

Justice System Involvement of Young Men in Polk County: Implications for Family Strengthening

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Introduction

Most people start families when they are relatively young in their adult lives, between the ages of 18 and 34. Children do best when they have constant, consistent, and nurturing sources of support from both parents. Society has a large stake in strengthening families to support their children's growth and development.

The criminal justice system is established to protect children and families, but it also can disrupt families through incarceration and can make it difficult for parents with criminal justice records to fulfill family economic obligations, either as a direct breadwinner for the home or through child support.

While the criminal justice system affects both sexes, nearly 90% of all persons arrested, convicted, on probation or parole, and in prison are men. This can have a significant impact on the availability of fathers in supporting and raising their children, particularly in certain neighborhoods and in races where the rate of criminal justice system involvement is particularly high.

William Julius Wilson's classic book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, documented the decline in "marriagable males" in certain inner-city Chicago by contrasting the number of working young men compared with the number of young women. His work drew from census data from 1950 to 1980, before the dramatic increase in incarceration in the country. Today, there needs to be additional analysis that focuses upon criminal justice system involvement of young men, by neighborhood and by race.

Data and Methodology for the Report

This report provides information for Polk County on the rate of criminal justice system involvement of young men by both neighborhood and by race (Black, Hispanic, and White nonHispanic, the designations provided by criminal justice data).

Four data sources were used in compiling this report:

1. Census data, which provided data for 2000 on the number of young men (18-34) by census tract and by race.
2. Prison population data, which provided point-in-time data for 2003 on the number of young men (18-34) in the state prison system by address at the time of imprisonment and by race.

3. Probation and parole data, which provided data for point-in-time data for 2003 on the number of young men (18-34) on probation or parole in Polk County, by resident address in the county.
4. Jail data, which provided point-in-time data for 2004 on the number of young men in jail by address at the time of arrest.

The probation and parole data contained some missing data on race, which were supplied by assuming that the same race proportions applied to the missing data as applied to the population for which race was provided. In using the jail data, individuals were not included in the count if they were in jail for parole or probation violations, in order to insure that there was not any duplication of count of those on probation or parole and those also in jail.

The Table in the Appendix provides the full data that was employed to provide the Charts below. There are two different calculations used for the Charts.

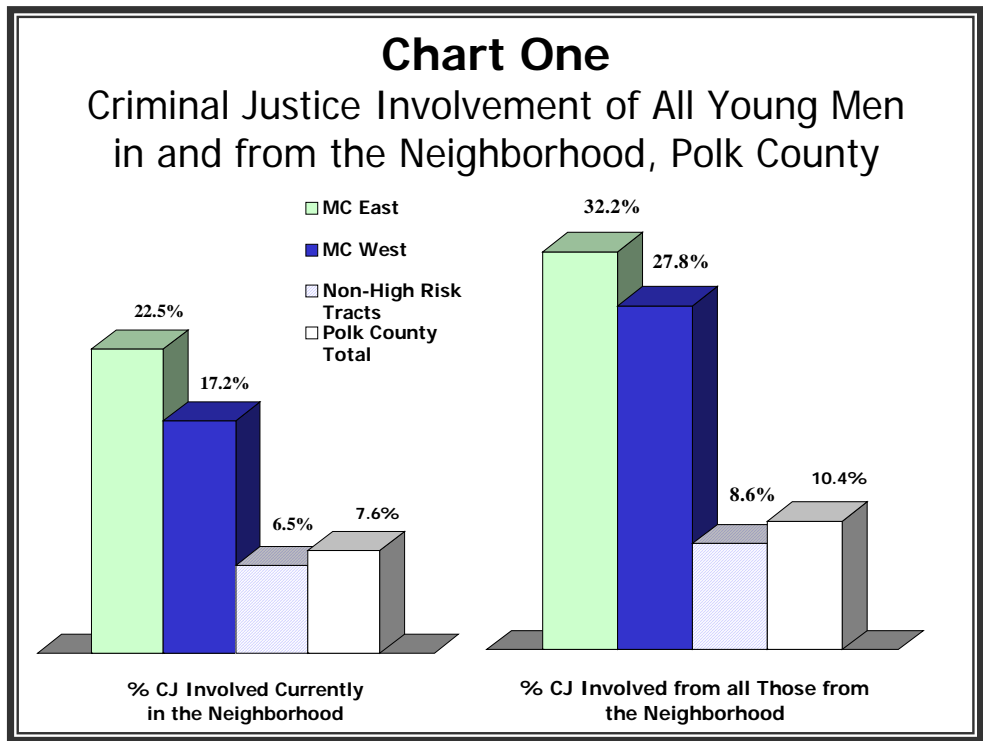
The first is examining the current population **in** the neighborhood and its criminal justice involvement. That is derived by dividing the number of young men on probation and parole by the overall census population. This provides information important information on the characteristics of the current population who can support community building and growth.

The second is by examining the current population **from** the neighborhood and its criminal justice involvement. That is derived by dividing the number of young men in prison, jail, or on probation or parole by the overall census population plus the number of men in prison or jail. The second percentage is a higher percentage and reflects the overall impact of the criminal justice system upon young men from the neighborhood or community.

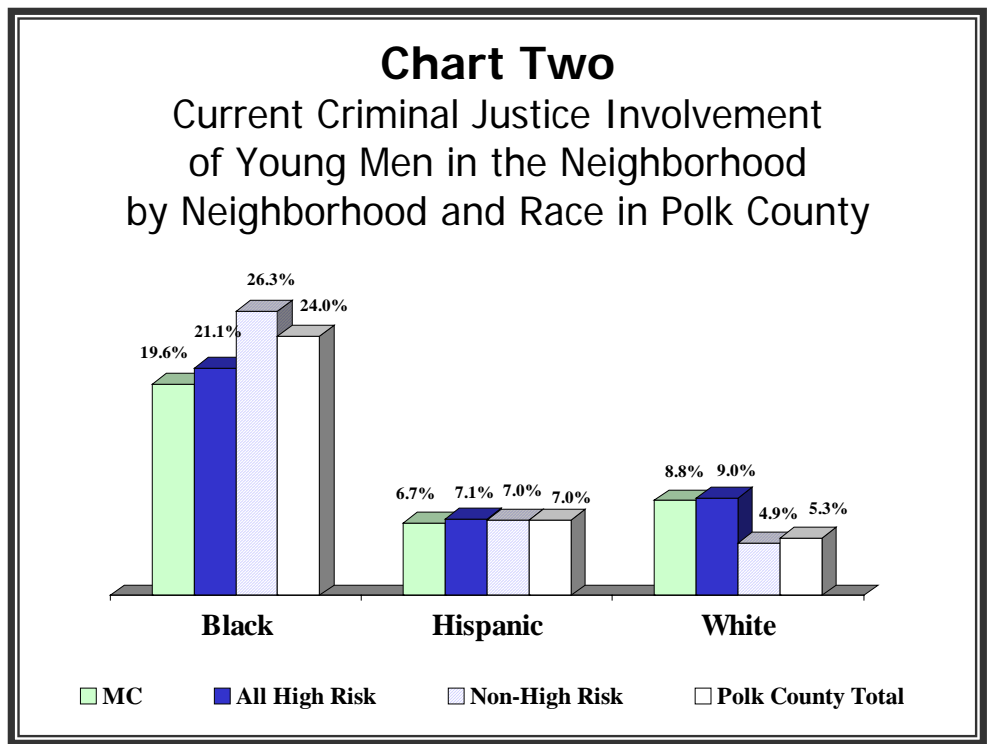
Findings

Chart One shows the rate of criminal justice involvement of both young men **in** the neighborhood and young men **from** the neighborhood – broken down by the two Making Connections neighborhoods and, for comparison purposes, the non high-risk census tracts in Polk County.

As Chart One shows, the rate of criminal justice system involvement of young men is substantially higher in both Making Connections neighborhoods than it is for the rest of Polk County and for Polk County as a whole. It constitutes a very significant share of the pool of young men needed to provide both economic and social support for children. Insuring that these young men can assume responsibilities in both areas – both to assuming appropriate fathering roles and in working to provide economic support – it is particularly important to the economic and social growth and well-being of the Making Connections neighborhoods.

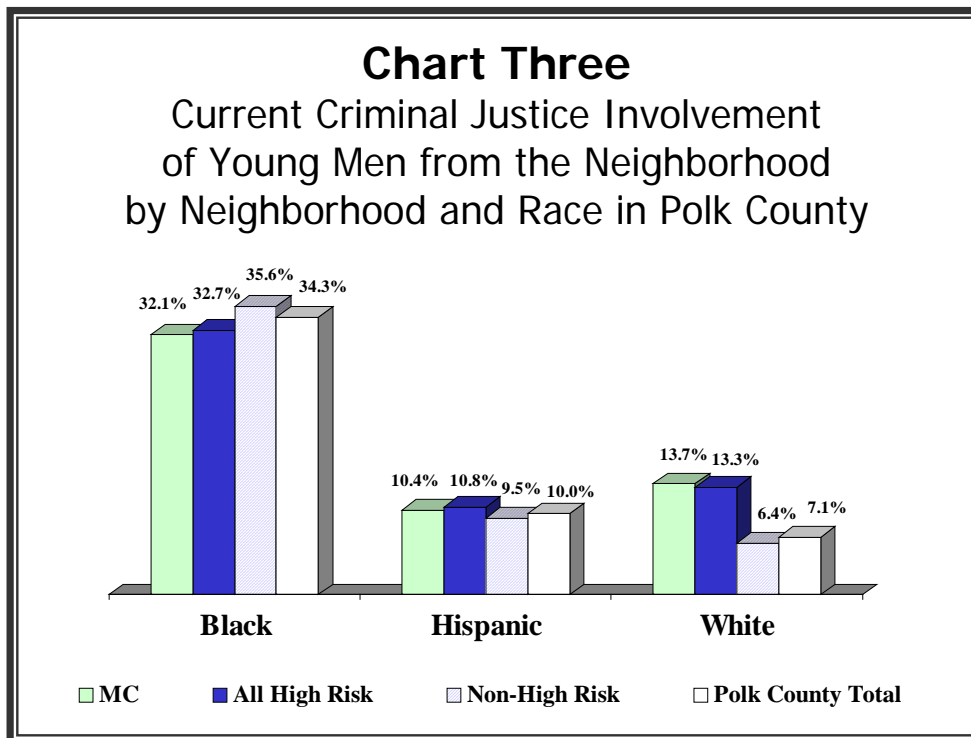


These numbers only tell a part of the story, however. Chart Two shows the rate of current criminal justice involvement (probation or parole) of all men in the community – but this time by race and by geographic location. In this chart, the geographic locations are shown as the two Making Connections neighborhoods together, all high-risk neighborhoods, all non high-risk neighborhoods, and Polk County as a whole. As Chart Two shows, the rate of involvement of Blacks in the criminal justice system is very high



throughout Polk County, actually higher in other parts of the county than in the Making Connections neighborhoods. Nearly one-quarter of young (18-34) Black men in Polk County who are in the community are on probation or parole, more than three times the rate for Hispanic young men and more than four times the rate for White young men, regardless of their geographic location. Moreover, the rates for Blacks and Hispanics are high regardless of geographic location. While White rates in Making Connections and High-Risk are double those in non High-Risk neighborhoods, they are approximately equivalent across neighborhoods for Blacks and Hispanics. Simply residing in Lower-risk neighborhoods does not appear to reduce the likelihood of criminal justice system involvement for either Blacks or Hispanics.

Chart Three shows much the same pattern, when looking at rates of criminal justice system involvement regarding young men **from** different neighborhoods.



Again, Chart Three shows that the impacts of the criminal justice system are pronounced upon young Black men. Over one-third of Polk County young Black men are under some form of supervision by the criminal justice system, more than three times the rate for Hispanic young men and nearly five times the rate for White young men. This figure itself under-represents the number with criminal records that may face significant barriers to employment, housing, education, and other services, as it does not include those who were released from prison without supervision or who have successfully completed their probation or parole.

Discussion

Clearly, the Making Connections neighborhoods and other High-Risk areas of Polk County have disproportionate numbers and percentages of young men with criminal justice system involvement. They should be a focus for restorative justice, re-entry, and other strategies that can help those who have been in the criminal justice system assume economic, social, and parenting roles in the community.

Yet the analysis by neighborhood alone masks huge disparities in the criminal justice system involvement by race. Black young men's involvement – and the barriers that involvement presents to strengthening families and building communities – is so pronounced as to nearly constitute the norm for Black men, irrespective of their geographic location in Polk County. Clearly, their absolute numbers are concentrated in the Making Connections neighborhoods, but strategies and solutions that reduce their involvement and address the barriers that involvement presents must be developed both within Making Connections neighborhoods and in all other parts of Polk County.

Appendix

Justice System Involvement of Young Men (18-34) Black, Hispanic, and White Populations

	MC East	MC West	MC All	All HR	Not HR	POLK
<u>Black Young Men (18-34)</u>						
Prison	39	90	129	155	163	318
Probation	46	87	133	177	297	474
Parole	9	14	23	39	34	73
Jail	9	8	17	21	19	40
Total Crim. Jus. Men in Com.	55	101	156	216	331	547
Total Crim. Jus. Men from Com.	103	199	302	392	513	905
Total Men in Community	182	614	796	1024	1257	2281
Total Men from Community	230	712	942	1200	1439	2639
% Men in Community CJ Inv.	30.2%	16.4%	19.6%	21.1%	26.3%	24.0%
% Men from Community CJ Inv.	44.8%	27.9%	32.1%	32.7%	35.6%	34.3%
<u>Hispanic Young Men</u>						
Prison	9	15	24	30	34	64
Probation	22	45	67	84	152	236
Parole	2	2	4	3	5	8
Jail	5	14	19	21	27	48
Total CJ Men in Com	24	47	71	87	157	244
Total CJ Men from Com.	38	76	114	138	218	356
Total Men in Comm.	436	617	1053	1221	2241	3462
Total Men from Comm.	450	646	1096	1272	2302	3574
% Men in Com. In CJ	5.5%	7.6%	6.7%	7.1%	7.0%	7.0%
% Men from Com. In CJ	8.4%	11.8%	10.4%	10.8%	9.5%	10.0%
<u>White, NonHispanic Young Men</u>						
Prison	69	43	112	149	481	630
Probation	115	52	167	254	1567	1821
Parole	23	10	33	48	161	209
Jail	9	8	17	19	81	100
Total CJ Men in Com.	138	62	200	302	1728	2030
Total CJ Men from Com.	216	113	329	470	2290	2760
Total Men in Com.	1004	1271	2275	3354	34971	38325
Total Men from Com.	1082	1322	2404	3522	35533	39055
% Men from Com. In CJ	13.7%	4.9%	8.8%	9.0%	4.9%	5.3%
% Men from Com. From CJ	20.0%	8.5%	13.7%	13.3%	6.4%	7.1%

All Young Men totals on next page.

Appendix

<u>All Young Men</u>	MC East	MC West	MC All	All HR	Not HR	POLK
Prison	120	158	278	348	689	1037
Probation	194	192	386	538	2061	2599
Parole	32	26	58	91	204	295
Jail	23	30	53	61	131	192
Total CJ Men in Com.	226	218	444	629	2265	2894
Total CJ Men from Com.	369	406	775	1038	3085	4123
Total Men in Com.	1004	1271	2275	3354	34971	38325
Total Men from Com.	1147	1459	2606	3763	35791	39554
% Men in Com. In CJ	22.5%	17.2%	19.5%	18.8%	6.5%	7.6%
% Men in Com. From CJ	32.2%	27.8%	29.7%	27.6%	8.6%	10.4%



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