local and national processes, such as recession, unemployment, declines in industries, and exposure to surveillance. Though fragile, the existing community cultural and social capitals, networks critical to family functioning and daily survival, must be reappraised and integrated in participatory collaboration with stakeholders. Traditional community organizing tools must be re-examined and reframed to reach larger audiences and to build alliances.

Keywords: re-entry, deindustrialization, neo-liberalism, community organizing, incarceration

"Going to live at Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity." Frederick Douglass, (1845 p.31)

Following the death of Freddie Grey, a 25-year-old Black American man who died of injuries while in custody of the Baltimore Police Department, a wave of anger convulsed the city of Baltimore (Center for Social Inclusion [CSI], 2015). This movement resulted in multiple arrests, state imposed curfews, damage to property, loss of potential future business investment, and resurgent conversation of race and deprivation in the city. As the city and its residents attempted to recover, many voices emerged asking the question, "How did we get here?" Perhaps, a more apt question would be, "Where is here?"

Baltimore, located in Maryland, is one of the wealthiest states in the U. S (United States Census Bureau, 2013). When compared across socio-economic status (SES) indicators, such as income, poverty, unemployment, race, and rates of incarceration, there are also numerous disparities among its residents. For example, in 2013, the United States Census Bureau (2013) reported that the per capita income was \$23,853 for Baltimore residents while it was \$35,751 for those in Maryland and \$27,915 for the country. Additionally, in 2013, 22.4% of the Baltimore population lived below the poverty line compared to 9% in Maryland and 14% of the United States. The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that in 2013, in Baltimore City, approximately 10% of residents were unemployed; in Maryland, the rate was nearly 7% and the national statistic was close to 8% (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2013).

The BLS reported that in 2013, 37% of Black young men (ages 20-24) in Baltimore were unemployed compared to 10% of White young men (BLS, 2013). Additionally, between White and Black Baltimoreans, 14.3% and 36.6%, respectively, live in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Furthermore, while Black Americans represent 13% of the United States population, that statistic rises exponentially for the Maryland and Baltimore populations (30.1% and 63.1%, respectively; US Census Bureau, 2013). Black Marylanders were arrested at more than three and a half times the rate of White Marylanders for drug offenses (Justice Policy Institute (JPI), 2012), despite the 2010 findings by the United States Department of Health and Human Services that 9 % of White and 10.7% of Black citizens used illegal drugs within the previous month. When released from incarceration, many citizens return to Baltimore. La Vigne, Kachnowski, Travis, Naser, and Visser (2003) reported that 59% of Maryland prisoners returned to the City of Baltimore in 2001. More recently, Fenton (2015) reported that 10,000 people return annually to Baltimore after incarceration. That is, they return to communities facing high rates of poverty, unemployment, and arrests. These environments can challenge the reentering citizen's rehabilitation and integration success rates (Morenoff & Harding 2014).

Current Study

Baltimore is similar to other poor cities (e.g., Detroit, Memphis, and Philadelphia) across the nation with regards to concentrated poverty and income inequality (Berube & McDearman, 2015). Understanding and intervening in these conditions must move beyond discussion of individual or community pathology to explore the contextual contribution of historical transformations that impact community stability and marginality. The nature of and extent to which community transformation in local and national social environments impacts individuals,

their families, and communities, requires the examination of interactive dynamics that result in community destabilization and marginalization. The emergence of alternative forms of community capital, incarceration, and challenges to full citizenship should also be addressed.

This qualitative study examined the impact of local and national transformations on communities, its citizenry, members of their networks, and advocates. More importantly, we focused on the experiences of Black male citizens returning to their communities after incarceration, the impact on members of their communities, and their advocates (e.g., organizations leaders and staff) living in East Baltimore. In these designated communities, less than half of working-age adults participate in the conventional labor force, and approximately one-third of all households live below the poverty level (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015).

There were three objectives for our study. First, we discuss the local and national transformation in the social environment - deindustrialization and socioeconomic changes – within Black Baltimorean communities. Secondly, we examine the transformational relationship to social capital, disproportionate rates of incarceration, the subsequent burden imposed on affected individuals, communities and organizations. The final objective describes the landscape facing the returning citizen. The findings are considered in light of the best practices for re-entry, advocacy, and community organizing in social work.

Literature Overview

Understanding the interaction of deindustrialization and transformations in community stability, social capital, and incarceration and reentry requires recognition of the processes leading to disproportionate incarceration and re-entry. First, historically, Baltimore has not always been blighted by poor economic conditions. From the end of the 19th century to the late 20th century, Baltimore factories, such as American Can, Domino Sugar, Bethlehem Steel, and Standard Oil, provided employment opportunities for large numbers of unskilled workers (Levine, 2000; Merrifield, 1993; Ryon, 1980). The demands of World War II triggered an explosion in industrial productivity forcing plants and factories to hire “groups that never had made much money to begin with” (Pietila, 2010, p. 78). These included Black migrant workers entering the city as part of the Great Migration as well as those who dated their families’ lineage to before Reconstruction (Pietila, 2010). Although overshadowed by the residential restrictions (e.g., restrictive covenants), Black industrial workers and military veterans soon established Black suburban neighborhoods with their associated benefits and comforts (Pietila, 2010). However, from 1950s to the 1990s many companies began to shed segments of its industrial base along with thousands of manufacturing jobs. Researchers have asserted that in the face of decline in manufacturing, many workers encountered unemployment or employment in lower wage jobs (Kletzer, 2000; Wolfson & Frisken, 2002; Wolman, Stokan and Wial, 2015). Consequentially, the loss of industry also signaled a shift in tax bases for industries to local property taxes on economically depressed property owners or absent landlords.

Second, market oriented capital accumulation, driven by the elite (Goldsmith & Blakely, 2010), with minimal set aside for social welfare programs required to support growth (Holliday, 2000; Harvey, 2005), exposed many urban communities to manifestations of neo-liberal experiments. A substantial body of literature (e.g., Gans, 1962; Gotham, 1999; Janowitz, 1967)

discusses the relationship of social cohesion to residential space and the disruptive impact of outside threats, such as revitalization forces, including urban development corporations, privatized schools (Peck, Brenner, & Theodore, 2008) and constructed highways that lase to the demolition lower income neighborhoods in Baltimore. Razing old and building new communities to address overcrowding and blight added considerable stress to already burdened communities (Brambilla & Longo, 1979; Phipsen 2016). As much as high-rise buildings created some housing for the poor, they often removed a sense of community in a larger built environment (Chatterjee, 2009; Gifford, 2007). Paradoxically, demolishment often destroys the consumer base of any commerce that may have emerged around such structures, such as Old Town Mall in East Baltimore, and dislocates existing communities (Douglas, 2016).

Further, attempts to rebuild through investments in renewal projects, such as a vibrant inner harbor, comprising mainly of tourist attractions, fine dining, and large hotels have not re-invigorated Baltimore's inner neighborhoods (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). For many who remain in these communities, low-income housing and state aid are the only legitimate available resources. Ironically, contractions in federal, state, and local interventions (e.g., Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996), and expansions in state sponsored policing (e.g., broken windows policing) occurred at the same time of the revitalization projects. In response, some researchers (e.g., Kelly, 1997; Soss, Fording & Schram, 2011; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1998) have welcomed contractions of state interventions, asserting that social welfare programs contribute to a culture of poverty/dependence and pathology, and state sanctions paternalism. Others have argued that contractions and surveillance have contributed to shifts in human and social capital and disparate rates of incarceration within already distressed communities (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Fullilove, 2004; Fullilove & Fullilove, 2005; Wallace 1988; Wilson 1997; Wolf, 2007).

Although interrelated, human and social capital differs in several marked ways. Human capital theory is rooted in economic theory and often applied in labor economics (Becker, 1964). Embedded in the individual, human capital refers to the knowledge, skill, and experiences an individual possesses (Becker, 1964; Hogan & McPheters, 1980; Schultz, 1961) that may be enhanced through investments made by the individual or organization (Wang & Barney, 2006). In contrast, social capital is deeply embedded in relationship with others (i.e., individual and groups) (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Individuals may accumulate social capital through skills that lead to deeper relationships, thereby transforming the relations among persons that facilitate action (Coleman, 1990). Thus, an individual's network of relationships represents a key resource for the actors in the network and may persist in spite of disproportionate rates of under- and unemployment and incarcerations within Baltimore's Black communities.

Third, against substantial destabilization of communities in Baltimore City, community membership may acts as a resource for Black men prior to, during, and after periods of incarceration. Efforts to cope involve not only the individual, but also his/her environment, actors within that environment, and available social capital and exchanges of resources (Antonucci, Ajrouch, & Janevic, 2003; Bott 1971; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje 1997; Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2008; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lepore, 1997). Disparate rates of incarceration among Black men represent a substantial source of stress (Xanthos, Treadwell, & Holden, 2010).

Despite the imposed constraints, work continues within the marginalized community, though they may fall outside the criteria of conventional labor (Star & Strauss, 1999, Wacquant 2007). Though these patterns of informal work provide resources for members of marginalized communities, Wacquant (2007) and Pahl (1989) argued that they also reinforce inequalities – this is the case for many members of marginalized communities. Barred from participation in labor forces that demands greater expertise or satisfaction with low wages, members of the community engage the local social capital. In many instances, the results are incarceration, pursuant loss of freedom, and in certain cases, loss of citizenship while incarcerated and upon return to their communities (Pahl, 1989; Wacquant, 2007).

Numerous studies including Whyte's (2012) *Street Corner Society*, Liebow's (2003) *Tally Corner*, and Hannerz's (1969) *Soulside*, all offer the story of marginalized communities. However, Til and Til (1973) cautioned that these communities are often sorted into categories, such as "culture of poverty" and more recently "cultures of dependence" (p. 2). Presently, solutions to the disparate outcome (e.g., poor health and high rates of incarceration) for communities living in poverty are often embedded in the neoliberal/conservative frame that personal responsibility is the only path for the poor (Wright, 2012). Often, this is an argument countered with another that suggests that the poor occupy environments bereft of any resources (Coleman, 1988; DeFilippis, 2001). Missing from the literature are discussions of the history of human and social capital within marginalized communities' networks and their relationship to large local, national and international transformation. Similarly, and from my observations, there is a dearth of social work literature that employs existent resources, such as the strength of network ties in advancing community-organizing efforts. This study explored these gaps by asking the following research questions: (a) What are the experiences of black men returning to their communities after incarceration?; (b) What are the community experiences of incarceration and the returning black men after incarceration?; and (c) What are community (i.e., returning citizen, community members and advocates) responses to incarceration and re-entry?

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of three distinct groups of participants: 10 key stakeholders (e.g., service providers, community activists, and elected officials), 10 formerly incarcerated individuals, and 20 members of their support network (e.g., family, friends). Initially, two key stakeholders were identified among the members of the Greater Baltimore Grassroots Criminal Justice Network (The Network) and Sister's Together and Reaching (STAR). The Network (n.d.) is comprised of representative organizations working with returning citizens to meet basic needs and advocate for policy change. STAR provides support to community members. STAR's Executive Director (n.d.), an established member in Baltimore, is an identified advocate with vulnerable populations. Using chain referral, these initial two stakeholders referred eight other stakeholders. Each stakeholder then referred a formerly incarcerated man who was convicted of possession, sentenced to a prison for up to four years (up to one year for possession of marijuana), and released within the previous three months. These men referred two members of their social network (family members and friend).

Stakeholders comprised two ecumenical leaders, four professional community organizers focused on employment and justice policy, four executive directors or directors of Community Based Organization (CBO) focused on re-entry, training, and employment. Six stakeholders were men and four were women. Stakeholder ranged in age (27 to 60 years old) with mean of 47 ($SD=13$). Eight stakeholders were Black and two were White. Eight stakeholders were born and raised in Baltimore, two were born outside of Baltimore, and one currently resides in Baltimore. Six stakeholders reported histories of incarceration.

All 10 formerly incarcerated men served at least three years for drug offenses (i.e., possession), and identified as Black, with ages ranging from 18 to 44 (mean=34.6; $SD=14$). Four participants (40%) were 18 to 24 years old, three participants (30%) were 25 to 34 years old, and three (30%) were 35 years or older. The majority of participants (70%) completed some high school, one (10%) completed high school/GED, and two (20%) completed some college or technical school but had no degree. Five participants (50%) were employed during the last six months. Of these, three had full-time employment and two participants (20%) had part time or temporary employment. The majority of participants ($n=9$; 90%) identified as heterosexual.

Community members comprised of 10 friends (50%), six family members (30%), and four co-workers (20%). Sixteen community members (80%) were men, and four were women (20%). Community members' ranged in age (20-59 years old) with a mean of 29.6 ($SD=10$). All community members identified as Black. Fourteen (70%) community members were born and raised in Baltimore and six (30%) were born outside of Baltimore, all of which currently resided in Baltimore City. Nine (45%) community members were employed full-time, three were employed part-time (15%), and eight (40%) were unemployed at the time of data collection. Eleven (55%) community members reported histories of incarceration.

Procedure

In keeping with IRB requirements informed consent was secured from each participant. Additionally, and in recognition that social scientists often position themselves as experts on the lives of marginalized communities at times stripping participants' agency (Haggerty, 2004), to increase the trustworthiness, enhance the interpretation of data, and increase the presence of participant in the discovery process, this study employed member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam, 1998). Member checking offers participants the opportunity to endorse, reject, or suggest alternate interpretations of data (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Merriam, 1998).

All audiotaped interviews were conducted between January 2013 and March 2013. After explaining the purpose of the study, interviewers employed a semi-structured interview and collected an in-depth life history on various topics, including early community stability (e.g., family history, neighborhood dynamics, and social capital) and community response to involvement with the corrections system, health, and community based organizations. Key constructs, incorporated in participants' inquiries to comment on experiences of returning to communities after incarceration, included (a) what are the community experiences of incarceration and the returning black men after incarceration and (b) what are community (i.e., returning citizen, community members, and advocates) responses to incarceration and re-entry? While participants were asked to speak freely, probes were used to surface specific domains

(e.g., challenges of first three months after returning from incarceration; social network characteristics and how they shape the return experience; economic and social changes in the community that have shaped stakeholder action; and how services have shifted in response to emergent realities). Each participant was interviewed in one session for 30 to 90 minutes per interview. The formerly incarcerated men were compensated with \$25 gift certificates. Members of their social networks were compensated with a \$20 gift certificate.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using QSR NVivo Version 10 (2012). Data analysis employed grounded theory methodology to surface themes related to the conceptual areas (i.e., micro-, meso-, macro-level community responses to incarceration, family, poverty, and risk behavior) among key stakeholders, formerly incarcerated Black men, and members of their social network (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory methodology is an iterative process. Each round of analysis builds upon the previous. As the analysis advances, the researcher proofreads the transcribed interviews for any typos or errors, gathers a collection of memos describing the analytic process, and develops a coding system comprising emergent codes categories and theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2006). At stage one, the transcript is read in its entirety allowing the reader to become familiar with the respondents. Next, the reader reads the transcript by topic areas. During this process, the reader documents emergent themes and questions associated with specific textual passages. This process continues throughout all phases of the analysis and is referred to as memoing (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). Memos assist the researcher to document the analytic process while remaining focused on salient characteristics, pertinent social circumstances, interactions, and processes of the concepts, such as enabling factors (Charmaz, 2006). Still another line-by-line textual analysis or microanalysis examines the participants' use of words to communicate specific details concerning phenomena (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). This process, referred to as coding, attaches conceptual labels to specific sections of data. As the researcher encounters other phenomena that are similar, the concepts become more abstract and grouped into categories. Categories then group concepts that may differ in form, but are directed at specific processes (e.g., enabling). They describe the conditions, variations, actions and interaction that facilitates, limits, or results from the phenomena's emergence (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). Employing theoretical sampling, the researcher compares instances of the concept from one interview to another, seeking similarities, differences, patterns, and variations. The constant comparison process enhances consistency of the categories that enhances the researcher's ability to make hypotheses concerning the relationship among categories for further examination (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Charmaz, 2014).

Findings

This study identified a progression of forces that transformed the communities that predict incarceration for Black men in Baltimore City and to which they return: historic community destabilization, transformation in social capital, and loss of citizenship (e.g., community and social trust). Community destabilization, associated with historic transformations

in the macro environment (deindustrialization) affects the individual and community's material needs and access to resources. Within the destabilized environment, social capital is transformed. Though marginalized or hidden, social capital provides opportunities for individuals to attain resources and materials needed. However, engaging in these markets often result in loss of freedom through incarceration. In many cases, these men are stripped of their citizenship upon returning to the community—the right to exercise the ballot and access affordable low-income housing. They also face a loss of community and social trust - a sort of invisibility. Consequentially, the community's response proves critical in shaping the individual's return and participation in community development.

Community Destabilization

Participants in this study discussed Baltimore city as comprising of neighborhoods prone to periods of great opportunities and stagnation related to monumental historic transformations. Stakeholders, participants, and members of their social networks described rich family histories and constellation that counter current conceptualizations of the nuclear family and contemporary images of the urban denizen. Participants described access to extended families within the community that contributed to considerable wealth. For example, one stakeholder, a 59-year-old Black woman, executive director of a West Baltimore Re-entry Program for women, reported growing up in West Baltimore during the 1960s in the home of her aunt and uncle. Her uncle was employed at Bethlehem Steel. In her interview, she described family economic stability as well as sharing resources in the form of cooperative parenting.

My mom was a nurse, so she went out to work every day. My aunt was a stay at home mom, so we always had some supervision there. My uncle worked at Bethlehem Steel, one of the labor mills that many folks know here in Baltimore. And it's just a blue-collar family just going out trying to raise the kids, and do the right kind of a thing.

Similarly, a 60-year-old Black man, executive director of an East Baltimore Re-entry program for men, added.

Bethlehem Steel was a steel mill ... and they had a lot of the adults around that time gainfully employed, I mean making really good money and many were homeowners. The community looked out for the children.

Thus, the consequence of having extended family within the community contributed to increased capacity to meet the material needs of its members. There was also a subsequent sense of connectedness and community based services that existed. One stakeholder described the community solidarity:

[I]t was all Black, you went to 139 Elementary School, you went to Dunbar Middle, you went to Dunbar High School. You went to ... in the summer to do your swimming lessons. And that was El Camino, you walked across Orlean Street or Central Avenue. We went to church on Sundays, you know that was the community.

However, re-entering citizens, their community networks and stakeholders also acknowledged the community's social problems. A stakeholder reported substance abuse as well as instances of domestic violence in his family of origin. "[H]e was a drinker too, he was an alcoholic... they're always fussin' and fightin' about money this and that, and they fought a few times." Participants also acknowledged the decline of existing community wealth and solidarity, resulting in destabilization. Participants made clear connections to macro environmental forces that destabilized the community and exacerbated existing social problems.

They described a connection between the loss of manufacturing jobs and severe community collapses. For example, with increased rates of unemployment, one stakeholder described his family functioning in the following manner "[he was] always short on mortgage, car notes and everything. ... he became a different person, always bitter, you know, the lifestyle of his family had to change. In fact, he and his wife ended up separating." Despite the conditions, families attempted to maintain some access to resources, such as home ownership. Members called upon the resources of the community. Grandparents would often intervene to prevent placement in foster care, although, this was often disturbed by the increasing visibility of the drug trade, outside and within the home, adding to the exposure to crime and violence in the community.

Social Capital

Because of the transformation in the social environment – limited employment opportunities and changing family resources – many participants turned to marginalized or hidden sources of capital within the community to secure needed or wanted resources. A returning citizen stated that as young men, they turned to neighborhood mentors to identify available sources of accruing material resources. The choice of mentor reflects consideration of the social milieu and the challenges they witness.

I use to look at a workin' dude and be like, man this man, he's workin' but he's still strugglin'. But this dude here, they're doin' what they doin' and they happy, they ain't never strugglin'.

However, mentors may have formal and informal labor force participation. While the men in this study all experienced incarceration related to drug related offenses, many spoke of members of their communities who avoided incarceration. This avoidance was often associated with immediate and extended family members, accrual of family wealth and access to resources. Often, these community members participated in the recognized labor force. They described the community members as providing "right direction."

For the majority of the young men interviewed in this study, this type of support did not exist in their families. Instead, they engaged the streets to meet existing needs: food, clothing, and shelter where they encountered both a formal and informal justice system. An informal justice system refers to community norm concerning appropriate behavior. For example, "snitching" or telling on other members of their community is not allowed. Older teenagers and young men who had grown up under similar circumstances often teach the informal system. Thus, the environment informs the informal codes and social expectations. Returning citizens

indicated that the milieu prepared them for the danger “you’re taught not to be afraid of anything. Get hit, you hit back.” Despite the absence of recognized resources valued by the larger society, these relationships that foster entry or avoidance of the marginalized labor force, simultaneously reveal the presence of existing social networks and community capital.

Threats to Community and Citizenship

Entering the marginalized or hidden labor force often results in engaging the formal justice system. In several cases, these interactions occurred quite early. One returning citizen reported that his first interaction with the police occurred at age thirteen. He reported that they beat him up because he refused to reject the informal code - that he does not reveal information on other members of the community. The fear of police surveillance and incarceration does not outweigh loyalty to the men in the community, who sold drugs and often provided food, clothing, and allowance for him. The threat of incarceration did not deter these men. Many participants, returning citizen, stakeholders, and community members alike, declared that incarceration was inevitable. In fact, given the rates of incarceration within the community, imprisonment is often an extension of the community. One returning citizen stated

...the same things are happenin’ on the streets, happen in jail, except for guns. You know all the enemies is things like, when all the beefs go on, it’s only gonna be two things that happen, you gonna get locked up or you gonna get killed. And eventually if both of you get locked up for hurtin’ each other, you all just gonna get locked up and the beef is gonna continue to go on while you’re in prison.

Often, the network ties that protected a participant while in the community are indispensable during incarceration.

It took for me to grasp from older dudes who had been there who was tryin’ to get a second chance you here to do better, they was big role models in the prison system and you know they was mentors, and I was always a good listener. And the thing about it, the funny thing about it was the guys that I was meetin’, these guys was the ones doin’ the harmin’ and the street stuff, the ones that were robbin’, hustlin’ and killin’ people, you know, but if you meet ‘em personally, they was good dudes at heart.

Despite the creation of fictive kinship networks and its potential contribution to social capital while incarcerated, they must serve their sentences alone. Perhaps more accurately, they serve time alone, physically, but remain emotionally linked to those they leave behind – wives, girlfriends, and children. In some cases, these members of the participants’ networks also serve time while waiting for their release. One returning citizen stated, “Like she was willin’ to ride with me regardless. But when you really care about somebody, you gotta think about their feelin’s and their hurt and I put myself in her shoes like, what if it was her, like my girl. I said, what if the woman who we love keep goin’ to prison for years, that’s like damn, I can’t deal with that. I had to think about that.”

Consequently, participants indicated that reentry was rife with challenges, risk of recidivism and diminished employment opportunities. Often upon release, histories of incarceration determine the contributions men make to their communities in exchange for needed resources. This includes barriers to certain types of employment and housing. A 29-year-old returning citizen stated,

They shut me down for having a conviction with a handgun...I got the interview... filled out the application at a cleaning service, downtown. I don't know they probably had somebody bad... they don't want to be responsible for nothing.

In addition to barriers to employment, the expectation of stable housing may be a prerequisite for release; however, as one stakeholder described, this can be a challenge as well as potential source of risk of re-arrest.

[T]he local housing authorities, they've been afforded discretion with how they ... accept and deny applicants. [A]lot of individuals who are returning back to these communities, if their families are still there, it's very rare that there is a stable environment for them to return to.

Thus, establishing a stable housing environment is often illusive. Despite these challenges, men often return to their communities. For most participants in the study, re-engaging the community offers the opportunity to access resources. However, the community response to the returning participants varies in complexity and action.

Community Response

The act of reentering the community after incarceration involves several levels of responses to the individual who is reentering and to the process of reentry. The community response also involves multiple strategies. The levels of responses vary across individuals, community, and institutional lines. For example, from an individual view point, responding to the act of re-entering, many formerly incarcerated individuals re-enter the community wanting to make changes within that community. One stakeholder with a history of incarceration declared, "I came back to change the neighborhood. I'm gonna get input in my own journey." Still other reflect shame, a sense of having been a burden to their family "... he has all of these things over his head, people been takin' care of him, they had to buy all this stuff. Even if they have didn't have a budget." Similarly, members of the community reflected both the prevailing notions concerning crime in the community and the desire to reach out to returning members.

... I can tell you that we have to keep Joe Blow locked up and he's a menace to society and he comes home he's gonna create a problem...then you say yeh, 'cuz Joe Blow ain't your cousin, your brother or your son, but Miss Mary over here, that's her baby boy. She want her son home.

The institutional response to the individual's return varies as many of the leadership of the organizations express personal and institutional concerns. In the case of the former, the head of a community-based organization (CBO) stated the following:

That even if people [are] doing wrong, you still try to help 'em... [I] remember when we got to places where we were having different life experiences and being exposed to different things. ... and lost a little sense of self in the process.

This approach to the reentering citizen offers empathy and reconciliation to returning members of the community. On the other hand, institutional concerns range from maintaining a strict conservative position "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and become something," to positions that acknowledged both the challenges that individuals face upon returning, as well as the expectation that they will actively participate in reentering and organizational efforts.

[S]o we got this web ...do you want to stay on the outside of the web and just circle the web or do you want to get into the intricacies and see and learn and know how things work...

None withstanding these varied responses to the returning individuals, the individual, community and organization all describe an urgent need to engage in the process of reentering. Among their concerns, reentering citizens listed the need for suitable housing and employment. To achieve these goals, strategies included calls for direct actions and strategic problem definition.

Both reentering citizens and their community members (stakeholders and family) described direct action as the need to push back. They recognized that pushing back requires greater inclusion. One participant stated, "having conversations with the community, to get them to warm up to the idea that these are somebody's children, somebody's fathers and mothers you know that are doin' these things." Others indicated that the concept of reentry requires considerable reframing of the problem of reentry. Such reframing involves designating reentry as a fiscal issue. Several participants stated that it is less expensive "to put money on the front end" for programs, such as education and health care, and if incarceration and reentry are to remain the most prominent facet of criminal justice agencies, then they must be "force[d] to educate individuals so they don't go that way. To help individuals, upon re-entry, to get employment, get housing, [and] to become contributing members of society." Several leaders of re-entry serving organizations echoed the need for reframing. They argue that seeking reentry dollars at times assigns the reentry label to the institution and its consumers, unintentionally stigmatizing consumers. Such stigmatization results in reduced capacity to engage the community in ongoing dialogue concerning the intersection of health, poverty, and over-all wellness. These conversations are critical to galvanizing the community.

As advocates for what we're doing, have the due diligence in reaching out to the community to make sure that we're ...sensitive to their concerns.

In summary, the findings indicate that the path from community destabilization to reentry involve a dynamic interaction among individual, community members, and institutions. Forces

that are external to the individual often shape these interactions, (e.g., community destabilization, unemployment, community capital). As the individual traverses the lifespan seeking resources, he encounters the limits that circumscribe the community as well as the resources that are available to him within those limits. In some cases, employing the resources results in engaging both the community as well as the larger justice system. While community codes may be protective, others run counter to the larger justice system codes. Hence, the individual engages the justice system, further limiting his capacity to contribute to the stabilization of his community or increase the social capital it possesses.

Discussion

Despite the resurgence of business growth in downtown cities across the United States, jobs being offered are not the opportunities that supported communities in previous generations (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993). William Julius Wilson (1987), speaking on the decay of urban environments, declared that the disappearance of work transforms the individual as well as social arrangement of the community and society, at large. Others (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Baum, 1996; Bobo & Johnson, 2004) have asserted that specific policy initiatives have transformed both the identity and social location of marginalized communities. For example, Alexander (2010) posited that the Drug Abuse and Prevention Control Act or War on Drugs, depicts the predominantly poor and working class Black inner city as a threat to all, including poor and working class White citizens, and denies many the civil rights championed decades earlier. These rights include participation in electing local and national leadership as well as the right to take personal responsibility.

Kretzman and McKnight, as cited by (Fisher & Shragge, 2000) contend that current models of work, with communities that focus on capacity building, are in line with prevailing neoliberal forces that proclaim the dominance of personal responsibility. Focused on citizenship and community assets, these models call for investments of community resources. Fisher and Schagge (2000) caution that this model does not address histories of oppression (redlining and absent landlords), redistribution of income, or wealth allowing individuals to fully participate in taking personal responsibility. Additionally, the model does not address the transforming social environments, social capital, and those who remain less than full citizens, due to histories of incarceration. These individuals and their communities are left to manage the stress of living on the margins, and relying on assets that predict recidivism.

Fook (2002) warned that singular objective truths do not exist. The progress from destabilization to marginalization has not occurred for want of personal responsibility (Fook, 2002). In fact, it is the history of destabilization that reduces the capacity to take personal responsibility as defined by the elite. Employing an intersectional lens on deindustrialization, community destabilization and incarceration, Wacquant (2009) and colleagues (Wacquant, Eick, & Winkler, 2011) posited that deindustrialization has made segments of the U.S. population, specifically poor African Americans, economically inessential. He contended that prisons and marginalized communities function to contain those at the bottom of our socioeconomic scales. They also function to contain the threat these masses pose, in both action and symbolic representation. After all, further economic development may make other segments of the society redundant.

The participants (returning citizens, stakeholders and community members) in this study discussed the influence of transformation in the social environment on social capital, full citizenship, and options for action. These transformations are associated with the deindustrialization of Baltimore City, increased urban deterioration, and concentrations in poverty. At one time, companies such as Bethlehem Steel, created opportunities for families to secure living wages and, in some cases, accrue a level of wealth. Similar to other middle class residents of the city, working and middle class Blacks exited for the surrounding suburbs, as well as retailers chasing the spending of the middle class. In addition to this departure, transformation in production, enhanced infrastructure development (e.g., well-maintained highways and expedient forms of transportation) resulted in decreased need for a stationary labor force (Calderón, & Servén, 2014). These forces resulted in an abandonment of the city by nearly all, save for the poor.

Similar to other cities across the United States such as Chicago, Illinois, Detroit, Michigan and Hartford, Connecticut seeking urban renewal, Baltimore sought to develop vacant or 'blighted' areas Koebel (1996). Often, these processes employed subjective and political methods to determine which areas were considered blighted. The author stated that these processes resulted in overcrowding and physical deterioration in some previously stable communities. Our findings suggest that with the concentration of poverty, increased drug trafficking and drug use, and greater police presence to ensure investors of the safety of communities, the nature of social capital also transformed. Given the reduction of formal employment opportunities, exchanges related to employment moved from formal to informal market, including criminal enterprises, such as drug dealing. Additionally, facing reduced job opportunities, limited exposure to gains achieved through academic performance and employment in the formal job market, many of the respondents in this study described the inevitability of incarceration. As reentering citizens, they encounter structural factors barring them from certain types of housing and employment, as well as attitudes concerning those with histories of incarceration. These conditions should be of great public concern. They limit the individual's capacity to exchange for needed resources influencing rates of persistent poverty in the community thereby affecting family constellations. These forces often drive many returning citizens into reliance on informal markets to meet basic needs and recidivism.

Implication for Social Work

Noting these challenges, the Second Chance Act that passed in 2008, intended to reduce recidivism, increase public safety through evidence-based programs (e.g., substance abuse treatment, alternatives to incarceration, and comprehensive reentry services) within a year of release, unless deemed necessary by a medical or appropriate treatment professional (Justice Center, n.d.). Similarly, researchers, such as Clear, Rose, and Ryder (2001) and Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, and Gordon, (2015), have called for expanding services, such as pre- and reentry programming, training, and policy changes to address housing. However, such legislation or advocacy often neglect to engage the resources that exist within the community. Chief among these are the strengths of social networks that persist before, during, and after incarceration. Explicitly stated in the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics is the declaration that the mission of the profession is to participate in enhancing human well-being especially among vulnerable and oppressed communities (NASW, 2013). While there is substantial literature focusing on empowering the individual, there is scant information

concerning engaging communities' social capital and networks to increase and achieve social justice in the macro environment.

Social networks, groups who share common interests, friendship, knowledge, and other forms of interdependency, counter the effects of inadequate services – health and social welfare, and marginalization - isolation and discrimination, influence individual well-being (Cohen, Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000; Ochieng, 2011; Stansfield, 2006), and may work to resolve problems among its members. Social networks offer a variety of social and material gains. A community advocacy paradigm is required to challenge the expectation that returning citizens fit into the society. Rather, community advocacy must engage the community in questioning the prevailing social order and the history that proceeded specific community transformations, such as deindustrialization, devolution, urban renewal and their relationship to community and neighborhood decay.

Engaging these networks is critical in an environment where dwindling funding to the human service sector and increased calls for austerity, shape the reentry experience of these returning citizens. Eliciting participation from existing networks promotes self-determination and ownership (Fetterman, 2002; Wandersman et al., 2004). Subsequently, capacity building engages members of the community in defining its needs, methods of achieving them, and measuring outcomes. Members of the community must explore their relationship to formal, informal, and hidden markets. Such examination includes considering the social and material capital gains within the market as well as the heightened vulnerability (arrest, exposure to violence) of members of the social networks. Further, returning citizens, their communities, advocates, and providers must increase capacity to engage and make use of existing social narratives, such as “personal responsibility” and “exceptionalism” in framing their argument. For example, is it fair that we expect returning citizens to take personal responsibility through work and caring for their families? But are the conditions of release that extend beyond the prison wall, that limit housing and exclude returning citizens from certain forms of employment, prohibitive of such efforts? Alternatively, can the economic condition of the community sustain a living wage?

Formerly incarcerated men, their social network, and community stakeholders describe the presence of social capital, governed by distinct social norms and communication within social networks. They are critical to family functioning, combating poverty, and navigating daily survival. The nature of social capital in many communities has transformed in relation to local and national processes (e.g., recession, unemployment, declines in industries), access to resources, communications and community norms concerning school, parenting, and exposure to surveillance. This examination of the lives of Black men returning to their communities, after incarceration, challenges us to consider the experiences of marginalized communities and efforts to intervene that focuses on the shifting interaction of individuals multiple identities (e.g., community member, reentering citizen) and social locations (marginal community, post-deindustrialized city) (Collins, 2004, Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011).

Limitations and Future Research

Deductive analysis, or top down reasoning, confines members of the community to an identity, behavior, or location (criminals, crime, and slums). Given the small sample size to this

qualitative research project, several limitations must be discussed. First, we cannot generalize the findings to all communities who experience disproportionate rates of incarceration. Second, the data we collected may not reflect the view of all community members. However, although based on a small sample, the findings from the present qualitative study point to the complexity of citizens reentering communities after incarceration and the challenges they, their social networks, and stakeholders, experience in developing and obtaining services. This exploratory research study demonstrates that there is a clear need for larger and better-funded programs to advocate with, and on the behalf of, formerly incarcerated Black men and members of their communities. It also demonstrates that there is resilience in the community that may be harnessed to transform themselves on their own terms.

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