



## Effects of Local-Level Culture on Prison Reentry

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# Nature of the Problem

- About half of all state and federal prisoners are black men
  - 730,000 inmates are released annually (West, 2010)
  - 93% of prison inmates will be released (Petersilia, 2003)
- Recidivism is a confusing measure: 60% recidivism has no clear meaning



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# Social Control Theory

- Concentrates on societal norms and values, and how they influence an ex-offender's decision to re-offend (Sampson & Laub, 1993)
- In neighborhoods where social capital is high, there is little crime and little need for formal policing (Coleman, 1988; Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Putnam, 1995).



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# Recidivism: mainstream perceptions

- Unemployment
- Inadequate housing
- Poor healthcare
- Lack of education
- Need for M/H or substance abuse treatment

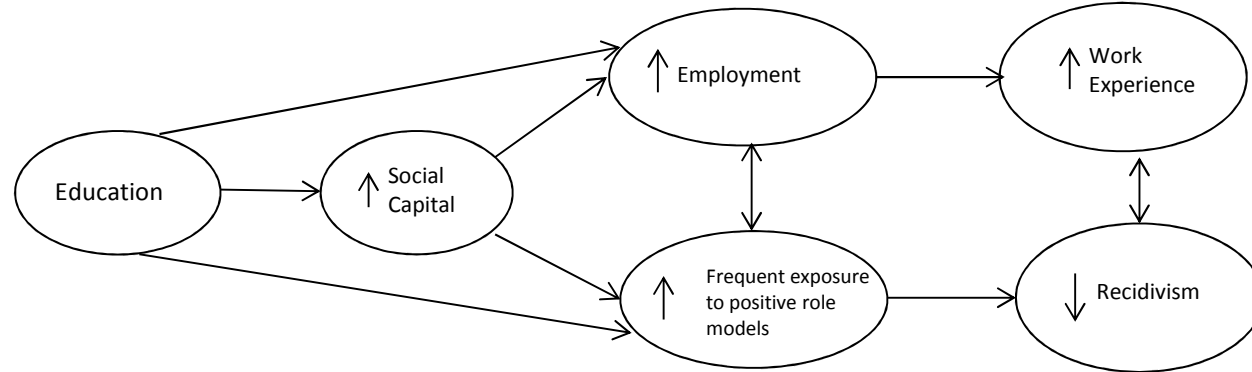


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# Mainstream Society's Perception of Theoretical Causal Process



# What is a cross-cultural approach to recidivism?

- Cross-cultural interpretation of recidivism defines it by intra-community values, norms, and expectations
- Mainstream perceptions are *ethnocentric*
- Collective mainstream culture was not affected by civil rights deprivation. Therefore, ....
  - education leads to a non-criminal lifestyle
  - everyone has equal access to education
  - everyone has equal access to employment and complementary privileges of mainstream society



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# Black community culture

- Black culture suffers effects of centuries of civil rights deprivation
- Black cultural expectations adjusted to life w/o civil rights
  - w/o access to education and its social and economic mobility
  - w/o freedom of vertical mobility



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# Black community culture

- Assumption: imprisonment in black communities has a cultural meaning different from mainstream community
- Black culture interprets imprisonment & recidivism within cultural conditions affected by civil rights deprivation:
  - Intra-community economic opportunities are limited
  - Intra-community education is relatively low
    - National data on reading: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level
  - Highly restricted social mobility



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# How do we help ourselves?

- Cannot rely on mainstream community
- We need culturally competent approaches
  - Adjust expectations to cultural norms and expectations
- Culturally competent reentry programs
- Culturally competent personnel
- *Black communities' responsibility to reduce imprisonment and recidivism rates*



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