



# REBUILDING LIVES: INTRA-FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS OF FORMER PRISONERS



Damian J. Martinez  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
School of Criminal Justice  
(joint appointment with Department of Social Work)



**RUTGERS**  
School of Criminal Justice



# Outline

- Reentry Statistics
  - Family Involvement
  - Research Findings
  - Future Directions and Implications
- 

# Reentry Statistics


- National
  - 95% of all state prisoners will be released from prison at some point (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).
  - More than 600,000 individuals are released from prisons annually (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).
- State—New Jersey
  - In 2002, nearly 15,000 individuals were released from prisons, almost 4 times the number of those released in 1980 (3,910) (Travis, Keegan, Cadora, Solomon, & Swartz, 2003).
  - Nearly one-third of individuals released from prisons in 2002 returned to Essex (16% [2,430]) and Camden county (15% [2,270]). (Travis, Keegan, Cadora, Solomon, & Swartz, 2003).
  - In Newark, 13% (1,705) of the total population returned. (Travis, Keegan, Cadora, Solomon, & Swartz, 2003).

# Family Involvement

- Former prisoners often reside and interact with their families of origin (Fishman, 1986; LaVigne, Visher, & Castro, 2004; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999; Nurse, 2002; O'Brien, 2001).
- Focuses on the perspective of the former prisoner (Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000; Ekland-Olson, Supanic, Campbell, & Lenihan, 1983; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999), but do not have a full understanding of family members' roles.
- Evidence that families give support to former prisoners (O'Brien, 2001; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999), but identifying support has been neglected.



# Research Findings

- Former prisoners provide social support.
  - The exchange of social support is a two-way street (bi-directional).
  - Former prisoners and family members perceived that the availability of support would be provided if needed.
  - Social support is complex and cannot be easily categorized into mutually exclusive types.
- 



# Future Directions and Implications

- Identify family members with whom former prisoners share close ties.
  - Include and integrate those individuals into prisoner reentry programs.
  - Incorporate the use of a program liaison to assist with maintaining and improving healthy relationships.
  - Encourage the use of non-resource-based mechanisms of support.
- 