

New Research Reveals New Approach to Prisoner Reintegration

Breaking the Reintegration-Recidivism Gridlock

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, October 15, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As more nonviolent offenders return to the community, post-release community support and parole and probation services may be strained. The release is one thin. Remaining free from re-incarceration becomes the challenge that historically plagues post-release service providers. According to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#), at least 168,000 individuals were re-incarcerated for technical violations. [Dr. Linda F. Williams, DSW](#), lead researcher on the Emergent Voices Research Project says,



Navigating Post-Release is a Chess Game

“Probation or parole are setups for failure. Meeting technical requirements is a challenge. You can’t major on a punitive focus and support reintegrating individuals. It’s one or the other and the old carrot-and-stick criminal justice paradigms exacerbate, rather than eliminate or reduce recidivism.”

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You can’t major on a punitive focus while also supporting reintegrating individuals . . . the old carrot-and-stick criminal justice paradigms exacerbate, rather than eliminate or reduce, recidivism.”

Dr. Linda F. Williams, DSW

Dr. Williams’ research examined the implications of human agency and self-determination on the desistance decisions of formerly criminal justice-involved individuals. Study participants included formerly incarcerated individuals who had been out of prison for 15- to 23-years. It also included current or former parole and probation officers.

The research findings indicated that desistance decisions occurred as a progression of identified turning points in the lives of the formerly incarcerated participants. All of them experienced from two to four re-incarcerations before permanently desisting from criminal activity. All of them indicated that successful reintegration depended on the individual, regardless of participation in reentry programs. Most of the otherwise compliance-focused probation and parole officer participants agreed.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Williams’ recommendations for future reintegration research include:

- Use stratified sampling to facilitate a deeper understanding of developmental influences on desistance decisions.

- Identify and address cognitive implications at each stage of the desistance journey.
- Identify triarchic influences of personal, behavioral, and environmental causalities at play at each stage of criminal desistance.
- Incorporate consistent consideration of participant-specific qualitative data at each stage of quantitative analysis.

“Psycho-dynamic shifts that emerge from participant narratives get lost to data aggregation. However, the qualitative nuances evident in the narratives of reintegrating individuals should augment the quantitative analysis,” says Dr. Williams.

ADVOCACY FOCUS

Williams further recommends that criminal justice policy advocates should push for abandoning punitive-deficiency and control-based paradigms in reintegration program design. We should advocate for an appreciative-opportunistic view that takes into account the perspectives of reintegrating individuals.

RECOMMENDATION FOR EXISTING PROGRAM DESIGN

Dr. Williams’ offers the following recommendations for existing reintegration service providers:

- Consider the developmentally distinct aspects of the participant.
- Recognize that a series of turning points facilitate the multiple desistance decisions before an individual achieves permanent desistance; and
- Acknowledge and leverage the implications of human agency in desistance decisions across the life-course.

Read the research report, “Emergent Voices: Reintegration and Desistance from the Perspectives of Formerly Criminal Justice-Involved Individuals” at EmergentVoicesResearch.com.

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