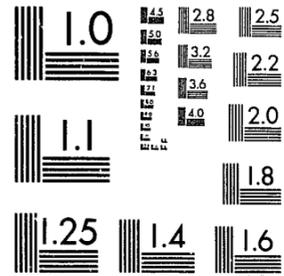


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OFFENDER PARTICIPATION IN CORRECTIONS: A SUMMARY REPORT

By

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National Institute of Justice

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This paper provides a brief summary of the findings of a national survey conducted in late 1980 and early 1981 of 100 offender participation programs in correctional settings.¹

Broadly speaking, "offender participation" refers to programs, policies, and practices that utilize offenders as a correctional resource. Rather than being merely a passive recipient of correctional services, the offender is actively involved in the provision and delivery of services. The underlying assumption is that the special experience and background of offenders may make them particularly effective as correctional workers. In addition, involving offenders in positions of responsibility may produce positive change both in participants themselves and also in the correctional system as a whole.

The Offender Participation Project was designed to stimulate interest in the concept of offenders' participating in the correctional process in an affirmative manner, to provide information on current offender participation programs and, in so doing, to develop a model for agencies to implement similar programs in their institutions or in the community.

As Larry Dye has noted in his Foreword to the full report: "In reality there are few 'new roles' for ex-offenders in corrections; offenders have been performing in a variety of roles in all phases of correctional work since the inception of the first penitentiary. The correctional system has relied upon inmates for institutional maintenance, assistance in diagnostics, education, treatment, and research efforts. In fact, the correctional system could not function without offender participation in support roles. However, these roles have been developed for inmates through economic pressure, exploitation, and personal manipulation rather than through any philosophical belief in the value of inmate involvement in correctional work. It would be hard to think of any area in the administration of justice in which we have not had some experience with the offender and ex-offender contributing manpower. Yet in spite of demonstrations of offender staff potential, it appears that there is a question as to the value of the ex-offender as a manpower resource. The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals succinctly stated the problem: 'Interestingly, correctional agencies will employ someone at sub-standard wages in prison, but refuse to employ the same person on release.' So, in spite of demonstrated capability in the institution, the offender is still not employable upon release

¹The full report, Offender Participation in Corrections: Methods for Involving Offenders and Ex-Offenders in the Correctional Process is available from the National Institute of Corrections Clearinghouse, Boulder, Colo.

from the institution." Furthermore, what is needed are "practical models of offender participation, models for both continuing and legitimizing the roles of offenders and ex-offenders within the mainstream of the correctional process, along with an offender participation program that brings staff and inmates together. Inmates and staff can work together to try to bring about notable social change within the correctional institution. This (study) has tried to capture and present some of the models for this collaboration."

A Typology of Offender Participation Programs

Most of the literature on offender participation was produced from the late 1960's through the early 1970's. Our first typology derived from the literature appears as follows:

a. Institution-Based

1. Educational programs initiated or staffed by offenders or ex-offenders
2. Therapeutic communities with inmates in therapy roles
3. "Participatory management" -- advisory councils, self-government, grievance mechanisms
4. Community service programs, e.g., "Scared Straight"

b. Community-Based

1. Community residential facilities staffed by offenders and ex-offenders -- halfway houses, drug/alcohol treatment centers
2. Correctional field services utilizing offenders and ex-offenders -- probation/parole aides, youth workers
3. Re-entry programs initiated or staffed by offenders/ex-offenders -- peer counseling, self-help groups
4. Employment programs and services for ex-offenders.

By July, 1980 a very high percentage of the programs discussed in the literature were apparently no longer in existence, according to the "last known date of operation" which we could identify.

The current survey produced a similar array of programs which were grouped into a typology of function, rather than location, resulting in five types of programs as follows:

- 1) Human Service Aides. Programs designed to utilize indigenous personnel, i.e., those currently under an agency's supervision, in human service roles. These include parole and probation aides, peer counselors, teacher aides, child care aides, suicide prevention aides, and other paraprofessional roles. The experience gained may, in varying degrees, prepare the offender for future job opportunities.
- 2) Education/Training. This category includes two types of programs: a) Special-

ized programs in colleges and universities which provide ex-offenders with the opportunity to obtain a college degree in a supportive environment on a regular college campus. b) Programs which involve local colleges in training incarcerated offenders for paraprofessional jobs. The primary focus in these programs is vocational training leading to a certificate followed by actual work as nursing or medical assistants, human service aides, or mental health technicians.

- 3) Community Service. Programs in which incarcerated offenders use their own criminal experiences and interpersonal skills to inform youth and others in the community about the realities of prison life. Although the effect of these programs on youth has been debated, the role assumed by the inmate often provides an opportunity for counseling, education, and public relations.
- 4) Participatory Management. This category includes inmate advisory councils, unit self-government, and committees dealing with specific areas such as grievances, food services, or recreation. While it involves a somewhat different set of issues than the programs previously discussed, the subject cannot be ignored in any comprehensive treatment of offender participation. The participating inmates assume a range of responsibilities and interact with staff and administration as representatives, not as individuals. Although councils are usually advisory in nature, the same can be said of many commissions in the outside world, yet their importance for citizen input and their contributions to decision-making are significant.
- 5) Ex-Offender Participation. Paid employment of ex-offenders in correctional agencies and in private agencies whose clients are offenders or ex-offenders. The largest and best known examples, such as the Fortune Society, Seventh Step, Delancey Street, and Synanon, are not included in this study. Rather, it includes several correctional agencies and many small programs, which, as part of their strategy, hire ex-offenders to provide correctional services. This category consists of twelve community residential facilities, seven employment and training programs, five re-entry or pre-release programs, four social service programs, two institutional treatment programs, one state department of corrections, and one adult probation department. The occupational roles of ex-offenders in these programs range from secretary to executive director, but most often the ex-offender is employed as a counselor or job developer.

Summary of Research Findings

This section provides an overview of characteristics of the five types of offender participation programs.

Program Settings. Most of the institutional programs identified are found in state prisons, with a few in jails or Federal facilities. In the community, private organizations serving offenders or ex-offenders account for most of the activity, primarily in ex-offender employment. A few programs exist in state probation or parole but none were found in county probation departments. Geographically, we received information on programs located in 26 states. We must emphasize that this does not necessarily indicate state sponsorship, but it gives some indication of correctional climates. The two most populous states, California and New York, account for 30 percent of the programs, with California showing the most diversity, being represented in all program types. New Jersey's prominence reflects a strong history and continuing commitment to paraprofessionals by the New Jersey Department of Corrections. Ohio, Washington, Michigan, and Virginia contributed four to seven programs each to the study. Massachusetts and Minnesota, states with a community corrections thrust, supplied the most programs utilizing ex-offenders as employees in community-based programs.

The size of the community in which a program operates depends on the prison versus community location. Most programs which occur mainly in prisons, such as participatory management programs, are usually in small communities with less than 25,000 people; while, in contrast, over half of the ex-offender programs which are mainly community-based, are in cities of half a million or more. Program accessibility follows the same pattern with ex-offender programs being easily reached by public transportation in contrast to prison programs.

Administrative goals can also be viewed as a setting factor since they influence the priorities which may be asserted in matters affecting a given program. About two-thirds of the administrators of human services and education/training programs consider reintegration of the offender their top priority, as do 44 percent of ex-offender programs. Administrators who were involved in community service or participatory management were most often concerned with custody and security, with re-socialization coming in second for community service programs, and a humane environment being a second goal for those involved in participatory management.

From one-half to three-fourths of the program administrators reported consensus between their goals and those of their agency. Over-all priorities of administrators tend to be congruent with the goals of their offender participation programs:

Type of Program	Administrative Goal	Program Goals
1. Human Service Aides 2. Education/Training 3. Ex-offender employment	Reintegration	Provide support services for re-entry, education/training, employment.
4. Community Service	Custody/Security and Resocialization	Provide services to other offenders, especially juveniles
5. Participatory Management	Custody/Security and a Humane Environment	Improve communications between inmates and administration.

Program Origins. About one-fourth of the programs were initiated by offenders or ex-offenders; nearly one-half of the programs were inspired or influenced by knowledge of similar activities elsewhere. Seven out of ten programs reported strong administrative support.

Age of Programs. From the literature search it appeared that many programs had not survived ten or fifteen years. Often this was the case. Of eleven parole/probation aide programs only two are still alive. Other types of activities had died in one place and sprouted up in another, and still other kinds of programs surfaced which had not been found in literature, such as inmate-operated pre-release centers within the walls.

Overall, about one-third of the programs had existed for eight years or more, another third from four to seven years, and 24 percent were less than four years old. None of the community service programs responding were in the top age group; proportionately these are the "newest" form and have indeed received the most public attention in recent years. The distribution of program age suggests that these programs are viable; they can, but not all do, survive shifts in policy and negative pressures. Furthermore, interest in offender participation is still alive, although not part of any movement or push in recent years. Offender participation is in a sustenance mode, not one of growth, despite increased numbers of offenders.

Number of Offenders Involved. Over half of the offender participation programs (57 percent) involve ten or fewer offenders. Among the agencies that hire ex-offenders to work with other offenders or ex-offenders, 71 percent have one to five ex-offenders on the payroll. Basically small numbers are involved in any given project. The few exceptions are in the university or college-based support centers in the community with 50 to 70 offenders involved, the Suicide Prevention Aides in New York City who number 150, and multiple inmate committee structures in some institutions which include 60 to 70 inmates. The largest number reported came from the Housing Units Program at

Muskegon (Michigan) Correctional Facility which involves 622 men or the total inmate population in the decision-making process and draws on the therapeutic community mode. Given the small numbers in most programs, we would expect to see discretion exercised in participant selection.

Selection of Participants. In response to an open-ended question on methods of selecting participants, responses did not always address both the criteria for selection and the process through which selection occurs. Sometimes, as in the case of inmate councils, process dominates via election. Education/training and human service programs are more likely to spell out established criteria, especially educational requirements. Because of missing data, this item is suggestive but by no means exhaustive. It suggests that many programs keep it loose, as far as criteria are concerned, or have not set down in writing the factors which influence the selection process.

Average Length of Participation in Program. Three out of five offenders participate in these programs for a year or less. Participation in education/training and in some human service programs is often related to completing a course of study; in other cases, the length of involvement is related to length of sentence. Inmate councils are most precise on this dimension because representatives are elected for definite periods of time, usually four to six months.

Staff Involvement and Training. Most of these programs involve a small number of staff on a part-time basis. Often the duties related to program activities come out of an officer's, counselor's, or administrator's regular workload. If grant funds are involved, it is more likely that a staff member will be paid specifically for work with the participation program. In forty percent of the programs, staff receive no training geared toward offender participation. This is true for 80 percent of staff involved with inmate councils in participatory management. Staff in ex-offender programs are most likely to receive training, followed by those who work with human service programs. In both instances, program staff most often conduct the training themselves. Community resources are not used to any extent for staff training.

Program Resources. We were interested in the resources available to these programs, especially in the institutional setting, where the level of resources would be an indicator of program support. The vast majority of programs operate on a regular schedule (82 percent) and have their own program space (67 percent). Community service programs are notably low in the latter category. The importance of program space is that it provides a home base and a place where participants can interact and share experiences. In most program types about half of the offenders receive training prior to participation, but not so in participatory management, where only two out of 25 programs provide orientation for inmate council members. However, all programs are more likely to offer some kind of on-going training to participants

once a program is underway.

About half of the sponsoring agencies provide other support services, such as additional space for meetings (28 percent), transportation for offender participants or their clients (17 percent), meals and food (15 percent), staff (15 percent), and supplies and equipment (15 percent). These contributions are often crucial to programs with inadequate resources of their own.

Community Resources. The most common community involvement takes the form of linkage with community agencies and groups through information sharing and client referrals. This was mentioned by four out of ten programs. As expected, ex-offender programs have the highest degree of involvement with the community in a variety of areas, while inmate councils are scarcely involved at all.

Program Benefits. Despite the varied goals and activities of the five types of groups, all but inmate councils place high value on the personal change which offenders undergo as a result of their participation. Personal change is perceived in terms of rehabilitation or resocialization, accepting responsibility for one's own behavior, gaining self-respect, etc. About four out of ten education and ex-offender employment projects see the acquisition of skills for the world of work as the primary benefit. Helping others is the main theme in one-fourth of human service programs and in one-third of those providing community service. Participatory management again stands alone with benefits geared toward improving the institution rather than the individual. Secondary benefits range across program types, indicating that many administrators perceive a range of benefits accruing to offenders through diverse activities. As far as the benefits which an institution or agency derives from offender participation programs, responses are most often stated in terms of meeting the needs of offenders, not so much the participants themselves but other offenders, their peers or their clients, who receive direct services or experience beneficial effects from improvements in the institutional climate.

Program Evaluation. Nearly two-thirds of the programs (62 percent) reported some level of program evaluation. In two-thirds of these cases the administrator or staff performs this function; in 18 percent the department of corrections is responsible. Evaluators from another source such as a university or a funder are involved in about one-third of the programs. The few evaluations which were available for review ranged from implementation reports to outcome studies.

In summary, "While the evidence illustrates that there are some fairly well conceptualized ways to proceed, further experimentation and innovation are needed. A true offender participation model calls for inmates and staff alike to have a voice in the participatory management policy of the institution. Community representatives should also be intimately involved with the institutional planning in programs. With

the adoption of such a philosophy and program thrust, it is necessary that organizational structures, personnel practices, program resources, and decision making methods be changed to reflect the new philosophy." (Dye, 1981).

EPILOGUE

by

J. Douglas Grant

President; Social Action Research Center

Certainly developments in offender participation have been spotty since Larry Dye and the National Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training fostered the symposium and monograph of that title in 1972. It would be possible to dismiss the entire thrust as just another good idea that didn't work if it weren't for the rather excessive number of notable exceptions. In addition to the programs directly discussed in this report, there are the community based efforts such as Fortune Society and Delancey Street along with the House of Umoja and the others discussed by Woodson (1981) in his recent book on neighborhood mediating structures. There are also the programs referred to by Larry Dye in the introduction. His program in the Pittsfield Jail (Fred Cohen, 1976) was a dramatic demonstration of the power of inmate and correctional officer shared participation. Certainly, the new careers study of which both he and I are participants, has for 17 years demonstrated the power of offender participation, not only in bringing about individual change in offenders, but also in their contributions to society.

What does this mean? Scott (1981) in a recent review of the exemplary offender participation program in the Ohio State Parole System points out the tremendous problem of shrinking budgets and the priorities given on bases other than effectiveness for determining who and what survives. He emphasizes how important it is to have a strong support system for a program and how staff burn-out is a phenomenon to be considered when developing meaningful roles for offenders themselves. A more general statement of Scott's observations is that we need to direct our attention to the settings in which programs are attempted.

Let us take a closer look at the implications of the setting in terms of program development. The Offender New Careers Program was developed in the setting of Richard McGee's latest book (1981), a relatively promising environment for innovation. However, before the project realized its goal of placing offenders in development roles within the corrections system, a change in the administration

had occurred and its rigidity forced New Careers to a new setting in the community development arena within another opportunity structure provided by the Federal Economic Opportunities legislation. Larry Dye's jail study had both the University and Sheriff's administrative support which provided a climate supportive of participatory developments. Within this climate, as Cohen reports, unbelievable developments occurred. As the settings changed, however, the miracle ceased. It must be more than chance that the strongest examples of employee participation are community based efforts outside the corrections bureaucracy.

What is necessary is a climate that fosters the development of the person; be it staff, inmate or ex-inmate through opportunities to participate in the organization's development. It appears plausible that the more opportunity there is for the offender to actually participate in the development of a program as well as in the operation of a program, the more likely it is that offender participation can be effectively instituted. One approach to merging the involvement of the correctional bureaucracy and a community setting would involve training offenders as community corrections program developers. They would serve as linkers between the bureaucracy and the local mediating structures within the community that are concerned with community development in general and offender reintegration and crime prevention in particular. This model would allow the demonstration of the concept of offender participation in correctional program development which was the intent of the original Offender New Careers Program.

The matter of appropriate settings for participatory strategies has been a central question of Hans Toch's and mine since our work with offenders in the study of institution violence (1980) and police officers as change agents (1975). We are at present engaged in a study with New York state correctional officers participating in corrections renewal and reform. This is leading to a book tentatively titled Change Through Participation, which calls for a shift from classic management to participatory management such as is evolving in industry (Ouchi, 1981). At this point it would seem safe to say that offender participation can only be productive where the bureaucracy can institute an open systems climate which fosters participation in its continual development for all staff and all clients. Lest this sound too demanding, let me quickly say: IT CAN BE DONE.

PROGRAMS IN STUDY

Human Service Aide Programs:

Case Aide Program, Ohio Adult Parole Authority, Columbus OH
 Human Service Aide, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, Harrisburg PA
 Citizen Volunteer Program, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, Harrisburg PA
 Peer Counselors in Pre-release:
 Yardville Reception and Correction Center, Yardville NJ
 Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills NY
 Great Meadow Correctional Facility, Comstock NY
 Queensboro Correctional Facility, Long Island NY
 Fishkill Correctional Center, Beason NY
 Taconic Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills NY
 Elmira Correctional Facility, Elmira NY
 Otisville Correctional Facility, Otisville NY
 Arthur Kill Correctional Facility, Staten Island NY
 Green Haven Correctional Facility, Stormville NY
 Wallkill Correctional Facility, Wallkill NY
 Woodbourne Correctional Facility, Woodbourne NY
 Peer Tutoring, New York City Department of Corrections, Queens NY
 Instructional Aides, Purdy Treatment Center, Gig Harbor WA
 Intensive Education, Yardville Reception and Correction Center, Yardville NJ
 Teacher Aides, Yardville Reception and Correction Center, Yardville NJ
 Child Care Aides, Prison MATCH, Federal Correctional Institution, Pleasanton CA
 Nursery School Aides, Purdy Treatment Center, Gig Harbor WA
 Concept Aides, Dept. of the Youth Authority, Chino CA
 Paraprofessional Workers, Yardville Reception and Correction Center, Yardville NJ
 Paraprofessionals, New Jersey Division of Juvenile Services, Trenton NJ
 Suicide Prevention Aides, New York City Department of Corrections, New York NY

Education and Training Programs:

Ex-Offender Program, Pima Community College, Tucson AZ
 Paraprofessional Training Program, Lassen Community College, Susanville CA
 Rebound Program, San Francisco State University, San Francisco CA
 University Alternative Program, San Jose State University, San Jose CA
 Human Service Training, Florida Correctional Institution, Lowell FL
 Mental Health Technician Training, Dwight Correctional Center, Dwight IL
 Nursing Assistant Training, Schoolcraft College, Livonia MI
 Medical Assistant Training, Youth Correctional Institution, Annandale NJ

Community Service Programs:

Plain Truth, Kilby Correctional Center, Montgomery AL
 Another Way, Sierra Conservation Center, Jamestown CA
 J.O.L.T., State Prison of Southern Michigan, Jackson MI
 Youth Services Group, Missouri State Penitentiary, Jefferson City MO
 Lifers' Juvenile Awareness, New Jersey State Prison, Rahway NJ
 Youth Enlightenment Seminar, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, Riverhead NY
 Checkmate, Marion Correctional Institution, Marion OH
 Youth Assistant Program, Wise Correctional Center, Coeburn VA
 Community Involvement Group, James River Correctional Center, State Farm VA
 Community Speaking Program, Federal Correctional Institution, Morgantown WV
 Speakers' Group, Larch Corrections Center, Yacolt WA

Participatory Management Programs:

Men's Advisory Council, Sierra Conservation Center, Jamestown CA
 Inmate Council, Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, Milpitas CA
 Men's Advisory Council, California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi CA
 Men's Advisory Council, California State Prison, San Quentin CA
 Inmate Human Relations Committee, California Correctional Inst., Tehachapi CA
 Staff-Resident Council, Iowa Women's Reformatory, Rockwell City IA
 Inmate Advisory Council, State Prison of Southern Michigan, Jackson MI
 Housing Units Program, Muskegon Correctional Facility, Muskegon MI
 Dormitory Council Program, Ozark Correctional Center, Fordland Mo
 Inmate Advisory Committee, Northern Nevada Correctional Center, Carson City NV
 Inmate Advisory Committee, Southern Nevada Correctional Center, Jean NV
 Resident Liaison Council, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, Riverhead NY
 Recreation and Entertainment Committee, London Correctional Inst., London OH
 Food and Food Service Committee, London Correctional Institution, London OH
 Stockade Inmate Council, Marion Correctional Institution, Marion OH
 Honor Dormitory Council, Marion Correctional Institution, Marion OH
 Inmate Council, South Dakota Women's Correctional Facility, Yankton SD
 Resident Council, Turney Center, Only TN
 Inmate Advisory Council, James River Correctional Center, State Farm VA
 Inmate Advisory Council, Powhatan Correctional Center, State Farm VA
 Resident Council, Purdy Treatment Center for Women, Gig Harbor WA
 Resident Advisory Council, Washington State Reformatory, Monroe WA
 Warden's Council, Federal Correctional Institution, Alderson WV
 Resident Advisory Committee, Federal Correctional Institution, Morgantown WV
 Reintegration Advisory Project, Fox Lake Correctional Institution, Fox Lake WI

Ex-Offender Employment:

OK Community, Phoenix AZ
 Conception, Inc., Sacramento CA
 Project J.O.V.E., San Diego CA
 Project One Way, Deuel Vocational Institution, Tracy CA
 American G.I. Forum, Denver CO
 Employ-Ex, Denver CO
 Connecticut Adult Probation Department, Hartford CT
 Broward Employment and Training Administration, Ft. Lauderdale FL
 On-the-Job Training, Kentucky Dept. of Justice, Louisville KY
 Prisoner Release Ministry, Inc., Joliet IL
 Prisoner & Community Together, Inc., Bradley House, Michigan IN
 Self-Development Group, Inc., Boston MA
 Massachusetts Half-Way Houses, Inc. (four programs), Boston MA
 Michigan Department of Corrections, Lansing MI
 Alpha House, Anishinabe Longhouse, Damascus Way, Eden House, 180 Degrees, and
 Portland House, Minneapolis MN
 Youth Correctional Institution, Annandale NJ
 Neighborhood Work Project, Vera Institute of Justice, New York NY
 Special Achievement Council, Columbus OH
 Switchback and Women's Residential Program, Salvation Army, Dallas TX
 New Directions Club, Inc., Houston TX
 Work-Training Release, Purdy Treatment Center, Gig Harbor WA
 Pre-release Program, Federal Correctional Institution, Alderson WV

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