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Understanding Prisoner Reentry Organizations: Tensions and Strategies for Success in a "Hybrid" Field

By

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Abstract

The field of prisoner reentry is complex organizational field, in that it is permeable to outside political influence and shaped by the various actors and organizations that together comprise it. However, organizational variation within the field that accompanies such political complexity and is embodied in organizations' interactions, has been largely overlooked. Therefore, to better understand reentry organizing, this thesis brings the concept of organizational hybridity as used in social movement organizations literature into the analysis of contemporary reentry politics. I introduce the concept to examine disparities within the field, as black-led community-based organizations appear most often excluded from formal avenues of influence. I use data from reentry staff interviews, multi-organization meetings, and organizational documents to first demonstrate that the reentry field is fraught with three central tensions regarding resource procurement, legitimacy-building, and goal attainment and illustrate how reentry organizations with a "hybrid form" experience these tensions to a heightened degree. Then, I discuss how the "hybrid" organizations tend to these tensions using strategies falling under two umbrellas: coalition-building, and strategic communication. Ultimately, my findings provide evidence for recognizing the capacities of non-state reentry organizations to carry out transformational change, despite the structural constraints of a formal organizational context.

Introduction

On May 26, 2020, people across Minneapolis flocked to the streets in response to the police murder of George Floyd (Buchanan, Bui, & Patel, 2020). Protests amassing between 15 and 26 million people in total continued in the following months under the familiar rallying cry of "Black Lives Matter" (BLM), a social and political movement started in 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for his murder of Trayvon Martin (Buchanan et al, 2020; Chase, 2017). During this renewed period of protest for racial justice, attention to the movement skyrocketed as news coverage, social media posts, and internet searches surrounding BLM abounded. People around the US wondered about the potential social and political impact of the protests, as organizers brought the idea of "defunding police" into mainstream discussion and subsequently, challenged the masses to rethink calls for "police reform," which often funneled more money into police departments as a "solution" to police violence (Diphoorn, Leyh, & Slooter, 2021; Bizel, 2021). Through the popularization of this discourse, more people around the nation were urged to understand policing in a new way: as a system of violence fueled by social inequities, instead of as a solution to societal ills (Diphoorn et al, 2021; Bizel, 2021).

Many journalists and some scholars suggest this shift in national consciousness following the 2020 summer protests constituted a racial reckoning for some and may bring with it potential to see radical changes to criminal justice systems in the US, albeit while acknowledging national political barriers to this possibility (Justice, 2020; Diphoorn et al, 2021). Journalists and scholars, however, were not the only groups to speculate about the possibility of transformational change on the horizon; the imagined realities of advocacy-oriented organizations also shifted in response to the social and political momentum brought by BLM. One organizational field where the

impact of this momentum is particularly apparent is that of prisoner reentry, where similar to the BLM movement, discussions of criminal justice, race, and public safety remain salient.

Existing research on the reentry field often fails to contextualize the actions and platforms of organizations within a political field where the power of the state is not steadfast. Much of reentry scholarship privileges the influence of the state on reentry programming and the corresponding popular attitudes surrounding solutions to recidivism (Kaufman, 2015) as scholars discuss current practices as an extension of a broad political history wherein racist policies born out of the aftermath of slavery and poverty management techniques based in neoliberalism take center stage (Wacquant, 2001; Petersilia, 2003; Western, 2006; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011; Miller, 2014). While this approach is valuable in understanding the historical-structural basis of reentry practices and ideologies, its focus on the top-down influence of the state assumes stability in the manifestation and power of the state as an entity. This is a hotly contested perspective within contemporary sociological literature where "the state" is theorized as an elusive concept whose multiplicity of institutions makes it difficult to study as a unified actor with stable goals and coherent intentionality, given individual actors prove paramount to its functioning (Morgan & Orloff, 2017). Accordingly, studies on reentry programs often overstate the influence of the state on reentry objectives as they undervalue the impact of social movement politics on actors across the field. To confront this issue, this paper explores how reentry politics are shaped by a complex organizational field, one both permeable to outside political influence and shaped by the various actors and organizational forms that together comprise it.

Background: Prisoner Reentry, Race, and a Devolving State

First, it is important to understand that reentry work, though not always primarily performed by NGOs, developed in response to state politics. In the 1970s, the US entered an era

of mass incarceration resulting from the mainstream political stance at the time to be "tough on crime," which in essence meant enacting strict drug policies with racialized implementation (Alexander, 2012). In the immediate aftermath of these policies and the accompanying heightened incarceration, prison demographics shifted dramatically from over 70% white in 1950 to almost 70% black and Latino by 1989 (Wacquant, 2001). Alongside this racial shift, prisons and correctional facilities shifted their focus from rehabilitation to retribution (Simon, 2010) as racial stigmas increasingly informed understandings of crime (Muhammad, 2011).

With retribution becoming the accepted objective of the US prison system, the welfare state also deteriorated as incarceration became the key "solution" to poverty (Soss et al, 2011). However, with a growing number of people released from prison each year, the need for social services was ever more pressing. As a consequence of these circumstances, recidivism rates soared (Travis, 2009). Escaping the revolving cycle of crime to imprisonment to release back to crime and reincarceration remained a near insurmountable challenge when root causes of crime, like poverty and lack of community services, stayed unaddressed and even compounded (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007; Kubrin, Squires, & Stewart, 2007). As a way to counteract these effects, reentry programming through non-state actors, including non-profit and for-profit organizations became commonplace (Garland, 1996; Myrda & Cullen, 1998; Beaty, 2021).

Literature Review

Out of this political and social context, prisoner reentry scholarship was born. Countless studies document the barriers faced by formerly incarcerated people as they attempt to reintegrate into society (Western, 2006; Travis, 2000; Petersilia, 2003). They frequently outline common challenges ex-offenders face after release, which can include but are not limited to issues securing employment (Pager, 2003;), housing (Roman & Travis, 2004), healthcare

(LaVigne, Visher, Yahner, 2004; Haley, 2014), and social support networks (Kjellstrand et al, 2021; Hochstetler, DeLisi, & Pratt, 2010). Additionally, some scholars connect these material challenges faced by ex-prisoners to larger social and political practices, like social stigma (Pager, 2003; Moran, 2012), legal discrimination (Pager, 2006), and permanent punishments, which serve as barriers to political participation, (Uggen, 2002), describing how these structural forces make social barriers significantly more difficult to overcome.

Moreover, these barriers remain a key focus of reentry programming, with some organizations specializing in one area, while others may offer a repertoire of services designed to tackle multiple of the ailments facing formerly incarcerated people as they return to society (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). The proliferation of reentry programs paved the way for another sect of reentry scholarship: one that focuses on reentry programming and organizational practices specifically. Studies in this area generally assess the positive and negative impact of reentry programming on formerly incarcerated individuals as well as on larger understandings of "criminal justice" in the US context. However, there is a dearth of studies on reentry programming that focus on reentry organizations in their own right.

My research lies at the intersection of literatures on prisoner reentry programming and social movement organizations to bring the organizational dimension of reentry to the forefront. Extant reentry programming literature is largely evaluative, focusing on either determining "what works" in helping formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society or assessing the role of reentry programming in the maintenance or expansion of the penal state. The first branch of evaluative work generally highlights certain aspects of reentry programming and organizational practices in a positive light. They typically emphasize how reentry programs and practices can serve as "benevolent brokers of capital" (Ajunwa, 2017) by reducing barriers to finding

employment or housing (Petersilia, 2003; Simon, 2005) or offering means of "rehabilitation" and social support (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis, 2009) through provision of mental health (Hanna et al, 2020) or family reunification services (Skinner-Osei & Stepteau-Watson, 2018).

A strength of these studies is that they empirically counter the "nothing works" approach to studying prisoner reentry, which was particularly popular in the 1990s (Petersilia, 2004; Petersilia, 2003; Seiter & Kadela, 2003) and victim blamed poor communities of color for their own disenfranchisement (Miller, 2014; Petersilia, 2004). Studies that focus on the ability of reentry programming to broker social, cultural, or economic capital challenge this narrative by providing evidence that some reentry programs and practices provide ex-prisoners with the skills and support necessary to overcome barriers to reintegration and reduce recidivism (Petersilia, 2003; Petersilia, 2004; Ajunwa, 2017). Although, this strand of literature is not without weakness. While this type of research demonstrates the benefits of reentry programming, it lacks examination of how these programs contribute to continued policing of ex-prisoners (Prior, 2020; Miller, 2014) and more broadly, the maintenance of state violence against marginalized groups (Thompkins, 2010).

The second evaluative approach within the literature, which analyzes the role of reentry programming in maintaining or expanding the penal state, addresses this weakness. Studies in this camp highlight aspects of reentry that remain problematic by assessing the discourses and practices of reentry programs to reveal their ideological underpinnings and consequent implications. A shining example of this type of work is Soss, Fording, and Schrams' characterization of reentry organizations as interstitial institutions connecting the penal and welfare states where the poor are governed through "responsibilizing discourses and practices" (2011; Prior, 2020). This responsibilizing role harkens back to a Foucauldian concept of

disciplinary power, wherein power is diffuse and functions to optimize certain outcomes (1995). In this perspective, power operates within the discourses and practices of reentry organizations and produces persons who ascribe to neoliberal notions of personal responsibility and work ethic as key predictors of success (Soss, et al., 2011). Other studies build on this idea of reentry programming having a disciplinary function by characterizing these programs as a "collusion" of the welfare and carceral states to manage the lives of the poor (Miller, 2014), an "extension of punitive containment" (Wacquant, 2010), and a significant part of a "Social Control Industrial Complex" (Thompkins, 2010).

A strength of these works is that they complicate earlier understandings of prisoner reentry programs. Instead of viewing the organizations as a solely benevolent force, studies in this area understand the "structure, role, and operation of the state" in ex-prisoners' daily lives through these programs (Miller, 2014; Soss, et al., 2014). However, in emphasizing the punitive aspects of prison reentry programs, scholars risk diminishing the material good reentry programs do for ex-prisoners and subsequently their communities e.g., providing avenues to stable employment and housing and offering mental health services (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Ajunwa, 2017).

Additionally, studies that implicate reentry organizations in the normalization of punitive state policies and goals often fail to account for variation among reentry organizations or recognize the ways in which these groups, which are often NGOs, and more specifically, non-profits, do exercise agency, implementing practices and pursuing goals that are not aligned with those of the state (Kaufman, 2015). This weakness is indicative of a tendency in the literature on reentry programming to assess practices and discourses organizations engage in, while

dedicating less attention to how an organizational context or specific organizational forms impact the process of reentry.

Fortunately, while reentry literature that focuses on the organizational context of the field in its own right is sparse, it isn't nonexistent. Current studies begin mapping the organizational dimension of reentry by drawing attention to the ways in which an organizational context impacts reentry outcomes as well as interactions across organizations and among reentry actors and clients. The existing studies focus on the style of interaction between nonprofit organizational actors and clients (Mijs, 2016), variation in nonprofit and for-profit reentry organizational forms (Beaty, 2021), challenges introduced by fragmentation within the organizational field (Nhan, Bowen, Polzer, 2017), and the agency non-state organizational actors exercise within a devolved reentry field (Kaufman, 2015).

Each of these studies underscore positive and negative consequences of an organizational reentry context for formerly incarcerated individuals as they return to society. Likewise, the strength of the few existing studies in this area of reentry research lies in the connections they draw between reentry politics, organizational forms, and the state, as they highlight the influence the state has on the form organizations take on through policy, economic control, and ideological influence even within a devolved field (Mijs, 2016; Nhan et al, 2017; Beaty, 2021), or emphasize the ways in which reentry NGOs successfully retain agency in their service provision, despite their relationship to the state (Kaufman, 2015). Ultimately, in calling attention to the looming influence of or divergence from the state, these studies acknowledge how reentry politics influence the organizational repertoires of reentry service groups and subsequently suggest that the reentry field is everchanging, given unintended consequences of state policy (Kaufman, 2015; Beaty, 2021), malleable organizational conceptions of the reentry process (Kaufman,

2015; Mijs, 2016) and fragility in the relationships between various reentry actors (Nhan, et al, 2017).

Overall, the existing research on the organizational dynamics of reentry advances reentry literature by mapping variation in the reentry field according to its modern organizational context, rather than solely its broad historical-political context. However, this research still depicts the actions of reentry organizations as relatively static as different organizations' *responses* to challenges in their given structural and political fields remain unaddressed. This aspect of reentry organizing is particularly important considering the reentry field is *flexible* i.e., responsive to the agency of the actors that inhabit it (Nhan et al, 2017), just as these actors are responsive to the structure of the field (Beaty, 2021; Kaufman, 2015).

I contend that this missing piece in the reentry literature can be addressed by looking to the literature on social movement organizations. Within this literature, organizations are contemporarily understood as malleable, in that they are "arenas of interaction" (Clemens & Minkoff, 2004) that both shape and are shaped by the fields in which they exist – political, organizational, sociocultural (Zald & Ash, 1966; Clemens & Minkoff, 2004). Likewise, social movement practices can occur within organizations, as organizations provide contexts for "identity-formation, mobilization, and strategic action" in pursuit of shared social or political goals (Clemens & Minkoff, 2004).

Though this organizational form, appropriately summarized as one of political advocacy, is not exercised by all organizations, in the past few decades, its reach has expanded as a broader range of organizations with more conventional functions, like service provision, adopted political missions (Minkoff, 2002). This transformation of organizations to embody a dual commitment to political advocacy and service provision is encapsulated in Minkoff's concept of "hybrid

organizational forms" (2002). Ultimately, she argues that organizations with a hybrid form encounter distinct challenges due to "environmental uncertainties and boundary conditions" (2002). More specifically, the dual orientation of hybrid organizations toward service provision and political advocacy creates obstacles for "legitimacy building, resource procurement, and effectiveness" as hybridity combines two seemingly disparate forms of organization, one of which is traditionally institutionalized and reform-oriented, while the other is often more decentralized and oriented toward radical change (Minkoff, 2002; Clemens & Minkoff, 2004). Subsequently, managing the sometimes-contradictory pressures of this dual commitment impacts a hybrid organization's ability to marshal support from members, sponsors, and authorities (Minkoff, 2002).

Factors like organizational density and competition within the field may threaten the viability of hybrid organizations as resource scarcity and the perceived legitimacy of more established organizational forms may lead sponsors away from organizations with hybrid forms due to the risk associated with their unfamiliarity and unclear boundaries (Minkoff, 2002). However, Minkoff also finds that hybrid organizations may present an opportunity for expansion of the resource infrastructure overall and the legitimacy available to existing advocacy organizations given they successfully engage political opportunities, while negotiating a balance with traditional service activities (2002). This success is contingent on the organizations' abilities to coopt existing sources of influence within the organizational field or create avenues for accepting innovation within the existing field by capitalizing on the politicized context of the field (Minkoff, 2002). Overall, this model of organizational interaction provides deeper insight into how organizational fields and forms influence one another, thus charting the boundaries of

agency held by organizational actors as they navigate everchanging political fields that are subject to the whims of a multitude of state and non-state actors and their goals.

The field of reentry, which contains a diversity of actors, including government officials, state agencies, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, religious institutions, etc. and consequently is enmeshed in politics, has largely been left out of this conversation around "hybridity" despite the orientation of many reentry organizations to both social provision and political advocacy. I tend to this gap in the reentry and organizational literatures, thus bridging the two fields of study, by analyzing how reentry politics, including the tensions within the field and strategies organizations use to overcome them, are shaped by a complex organizational field comprised of various actors with numerous organizational forms.

Understanding the tensions and strategies of organizational actors within the reentry field as part of a process inherent to a specific organizational form, the hybrid form, departs from the aforementioned evaluative reentry literature, which too often divorces reentry organizations from their own agency and political perspectives, and expands on the sparse literature attending to organizational variations in reentry services. Further, centering the perspectives of reentry service providers is essential to understanding the field of reentry advocacy more broadly because these actors maintain a bounded level of political agency (Anderson, 2018; Nhan et al, 2017; Kaufman, 2015) as they navigate reentry politics. Focusing on the perspectives of these actors in relation to the political and institutional context defining reentry expands understanding of the reentry field by highlighting the process through which reentry service provision and advocacy develops and evolves in conversation with but not solely determined by the goals of the state. Taking this process-based approach connects macro explanations of reentry programming development to the micro level; therefore, complicating popular understandings of

seeming contradictions between actors' stated goals and beliefs, and the goals they pursue in practice, which mistakenly assume little capacity on the part of reentry actors to diverge from visions of "criminal justice" normalized through neoliberal ideology and punitive state policies.

Methodology

To understand how organizational dynamics influence the various actors and politics of the reentry field, I analyzed prisoner reentry organizations located primarily in the Chicagoland area using a multi-methods approach that combined interviewing, participant observation, and textual analysis of documentary data. Chicago and its surrounding area offer rich insight into the field of reentry considering the area's immense diversity, populous, and history of racially disproportionate mass incarceration (Lyons, Lurigio, Roque, & Rodriguez, 2013). Additionally, Chicagoland is home to a great assortment of reentry organizations, some of which are the largest, most well-funded, and oldest in the country (Miller, 2014). These facets of the area, in addition to the recent passage of criminal justice reform legislation in Illinois, like the bill known as the "Safety Act," make Chicagoland a particularly compelling site for reentry research.

For my research, I utilized three modes of inquiry: semi-structured interviews with seasoned reentry advocates who each have 9+ years of experience across different organizations; observations from multi-organizational reentry meetings conducted on Zoom; and content analysis of organizations' letters to government, meeting minutes and video recordings, and webpages. Through this amalgamation of data, 22 organizations, including city and state agencies, and nonprofits, are represented. The nature of my interactions with these organizations and their representatives are summarized in this paper's Appendix within tables which list interview and observation time lengths, dates, contexts, and participating persons' and organizations' pseudonyms.

In the initial phase of my project, I browsed online resources on state and non-state websites designed to connect returning citizens to reentry services. Using these resources, I developed a list of reentry organizations throughout the Chicago area, and sent out emails to organizational staff to inquire about interest in interview participation. This recruitment method unfortunately elicited few responses, so I altered my recruitment technique, connecting with advocates and service providers at multi-organizational reentry meetings open to the public through Zoom and reaching out to other reentry actors that existing interviewees kindly put me in contact with.

As I was introduced to more reentry actors, I received invitations to attend a statewide reentry conference and a reentry coalition meeting, both of which were held virtually and functioned as forums for discussion among NGOs and state agencies involved in the reentry process. Additionally, I was forwarded recordings of the opening and closing plenary sessions of a statewide reentry conference that had occurred earlier in 2021. The remaining data, including the organizations' letters to government, mission statements, service descriptions, short video clips from reentry events, and meeting minutes, I collected during the virtual conferences and meetings and from organizations' websites.

During the interviews, I asked participants questions pertaining to their experiences working at different reentry organizations and the relationships their organization(s) had with other reentry organizations and government. I also asked about their perceived challenges in accomplishing their goals, as well as their motivations for doing reentry work. Conducting these conversations in a semi-structured fashion allowed me insight into these experienced individuals' perceptions of the reentry field as well as their own reasonings for participating in the field in whatever way(s) they do e.g., direct service, policy advocacy, grassroots organizing.

Attending virtual conferences and meetings, as well as analyzing the previous meeting recordings, also revealed individuals' perceptions of the reentry field and the existing challenges in carrying out their work. These insights were revealed as the meeting agendas usually consisted of organization introductions, where each spokesperson offered their organization's progress updates and difficulties in accomplishing their goal at hand. Following these progress updates, the host organization for the meeting often briefly presented on upcoming opportunities and events for reentry organizers, and attending organizations made suggestions for improvement or asked questions. Additionally, current events that impacted reentry services and their clients, like COVID vaccination rollouts and key legal changes in the Illinois Safety Act, were presented in an informational manner and then discussed among the groups, focusing on perceived wins, concerns, and recommendations moving forward. These meetings, both live and recorded, provided me the opportunity to observe how the different reentry organizations interacted, as well as how they negotiated their relationship with the state, as groups aired grievances about certain state policies, procedures, and funding opportunity structures and other organizations brainstormed solutions or action plans to remedy the given issues.

Lastly, the supplementary materials, like organizations' letters, mission statements, meeting documents, and webpage descriptions, I incorporate to complement my interview data and meeting field notes, using the additional information provided to understand the operation and goals of organizations in more detail. This data I also used to assess the alignment of actors' behaviors during conferences and stated beliefs in interviews with those expressed online and in written correspondence with others, mainly government agencies and officials.

I conducted analysis for all of my collected data using a combination of hand-coding techniques and MAXQDA, a software program equipped with tools for textual and multimedia

analysis. For interviews, I transcribed the data in order to hand-code each document employing initial coding to identify potential topics, processes, and affects for further inquiry. After initial coding, I uploaded the documents into MAXQDA to apply axial coding as a second cycle technique in light of the central themes emergent across the data. Utilizing a similar first and second cycle coding process, I analyzed the conference and meeting data, applying codes to my field notes as opposed to transcriptions for the meetings I attended.

The supplementary materials I approached differently, analyzing the discourse in these materials to assess and support my thematic analysis of the interviews and meetings. Using MAXQDA, I conducted lexical searches for keywords associated with themes in reentry actors' interviews and cross-organizational dialogues. These searches allowed me to identify instances where actors' expressed goals, beliefs, and actions appeared in organizational documents.

In all, the data presented in this paper reflects only a small sample within a much larger area of study. However, my research exhibits strength through its multi-methodological approach, which allows for the rich inductive analysis suitable for deriving a complex account of data wherein organizational practices and social actors' interactions are situated within social processes and contexts (Ezzy, 2013). In the following sections, I present the findings of this research and discuss their significance.

Findings

I find that the reentry field is plagued by three central tensions, concerning resource procurement, legitimacy building, and goal attainment. Additionally, reentry organizations that embody the hybrid form – an organizational identity merging service provision and political advocacy – tend to these tensions using a variety of strategies, which fall under two umbrellas: coalition-building, and strategic communication. Lastly, while reentry actors demonstrate an

awareness of how structural and institutional constraints and political contexts limit their work, they nonetheless, maintain radical visions for the future of their work. This vision maintenance ultimately reflects their perceptions of reentry politics as well as belief in the potential of broader social change around race and racial attitudes. Overall, it is in balancing their real and imagined realities of reentry and justice more broadly that informs their strategic interaction within the field, where they pursue change by both negotiating with and challenging status quo approaches to reentry programming and policy.

As I discuss later, each of the tensions faced and strategy umbrellas employed by reentry organizations I understand and contextualize by utilizing a conceptual framework from social movement organization literature. Specifically, I argue that the tensions that characterize the reentry field reflect the distinct challenges of social movement organizations with a "hybrid form," i.e., those dedicated to service provision and political advocacy. Also, I contend that the strategies reentry organizations engage in to overcome these tensions can be understood as those that hybrid social movement organizations use to manage risk and capitalize on opportunities in the pursuit of their goals.

Reentry field tensions

Resource procurement, legitimacy-building, and goal attainment were the three topics most heavily discussed in interviews when I asked respondents about challenges in carrying out their work. Similarly, they were recurring themes in meetings when organizations provided progress updates on their monthly agendas and discussed their concerns about reentry-related current events, like policy changes.

Underfunding and resource inequities

In terms of resource procurement, organizational actors described perpetual tension within the reentry field vis-à-vis the precarity of funding from year to year, which often depended on state budget allocation to reentry services. This concern around funding matches phenomena commonly described in extant literatures and across organizational fields where, as the state devolves, pushing responsibility for social services out to non-state actors, service providers are made to compete for state funding (Beaty, 2021; Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). Consequently, this dynamic shapes the reentry organizational field, considering the organizations awarded direct contracts with state agencies and the amount of funding an organization is allotted often determines their influence within the field (Beaty, 2021).

In practice, this translates into funding inequities across organizations, and subsequently, when there is sparse opportunity to acquire significant funding from other sources, these inequities are also experienced by organizations in terms of their impact. For example, groups with adequate funding have the resources necessary to expand their reach, taking on greater numbers of clients and developing new programs and services, while others struggle to maintain their existing programs and serve their standing clientele. Julia, a woman who has directed reentry advocacy and service provision at a state agency and a nonprofit, touches on this impact disparity introduced by resource inequities, saying:

> We went from [previously] having a $1.3 million grant to do this work. And over the last year or so, it got decreased to $500,000. So a huge gap. And because of that gap, it has made our ability to offer these services to the individuals *way* less because we don't have the funding.

In addition to mentioning how her organization's funding decreased significantly over the past year, Julia also later described specifically how this funding reduction impacted her organization's reentry programming: her organization had to cut more than half of their partnerships with community-based organizations. According to Julia, her department used to

lead a community-wide reentry project that consisted of five focus points: case management, health education, guardianship advocacy, sexual education and resource provision, and identification (ID) services. Under each of these focus points, members of her organization would work with and provide funding to community-based reentry organizations who were experienced in a given area of direct service or advocacy. With this set up, individuals could receive "wraparound" assistance when returning to society after prison precisely because her organization provided coordination among the organizations working within and across each focus point, making it possible for "all the partners [to talk] to each other." However, when her organization's funding was cut, Julia's reentry project could only afford to maintain partnerships and programming for 2 of the 5 focus points, health education and ID services.

This scenario, wherein the funding cuts experienced by Julia's department within a state agency led to a decrease in the agency's funding of partner organizations, illustrates one way in which nonstate reentry organizations experience heightened challenges concerning resource procurement. These challenges are then made worse specifically for community-based reentry organizations, whose advocacy-based approaches to service provision position them first on the chopping block when reentry services are dwindled down to only the "essentials." The situation Julia describes reflects a valuing of basic service provision over approaches that incorporate advocacy, given health-based and ID services remained funded, while more advocacy-oriented focus areas, like case management and guardianship services, which require client-centered engagement with political systems, were scrapped. In essence, through depicting how funding cuts domino from state agencies to nonstate partners in a fashion that privileges basic service-oriented organizations over community-based organizations that undertake advocacy within their

service provision, Julia reveals how reentry organizations with a hybrid form are particularly

vulnerable to environmental setbacks e.g., underfunding, within the institutional field.

This central connection between funding, impact, and the value of certain organizational

orientations was expressed by other reentry advocates as well. For instance, Sandra, a woman

who had done reentry work for both a state agency and multiple nonprofit organizations,

describes not only how she views underfunding as incessant to programs reliant on state

resources, but also how funding determines the way organizations can carry out their work,

remarking:

> There's not typically a ton of money, unless you're one of those for-profit businesses, and most of the staff are stretched pretty thin. That's just the way state resources run: to try to strike that balance between what we'd love to do and what research tells us is best with what resources we have available and how realistic we can be. And that's where it gets difficult because there are plenty of times in my career when I've known we are not following research to the tee. We are not doing what research says we should be. But that's because the resources don't exist to do that. So we're going to do as close as we can. But that's hard: to know you're not doing the absolute best. You're doing the best with what you have, not the best.

In Sandra's description, not only does she discuss state underfunding of reentry as an ongoing

issue characteristic to the institutional context, but she also expresses the frustration that often

comes with this realization as a reentry service provider that you do not have the resources to

serve the reentry community in the capacity or fashion you wish you could. In differentiating

between what organizational actors would "love to do" and what is "realistic," Sandra

demonstrates the centrality of underfunding in creating a divide between her own real versus

imagined vision for reentry programming. Moreover, Sandra offers that organizations' common

"solution" in acknowledging the discrepancy between these two realities is to do "the best with

what you have," which speaks to a phenomena endemic to hybrid organizational survival –

negotiation with institutional logics (Minkoff, 2002). Although, it is critical to understand that

such negotiation is not indicative of complete conformity with favored organizational forms in the field, considering political advocacy remains central to these reentry organizations' goals, which I elaborate on in a later section of this paper.

Apart from the issue of underfunding affecting the organizational capacities of state agencies and publicly funded nonprofits, it is also important to note that funding inequities in reentry work are often pronounced along racial lines. In my conversation with one coalition of community-based reentry organizations, participants lamented over how white-led organizations that already have widespread name recognition and established funding bases receive more direct contracts with and grants from the state. Conversely, black-led organizations that focus their services within historically underfunded communities in which they often live, get what several participants called "fiscal scraps," referring to how they are made to subcontract from these larger white-led agencies, which leaves them under-resourced thereby effectively constraining their ability to administer services within their communities. Reentry advocates' grievances around this arrangement are captured in this excerpt from a statement one organization within a coalition of black-led reentry actors posted on their website to preface a call to action for their community members and allied organizations:

> For over three decades [this organization] has provided services to Chicago Black communities, garnering a reputation as a leader with integrity and investment in uplifting the health and welfare of our community. We can no longer effectively work in the existing 'partnerships' that continually exploit our work and community. Investing in Black communities, Black organizations, and Black leadership, requires more than providing small subcontract agreements. The current system inadequately funds services and systematically exploits the work of community-based and client focused organizations.

In this statement, not only does the organization describe the negative impact racially compounded underfunding has on the work of black-led reentry organizations, but there is also a sense of frustration expressed in how the current arrangement, where black-led organizations

must rely on subcontracts from larger, white-led reentry agencies, threatens the viability of black-led, community-based organizations.

This threat that funding inequity presents to black-led organizations is again reiterated in a later statement by Georgia, the founder of an established black, community-based reentry organization, where she claims the current funding model is "systematically causing the demise of Black-led and operated organizations throughout Chicagoland" and offers the rhetorical question, "how can we truly serve the needs of Black communities that have often received fewer resources when our Black-led and operated agencies are receiving scraps that barely keep the doors of the agency open?" Within Georgia's question is the idea that black leadership in reentry organizing and community engagement is essential to *truly* meet the needs of communities most directly impacted by incarceration, given these groups' personal relationships and proximity to the communities they serve.

Consequently, for black leaders like Georgia, funding inequities in the reentry field not only threaten the existence of black-led agencies, but in doing so also undermine reentry efforts as those groups most familiar with challenges faced by black communities are systematically stifled in practice. Returning to the statement released by one black-led organization, funding disparities along racial lines illustrate how black, community-based groups are "used to engage the community as a face of color to collect numbers," which positions them as a mere "convenience" for directly funded, white-led agencies. Ultimately, this suggests that race itself adds to the risk associated with organizational hybridity, given the heightened difficulty black-led reentry groups, who more often engage in direct community advocacy, face in securing funding as opposed to white-led groups. This implication is especially pronounced when considering black-led groups' substantial years of experience in the field, which would be

thought to counter the organizational unfamiliarity Minkoff (2002) credits with driving stakeholders away from hybrid organizations.

Legitimacy-building discrepancies

Similar to the issue of funding wherein organizations express grievances related to the perpetual scarcity of public funds and funding allocation disparities across organizations by race, another key challenge that impairs the organizational capacity of reentry groups, often along racial lines, is their perceived legitimacy. Organizational legitimacy commonly refers to the "appropriateness or alignment" of the given social arrangement of actors in the context of its social system (Deephouse & Zhang, 2018). In the context of reentry this can be understood as the perceived alignment or appropriateness of a certain organization, through its practices, impact, goals, etc. with broadly understood reentry field objectives and practices, like service provision for formerly incarcerated individuals.

In some organizational contexts, the perceived legitimacy of different groups determines their influence within their field as positions of power and funding are more often awarded to those organizations deemed most legitimate by stakeholders (Minkoff, 2002). However, because the reentry field is comprised of various actors, with varying understandings of "appropriate" reentry goals and services, determining which actors confer legitimacy upon organizations proves complicated. Regardless, the perks of being perceived as legitimate appear apparent to actors within reentry organizations. Actors in the reentry organizations I engaged with constantly attempted legitimacy-building through the rhetoric used on their websites and in conversations with other organizational actors. In this sense, reentry actors attempt to build legitimacy for their organizations through performance as they demonstrate their organization's "alignment" with reentry goals and practices by signaling these traits to others.

Moreover, considering actors understand the scarcity of substantial funding contracts with larger agencies and with the state, organizational performances of legitimacy are often reflected in demonstrations or assertions of why one's group is "best" for a particular reentry job or at least more suited than other organizations. The primary ways this competition for legitimacy takes place between reentry organizations is through their performance of "expertise" and "progressivism" for state actors, and other reentry organizations. Performances for each of these audiences reflect an organization's motivation to gain influence in the field; however, the avenues of gaining influence by earning perceived legitimacy with the two groups are different.

Ultimately, performances of expertise and progressivism function to supply reasoning for supporting certain reentry groups over others. With state actors, support is exercised in the form of funding and event invitations which serve as opportunities for groups to come in contact with more clients and therefore influence the reentry process. Reentry organizations, on the other hand, award their support by forming coalitions with one another. Regardless of whether these coalitions are formal or informal, the involved organizations seek benefit through possible connections and leverage their ally organizations hold with state actors.

First, organizations signal their expertise to state and nonstate reentry actors by citing conversations they had with other reentry actors or government officials and by also mentioning their inclusion of formerly incarcerated people within their work. Examples of the first type of expertise-signaling include numerous instances during reentry conferences when representatives of different reentry organizations cited conversations that they had with state government officials involved in the Black Caucus or the promotion of the Illinois Safety Act, a criminal justice reform bill often discussed in reentry organizing spaces because of the changes it makes to policing and corrections department procedures.

One instance in which this name-dropping occurred was during a statewide reentry meeting hosted by a state agency, when Gabe, a member of a black, community-based coalition, spoke of his group's conversation with a government official in their monthly meeting. When entering a Zoom breakout room to discuss reentry actors' thoughts on the Illinois Safety Act, Gabe led with, "I have to say, me and Devin actually had a chance to talk to [the elected official] when he came to the [coalition meeting]. So we had a chance to talk to [the elected official] […] about this [bill]." Here I saw how Gabe first established his expertise by implying he had insider knowledge on the topic, given his conversation with an authority who was closely familiar with the content of the bill. Other people similarly hinted at their insider knowledge in this way, with one participant being explicit about the fact that other reentry groups probably lacked the knowledge she had, remarking, "some people don't know that *actually*, [the elected official], because of this law had…"

Following these types of statements, reentry actors often furthered their performance of expertise by leaning on the stories they heard from elected officials in order to support their own opinions or argument. I witnessed this happen in Gabe's case as he cited anecdotes about a poor woman going to jail for petty theft and a rich man being out on bail after committing aggravated assault, and mentioned these examples were provided by the elected official when talking about the benefits of abolishing cash bail under the Illinois Safety Act. In this scenario, the elected official's examples are used by Gabe to make his own assertion about the practice of cash bail, describing it as "medieval," given it was designed to lock up and "make money off of poor people, especially poor black people." In effect, doing this allowed Gabe to borrow the authority of the elected official as a means of asserting legitimacy in his own perspective.

Overall, in demonstrating their connections to government officials who appear dedicated to the formal advancement of black community interests, indexed through their Black Caucus membership or Safety Act promotion, reentry actors assert their proficiency in reentry field politics, considering formerly incarcerated individuals are disproportionately black and come from under-resourced communities. This type of claim to expertise was usually utilized by black-led organizations, considering the missing element of legitimacy often experienced by such groups was a connection to formal power structures and institutional authorities. Likewise, this lack of connection to formal power structures is unsurprising when we understand that community-based organizations, which are more often black-led, are typically more advocacy-oriented than white-led organizations, which are more conforming to established organizational forms where service provision is the primary commitment.

White-led organizations, on the other hand, already seemed to have these formal ties to power given their aforementioned longstanding funding partnerships with the state. However, this formal connection fails to grant these organizations legitimacy in the eyes of the clients they serve who, in the words of Brenda, a reentry organizer who was once incarcerated herself, "can spot a fake in a heartbeat." Thus, the challenge of legitimacy facing these groups is more often one of illustrating authentic knowledge, i.e., expertise on the patterned hardships built into the marginalization of black communities and subsequently, on the experiences of a great percentage of formerly incarcerated people. A primary way white-led organizations try to signal this knowledge, which is typically derived from common black experiences under racial capitalism, is the organizational equivalent of declaring "I have black friends." Calvin, a formerly incarcerated reentry advocate at a black-led organization, describes this signaling in his remarks about white-led organizations' attempts to coopt knowledge on black experiences. Claiming to

have this more informal aspect of reentry expertise, Calvin sees as a way for white-led groups to

maintain their funding as competition in the field increases. Specifically, he explains how white-

led organizations try to perform "expertise" by declaring they include formerly incarcerated

people in leadership of their work:

> Because reentry is sort of like this 'sexy' thing, you have a lot of organizations that
> compete with one another for funds. And it is not necessarily driven by impact. So if I'm
> competing with another reentry organization just because I want to build the brand of my
> organization and I'm not necessarily motivated in really helping people, that creates
> problems. Because on paper, you have all of these [primarily white] reentry organizations
> that say they do this, say they do that, but they don't. Like a lot of organizations say, 'yes,
> we're led by directly impacted people.' But when you look at the boards and at the
> leadership, it doesn't reflect that. And that creates a challenge, because you have people
> who are not necessarily driven by change, but they're driven by 'this is a hot topic,'
> people are throwing money at it. And so people are motivated on the financial side of it,
> and not necessarily the impact that we can have in this work.

Through Calvin's remark, it is also apparent how he views this inauthentic performance of

"expertise" as problematic because he believes it illustrates how organizations' fixation on

funding competition may encourage organizational motivations outside what reentry work is

meant to be about: harm reduction to individuals through service and to communities through

advocating for social change. This division between Calvin's motivation for doing reentry work

and what he believes to be the motivation of performative, white-led organizations, once again,

speaks to differences in the organizational forms of black-led and white-led groups. While

Calvin's organization embodies hybridity by also centering political advocacy, i.e. being "driven

by change," formerly incarcerated representation in leadership functions merely as a hollow

promise for white-led organizations who utilize such claims as a means to maintain influence in

the field without incorporating any actual advocacy-oriented commitments into their approach.

In sum, the approach these white-led groups take to reentry remains unchanged as their service

provision practices continue to reflect institutional logics, which are detached from advocacy-

based motivations.

Further, when reentry advocates make claims to legitimacy by performing expertise, they often simultaneously perform progressivism. Signaling one's progressivism is easily tied into performances of expertise because the underlying assumption in claims to expertise in reentry work is that the organizations with the "best" approaches are those most ethically based and grounded in the advancement of social reform or transformation. This connection is seamlessly forged considering reentry work is popularly framed in terms of harm reduction and social and community development. Moreover, the tie between which organizations are "best" and which are "most ethical" is reflected particularly well by Sandra as she describes her current role at one of the larger reentry nonprofits in the area:

> I do business development, which basically means that I respond to [reentry service] solicitations and explain kind of why we are the best [group to partner with] if you're going to prioritize this service to bring into your institution to offer it. And one of the reasons that we are, in my opinion, is that we are a nonprofit… In offering services to correctional institutions, the majority are profit based.[1] And when your business model requires people to be incarcerated, and more importantly, requires a certain number of people to be incarcerated for you to be profitable, that's just kind of like an ethical line that I have to draw.

In sum, Sandra's comment demonstrates how legitimacy-building in reentry work is done through the simultaneous assertion of expertise and progressivism, which are importantly framed in terms of being "better" suited both ethically and in practice than other organizations. Once again, this aspect of competition becomes salient due to organizations' awareness of resource procurement issues that characterize the devolved field of reentry, where groups feel the need to perform their value in order to obtain influence in the field and subsequently, the organizational capacity to carry out their reentry goals.

Though unfortunately for black-led groups, as is seen in Calvin's remarks on the performances of expertise by white-led organizations, successfully obtaining formal legitimacy

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[1] See Beaty, 2021.

often holds more weight in earning influence in the field than informal legitimacy because the state still holds many of the purse strings in reentry. Such prioritization of formal over informal legitimacy again relates legitimacy discrepancies among these groups to their traditional versus hybrid organizational forms. The inclusion of advocacy-based motivations within the service provision of black-led groups gives the perception of informality and subsequently, questionable institutional legitimacy because advocacy exists outside the bounds of traditional institutionalism (Minkoff, 2002). However, fortunately for these groups, forming coalitions with other organizations offers another avenue to garnering formal legitimacy by proxy, which I discuss later as a strategy employed by hybrid organizations to gain field influence when hindered by resource inequities, lack of formal ties to power, and state aversion from non-traditional goals.

Goal divergence and misleading expressions

As briefly mentioned before, reentry organizations also must navigate heightened tensions surrounding the pursuit of their goals due to how funding inequities and legitimacy discrepancies shape their organizational capacity. While part of this tension stems from inequitable funding as groups with greater formal legitimacy advance, while groups with more informal, community-based legitimacy are excluded from state partnership and steady influence, this is not the only hindrance certain groups, especially those with a hybrid approach, face in reaching their goals. Rather, goal divergence between reentry actors contributes to tension within the field, as some actors' end goals are regarded as pipe dreams while others are deemed "realistic." As is on par with discussion in the earlier sections, the goals of community-based, black-led organizations, who center advocacy in addition to service provision, were usually the ones deemed impractical; though interestingly, black leaders at state agencies often also

expressed these "impractical" goals even if these goals were not formally recognized through their organization's agenda.

As is characteristic of organizational fields enmeshed in politics, a diversity of actors and stakeholders invested in a particular issue often translates into a diversity of goals (Clemens & Minkoff, 1994); some of which overlap, while others clash or are even diametrically opposed (Minkoff, 2002). Within the reentry field, goal divergence among reentry actors is revealed in multiple ways, including in organizations' articulations of their missions, actors' conversations around recent changes in reentry and criminal justice work, and organizations' framings of the purpose of their services and situation of their work within broader political contexts. Throughout my data, the main point of goal divergence is between reentry actors who advocate for traditional reform of the criminal justice system and those who seek out more radical change, like restorative justice through the short-term goal of resource distribution and/or the long-term goal of prison abolition. I identify this division when reentry actors express either belief or disbelief in the ability to achieve justice and equality through changing systems of policing and imprisonment internally.

It is also important to note that the primary site of this division within the reentry field, I observed, between state government officials and reentry actors who engaged in political or community advocacy, regardless of state or non-state agency affiliation. While elected officials often boasted the impact of reform legislation in "reimagining public safety," advocacy-oriented reentry advocates more often expressed belief in the need for transformational change e.g., through non-reformist reforms or police abolition. These beliefs were then reflected in how reentry advocates articulated their goals. Julia, for instance, demonstrates belief in the need for

transformation as opposed to reform in criminal justice and reentry when describing her opinion

on prisons in an interview. She starts by saying:

> I try not to tell people outside of my close friends about it because I feel like people will think I'm crazy. But I just feel like prisons are just modern-day slavery holdings. Having worked in them, [I saw how] they pay those individuals that are in there like pennies to do work that they would pay outside of jail or prison, […] a lot of money for. So I just feel like it's like slavery. Like, yes, we got rid of slavery, but did we really? […] So I don't know that I believe in jails and prisons […] So I don't know if I believe in reform.

In this statement, Julia hints at her rejection of the belief that prison reform is an effective

strategy for improving the lives of those who experience the criminal justice system. Instead, she

highlights the harmful nature of incarceration, by emphasizing the exploitation of people's labor

that occurs in prisons. Additionally, in equating prisons to slavery holdings, she draws an

important connection to race and the function of incarceration, suggesting the racial disparities

seen in prisons are by design. While this suggestion is more readily accepted in academic circles

due to the literature connecting slavery and the emergence of the modern prison (Muhammad,

2011), Julia's clarification that she doesn't often share this belief with people for fear that they'll

think she's "crazy" illustrates her awareness that anti-reformist attitudes are typically regarded as

ludicrous in the formal reentry field. Following this, Julia elaborates on what she sees as the

purpose of prisons and consequently, why she rejects reform as a solution to problems within

reentry and the carceral system, remarking:

> You can't reform what somebody meant for something to be. Like, when people say the system is broken - No, it's not. It's functioning the way that it was set up to function, the way it's supposed to function. And people are either *just* learning about it, or I don't know what they think. But it's not broken. I think the same way about jails and prisons - they're doing what they're supposed to do. They're incarcerating people to keep money flowing and all that type of stuff.

Here Julia expresses the belief that prisons are designed for harm, given their function is to

punish people. Importantly, Julia grounds this belief in understanding that prisons serve an

economic purpose for the state as she alludes to how the profitability of corporate investment in prisons allows incarceration to be treated as an industry (Davis, 2003), which brings with it the implication that the prison system relies on the inevitability of punishment and therefore, harm.

While Julia, who is a black leader at a state agency, demonstrates a non-reformist approach to reentry work by explicitly expressing beliefs about the innately harmful nature of prisons, another way reentry advocates, specifically those at non-state, community agencies, illustrate their rejection of reform and preference for transformative justice is through their articulations of their goals and practices. This distinction in how black reentry actors articulate their ties to a non-reformist approach is notable due to the different actors' proximity to the state. To elaborate, the implication is that black leaders formally located within the state, like Julia, may express non-reformist goals through personal belief, which is less tangible than direct practice, while those within community groups express these goals explicitly in their organizational missions. Ultimately, this suggests that differences in how actors articulate their non-reformist approach reflect the constraints of traditional institutionalism that actors, like Julia, face working at a state agency; whereas community groups' embodiment of the hybrid form allows for flexibility in the commitments of their organizations (Minkoff, 2002), so advocacy and a desire for social change can be more acceptably advertised in their formal goals.

Returning to the more flexible expressions of non-reformism by community-based groups, non-reformist goals and practices are essentially "reforms" embedded in a grassroots, collectivist approach and designed to reconstruct social relations by building the "people power" necessary for transcending existing hegemonic paradigms (Wilson, 2017). Popular examples of this type of "reform" include practices aimed at redistributing power in society through acts like resource distribution, community development, and the erosion of harmful political-legal

systems, each of which unsettle hierarchy (Morris, 1976). Community-based reentry advocates, therefore, exhibit non-reformist goals through their preoccupation with "people power" building practices.

Ken, a man who did reentry work for both state and nonprofit organizations, but now focuses on volunteer community engagement and nonprofit social justice work more broadly, provides a clear example of how building "people power" is central to the goals of advocacy-oriented reentry actors. He expresses his belief in the need for radical change explicitly and then follows this proclamation with a list of goals and practices he imagines could bring a better, safer reality to fruition, saying in an interview:

> This should be the safest city in the country, by the logic that more cops equal safer streets. We're spending - I forget the number - you probably know it, like 1 point or 2 point billion something dollars on cops in Chicago. And it's not safer. So let's *safely* put to rest that works! {laughs} And I'm the big abolitionist now, which is crazy given our backgrounds. But I'm like, okay, let's defund the police, let's abolish prisons, let's take this extremely large bag of money, and pour it into all the things that lead to all the issues.

In his statement, Ken first acknowledges that the carceral logics of the American prison system fail to produce solutions to crime. Underlying this acknowledgment is the belief that policing itself is ineffective and therefore, traditionalist reforms to policing are doomed to fail as they remain grounded in carceral logics. Following this realization, Ken offers defunding police and abolishing prisons as goals that he believes represent actual solutions, both of which require an erosion of the existing political-legal system pertaining to criminal justice, making them acts of power redistribution. In addition to calling for an end to policing and prisons to reduce harm, Ken also establishes the value he sees in resource distribution as a reentry-related goal, suggesting that inequitable power arrangements which create and perpetuate resource disparities are what "lead" to crime and incarceration in the first place.

While Ken and Julia's assertions about prison and policing are explicit in rejecting reform in favor of non-reformist practice, it is key to note that outside the context of private interviews, organizational reentry actors were usually much more subtle in their expression of preference for non-reformist goals. These subtleties were captured in a number of instances during multi-organizational reentry meetings when elected officials came to speak about criminal justice reform efforts, where participating reentry advocates would roll their eyes at the elected official's claims or (somewhat) discretely challenge their talking points when the floor opened for questions.

One example where this tension between the perspectives of a reentry advocate and elected official was particularly notable was during a coalition meeting for black-led reentry organizations. In this meeting, participants discussed the recent passage of the Illinois Safety Act with a government official, who was invited to speak on what he believed to be promising components of the bill. During his speaking time, the elected official characterized the Illinois Safety Act as a bill that ran counter to "the policies of over-policing and underinvestment and under-resourcing" and that instead begins to "*reimagine* what public safety looks like and *reinvent*[s] these systems." Though despite the radical language used to articulate his talking points, the content of the elected official's message remained traditionally reformist as he proceeded to talk about how the Safety Act works to "change the mindset of individuals going into the [policing] profession" because "not all cops are bad" and aims to reform the prison system so that it will "incentivize individuals in correcting their behavior."

When the floor opened for questions, Georgia, a reentry advocate at a black-led, grassroots organization, took the opportunity to challenge the elected official on his point that prisons can "correct behavior." She remarked:

> I can recall we used to use the term 'rehabilitation' a lot when it came to corrections. […] [But prison officials] were not willing to put people back in the shape they were [in] before they committed the crime and even if they did that, that wasn't helpful, because they were beat to crap, right? But we went from rehabilitation - which didn't make sense - to corrections. So now we calling it corrections. And even with what you're saying [about the Safety Act reforms], they're not correcting anything. [In this coalition,] we work on 'no entry,' which is before anything ever happens, which is [improving] the community. It doesn't make sense to say that they're correcting them in incarceration because they're not. They're not correcting anything. A lot of people come out in a worst state than the one they went in to be honest, and then we got a lot of them that can't even get out...

In her response to the elected official's claims about the Safety Act, Georgia problematizes the official's perception of prisons, drawing attention to how the language of "rehabilitation" and "corrections" is essentially false advertising. Similar to the way Julia highlighted the punitive design of the prison system, Georgia elaborates on the toll incarceration has on individuals both leaving and stuck in the system. Effectively, her message to the elected official is that the reforms he's trying to sell as revolutionary achievements fail to actually change anything because prisons are not welfare institutions; they are punitive. Importantly, in making this point against reform, Georgia also makes a case for a non-reformist approach by promoting the community development work of her group as an effective strategy for keeping people from even entering the prison system to begin with.

This clear differentiation between the strategies of community-based groups, whose entire approach to reentry provision is rooted in advocacy via community empowerment, and those of other reform-oriented actors, ultimately, illustrates how organizational hybridity inclines certain organizations to goal divergence from government authority. Additionally, in pushing against the elected official's reformist approach, Georgia illustrates the potential held by hybrid organizations to introduce innovation into institutional fields as their dedication to service provision, which is a traditional orientation, offers them a baseline legitimacy that purely

advocacy-oriented organizational forms do not possess in institutional contexts and subsequently, provides them avenues to critique traditional approaches from within.

Unfortunately, the elected official was not made to respond to Georgia's commentary on account of his unstable internet connection disconnecting him from the virtual meeting shortly after. When he was able to rejoin the meeting after just a few minutes, the conversation had already moved on. There is, however, another significant aspect of this interaction between Georgia and the elected official which warrants attention because it highlights how the precarity of funding continues to shape organizational actors' interactions with government officials even when the organizational actors are embedded in a grassroots approach to reentry work.

After the government official left the meeting, Georgia, commented that the elected official was "drinking the Kool-Aid" while rolling her eyes. Harold, a state agency reentry member who was involved with the coalition, agreed while laughing about how elected officials are "all up in the Kool-Aid to make sure [people] vote [their way]." In this context, Georgia used the term "Kool-Aid" to refer to the elected official's expression of prisons as potentially correctional, which she implies is a mistaken understanding. Harold then expands on her point by suggesting that elected officials only express these views about prisons to win votes, which implies that regardless of whether elected officials believe prisons are correctional or not, they are incentivized to advertise them this way due to popular perspective.

However, despite these critical comments, the coalition members still rejoiced at the conclusion of their meeting because their organizations were now connected with the elected official. While I initially found such celebration odd after witnessing the group's clear goal-related disagreement with the official, Harold made it clear that the benefit of this connection was the possibility it presented for receiving formal funding. This is seen in his remark:

>He called it the budget – I call it money, the Benjamins! And when he said can we talk about budget, I was like, wait you know what?.. Uhhhh {pause for comedic effect}, 'we looking for a grant - hint, hint!' So we're gonna need some dollars! {people erupt in laughter} And we talking to the right person to get us some dollars now!

This remark, which first appears incongruent with actors' attitudes surrounding the official's message at their meeting, once again supports an understanding of these community-based organizations as hybrid. Their apparent disdain for the official's approach to reentry followed immediately by rejoicing over a connection to formal power structures through making his acquaintance illustrates the coalition's performative negotiation with status quo institutionalism. Such negotiation Minkoff asserts as common to hybrid organizations given they must balance their conflicting institutionalist and anti-institutionalist identities i.e., service provision and political advocacy respectively, when navigating an institutional field while simultaneously attempting to change it (2002).

Overall, it is interesting that goal dealignment among reentry actors often occurs between state political elites and those that do not hold elected office but are politically invested in reentry communities. This caveat adds dimension to understandings of tension in reentry as an organizational field because in regard to goals, there is not a clear boundary simply between state and non-state individual actors.

To elaborate, reentry actors in non-federal government agencies, like Julia, expressed more similar goals to those in non-state, nonprofit agencies, like Ken & Georgia, than to elected officials, who are also state actors. This is apparent in how advocates at agencies discuss the importance of resources as an underlying issue of crime and recidivism, while government officials point blame to the incarcerated individual by emphasizing the need for making prisons "rehabilitative." Ultimately, the expressed alignment between state and nonprofit reentry actors and dealignment with elected officials carries implications about the flexibility of state agencies,

as community reentry advocates, who generally are considered to have more "radical" visions of justice, move between state agencies and nonprofits in their reentry work as is the case for several of the people I interviewed.

Additionally, the discontinuity of the reentry goals among state actors observed between government agency advocates and elected officials suggests the nature of an actor's role within the state matters in reentry politics. Factors like heightened political clout or job vulnerability may influence elected officials' reentry goals as their perceptions and imagined possibilities are shaped by their specific experiences as visible public figures within the political order. However, further research is needed to explore this aspect of reentry field interactions in more detail, especially given state agency actors differed in how their radicalism was conveyed, relying more on expressions of personal belief than on goals formally embodied through their organization. Nonetheless, the participation of elected officials in reentry politics, despite their goal divergence from reentry organizational actors, continues to remain integral to advocates in the organizational field because forging formal connections to political power and funding are essential for influencing the reentry agenda.

Strategic actions

In reference to issues related to funding, legitimacy, and goal expression, I have shown how organizations demonstrate their acute awareness of these tensions within their field, as well as how certain organizations bear the brunt of these challenges on account of their hybrid manifestation of both service and advocacy. However, despite often occupying vulnerable positions within the reentry field due to their hybridity, organizations most affected by these challenges frequently engaged in strategies to overcome them. Strategic action was often undertaken by community-based organizations, who incarnate hybridity by striving toward goals

related to social or political advocacy in addition to engaging in service provision. Likewise, this dual commitment to service provision and advocacy, which is the core feature of the hybrid organizational form, is often what provides the impetus for strategic action rather than organizational conformity for organizations within a hierarchical yet diverse field, as these organizations seek to innovate the field but acknowledge how an institutional context constrains what approaches to change will likely be successful (Minkoff, 2002). In the case of reentry, the strategies that organizations employ in attempt to gain influence when their formal legitimacy and advocacy-oriented goals in the field are rejected fall under two categories: coalition-building and strategic communication.

Coalition-building

First, reentry organizations engage in coalition-building as a way to maximize their opportunity in connecting with state actors, including state agencies and elected officials, considering the possibility of formal connections to power could help to mitigate funding and legitimacy issues that directly hinder their organizational capacity. I witnessed reentry organizations attempt to build these formal connections through coalition-building by aligning their organization with more influential agencies via inviting these agencies to their meetings, into their coalitions, or advertising them as partners of the organization on their websites.

Usually, the organizations that were perceived as influential by the community-based groups, who most often lack sufficient funding and formal legitimacy, are those organizations connected to the Department of Corrections (DOC) either through direct funding contracts or through status of being a different state agency invested in some aspect of reentry. A key example of community-based group alignment with an influential, connected agency, is offered by the black-led coalition of reentry organizations that Georgia, Harold, and Gabe were all active

members of. While Georgia and Gabe are representatives of two different black-led, community-based nonprofits, Harold is a state agent who is in constant contact with state actors that have influence over reentry contracts and related budgeting, like elected officials and DOC high-level employees.

In being a member of this black-led coalition, which primarily consisted of community-based organizations, Harold essentially played the role of liaison between government officials or DOC leaders and the coalition's community-based reentry advocates. This liaison role was embodied by Harold in coalition meetings as he was always responsible for providing updates on DOC-related activities and reentry events that government officials planned to attend, during which he would mention his efforts to promote the work of the community-based organizations as a way to suggest their inclusion. One clear example of this promotion followed Harold's update on an upcoming DOC-sponsored reentry event that several elected officials were rumored to attend, where he said:

> I *know* you're gonna be there [at the event]! Because when we do our final site visit, our final walkthrough [of the event venue], I always make sure I can invite you all. John has been on the call [before] when we did a walkthrough to make sure that we have the ID areas [for your organizations' booths] and it's in a good place.

In this remark, Harold clarifies to the group that he has already put in a good word about the community-based groups to the employees at DOC who are in charge of this event and assures the group that their organizations will be given a spot at the event. In effect, this interaction demonstrates how through Harold's membership in the coalition and his promotion efforts, the community-based organizations allied with him now have the opportunity to showcase their services at this event. Such an opportunity is particularly valued by these community groups considering the presence of elected officials and DOC employees at this event presents them

with opportunities to make formal connections to influence, which could benefit their organizations' statuses and subsequently, funding situation.

Given these advocacy-oriented organizations lack the qualities that typically provide avenues to influence, like formal legitimacy and goal alignment with stakeholders, coalition-building with state actors who share community-driven goals, like Harold, provide an alternative avenue to influence. However, since this avenue is dependent on the actions and effectiveness of state actors affiliated with DOC and elected officials, the success of coalition-building in obtaining influence is pursued through case-by-case inclusion of community-based groups, which helps establish legitimacy and connections to power over time. In other words, this process is fragile in its dependence on individual relationships and leads to small shifts in organizational power as opposed to immediate upheaval of the reentry field hierarchy. Moreover, such incremental shifts in influence within the field through community organizations' coalition-building ultimately depicts the tendency of hybrid organizations to engage in efforts to counter the risk associated with their unfamiliarity in the field by coopting existing sources of influence (Minkoff, 2002). In the case of community reentry groups, coalition-building serves as the avenue to coopt the influence of allied state actors, like Harold, and to combat unfamiliarity by capitalizing on these influential connections to engage in conversation with elected officials.

Strategic communication

Another strategy reentry organizations, especially those that are community-based, employ in an attempt to overcome challenges in the field related to funding, legitimacy, and goal alignment is strategic communication. In the context of reentry, strategic communication is exhibited by organizations when their language and the manner in which they present their talking points illustrates an attempt to frame their reentry work and its objectives as pressing,

important, or appealing to invest in. The reentry organizations I encountered at meetings and reentry advocates I interviewed employed this type of framing primarily by engaging with politically salient narratives when articulating the goals and grievances currently paramount to the reentry movement.

For the reentry organizations I interacted with, this meant connecting reentry challenges to the COVID-19 health crisis and racism, while presenting their group's ideas and services as an important part of efforts or movements, like BLM, that work to address these larger systemic issues. The connection between reentry work and solutions to address issues of racism and COVID are illustrated succinctly in one of the statewide conference's opening remarks, where a community reentry member set the tone of the meeting in saying:

> Good morning and welcome to the […] reentry conference. We are super excited to have each of you with us today. The theme of today's conference is advancing criminal health and social justice, amiss two pandemics: COVID-19 and racism.

In this statement, not only does the reentry advocate explicitly name COVID and racism as key issues impacting reentry populations that need to be addressed, but in doing so, also establishes that the work of reentry advocates falls within the realm of social justice. Throughout the rest of the meeting, as well as in the other reentry meetings I attended, COVID-related issues and racism were often discussed in the same breath, as reentry advocates noted how COVID cases and deaths disproportionally impacted black and brown communities, and incarcerated populations, which are disproportionally black and brown. In making this connection, reentry advocates compound the salience of their work by demonstrating how their field currently represents a clear site of convergence for these two issues that were both high priority in national public conversation at the time, given the ongoing pandemic and record-setting summer of protests against racial injustice (Buchanan et al, 2020; Bizel, 2021).

Unlike the strategy of coalition-building, attaching reentry work to politically salient narratives, like the importance of stopping the threat of COVID and addressing systemic racism, does not serve to manage the risk that hybrid reentry organizations face on account of the institutional unfamiliarity of their organizational form. Rather, politically strategic communication is a method these organizations use to promote innovation in the field by normalizing a connection between the institutional field and political advocacy (Minkoff, 2002) as well as by incentivizing elected officials to consider their goals, as politically salient framing forges a connection between community-based reentry work and political actions that a disgruntled publics may desire. This use of politically salient talk as a strategic call to action and subsequent call for institutional innovation by appealing to what is relevant to the greater population, instead of just incarcerated and reentry populations alone, is demonstrated clearly by one of the spotlight speakers who reentry advocates invited to a statewide conference where elected officials, DOC employees, non-punitive state agencies, and community-based organizations were all present. The speaker, who is a researcher and was a 1960s civil rights activist, passionately remarked on the connection between COVID, racism, and reentry work as a part of the solution in saying:

> Those of you who are interested in helping with assuring that when people return home, they have some place to go, I think we're also invested in the notion that we have another duty. And that duty is to really see how much and to what degree our efforts to promote decarceration, our efforts to create abolition, have to be heightened. What's at stake is not just the health of the folks we serve on the inside. What's at stake is the health of all of us in the United States […] Everything that we do to rethink our notions about the best way to handle many of our society's problems will ultimately result not only in a more humane and more ethical society, [but] we'll also be preserved, I hope, from what is probably going to be an endemic cycle with COVID-19 coming back, just as the flu does, to continue to haunt American society.

In the speaker's impassioned statement, he not only asserts that *innovative* thinking and solutions are necessary to overcome COVID, but in grounding this claim in pursuits toward abolition and decarceration, which are inherently racialized movements, he also stresses that racial justice is an integral aspect of such innovation. Importantly, he also frames the reentry movement's pursuit of racial justice as a facet of addressing COVID as one that is pressing in protecting American society as a whole. This strategy is meant to encourage those at the meeting for whom the lives of the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated are not a priority given public stigma around them, namely government officials, to see value in innovative pursuits within reentry work. Another reentry advocate, Brenda, elaborates on how she believes elected officials need this type of encouragement, specifically from organizations that are advocacy-oriented, to actually commit to addressing reentry-related issues by remarking:

> There are elected officials that understand that there are disparities and disconnects with mainstream America, *white* America, with the realities that go on in our [black and brown] communities and that there is truly a connection between poverty and gun violence, poverty and mass incarceration, etc. So there are *some* elected officials that understand that. But there are others that know it and don't care. And there are many others that just don't care. So to call an elected official on the carpet and say, 'This is what is going on, and this is what you're not doing' as [say] an employee of the city, it would be very difficult for me […] But if I am an *organizer,* I'm not obligated to anyone. I can call the truth what it is and speak truth to power.

Here Brenda draws attention to the unique positioning of reentry organizers as agents of accountability for elected officials, whose own positioning in the political-institutional field incentivizes them to reject innovation in favor of status quo, piecemeal "solutions," which they may attempt to frame as transformative, as discussed earlier. According to Brenda, reentry organizers, who occupy a role both within and without intuitionalism, due to their positioning within community-based organizations, have the flexibility to push elected officials toward innovative approaches to social change that other actors who are more institutionally entrenched,

like city employees, do not. Ultimately, Brenda's commentary illuminates how the hybridity of

community-based reentry efforts allows actors to push for innovation in ways that other actors

cannot while existing formally within the institutional field. Returning to the words of the

spotlight speaker from one statewide reentry conference, this strength in the positioning of

community-invested reentry organizations is also recognized, as he concludes his call to action in

saying:

> Some of the answers to the [COVID] problem are not just in the vaccines. They're in the
> kinds of things that we are concerned with in this conference. They're concerned with the
> people whose lives are so much at the center of what we do. And I think it literally is
> upon us to figure out what are we going to do next […] In the words of the old black
> preachers of the 1960s: "If not us who? And if not now, when?"

Once again, the work of reentry advocates is presented as integral to addressing the pressing,

politically relevant issue of COVID infections and the racial disparities it accompanies.

Additionally, in quoting the "old black preachers of the 1960s" who are widely understood as

prolific agents of social justice during the civil rights movement, the speaker symbolically paints

reentry advocates in a similar light – as bearers of change in the contemporary movement for

racial justice – which makes apparent the appeal of investing in their work.

Overall, remarks like these, coupled with the countless references to George Floyd in

community-based reentry organization's discussions of reentry-related current events, like the

Illinois Safety Act, demonstrate how these organizations contextualize their own work within

broader political narratives. Such contextualization serves a strategic purpose by attempting to

frame the innovative pursuits of community-based reentry organizations not as "impractical," but

as sensical and worth the investment. As Minkoff (2002) suggests, successfully engaging these

political opportunities creates the possibility for hybrid organizations to change the field from

within, expanding resource infrastructures and formal legitimacy for existing advocacy-oriented

organizations as political advocacy becomes fashionable to stakeholders. However, for reentry advocates, such expansion has yet to be seen, which proposes a need for future research on reentry organizations' balancing of strategic actions toward innovation and negotiation with institutional constraints as the political context evolves.

Maintaining transformational visions in a reformational reality

Ultimately, in lamenting over the challenges they encounter in the reentry field, advocacy-oriented reentry actors demonstrate an awareness of how structural and institutional constraints and political contexts limit their work. However, through their active use of strategic actions, they engage with the field by both negotiating with and challenging status quo approaches to reentry work. This negotiation illustrates these actors' abilities to balance their real and imagined realities of reentry and justice more broadly, as a hybrid organizational form allows them to work within a field defined by structural and institutional constraints without having to sacrifice their non-reformist, anti-institutionalist approach; instead, hybridity strengthens an organization's potential to introduce innovation within the field (Minkoff, 2002). In effect, this possibility for change i.e., for reaching the imagined reality, allows individuals within these hybrid reentry organizations to maintain radical visions for the future of their work despite the existing constraints of their current institutional reality. This vision maintenance ultimately reflects their perceptions of reentry politics as flexible through the impact of small-scale actions and the corresponding belief in the potential of broader social change around race and racial attitudes.

Ken offers an exemplary example of such vision maintenance when I asked about how he stays motivated to pursue transformational change when faced with the constraints of the reentry field. He says:

> What keeps me going [when reentry work is discouraging] is just knowing that I will always find a way, whether it's food security, whether it's jail support, to help people that just need help, like "I need resources, I need someone out there to care about me as an individual, and not look at me as homeless, criminal, addict." Whatever this label you want to put on these people - no, they're just people… So kind of supporting the community as a whole at this point in my life and knowing I as an individual can make a difference. I don't need to work for the state. I don't need to be in "criminal justice" {gestures air quotes}. I can support people through mutual aids, through community organizations and have just as good as an impact."

In this statement, Ken describes his belief in the work of community organizations and the accompanying impact of individual, small-scale action in "making a difference" i.e., bringing his imagined reality, where people are not incarcerated and stigmatized but instead are adequately provided with resources and support, to fruition. Additionally, this hope Ken holds for transformational change importantly rests in the connection he makes between community-based approaches to reentry and the ability to undermine existing structures that perpetuate carcerality and racial injustices. This idea he elaborates in saying:

> The idea that you're going to overthrow the beast that is politics and big government… {shakes head, indicating disbelief}. Yeah, I'm much more of the - let me start on the ground [type]. Let me start with these small nonprofits, these little grassroot campaigns, [and] start making some real change in the lives of individuals and just try to keep chipping away at these [systemic] issues.

In commenting on the ability of nonprofit, grassroots groups to "chip away" at systems of inequality while suggesting that immediate, overhauling change through government is improbable, Ken reveals not only his appreciation for the advocacy-oriented, community-based organizations but also nods to the strength of slow-but-potentially-steady change a hybrid organizational form offers. This acknowledgement of the transformational capacity of hybrid reentry organizations serves as the backbone of Ken's vision maintenance as the actions of these organizations is what he attributes to the flexibility of reentry politics.

In correspondence with maintaining visions for future transformational change through belief in the impact of the small-scale actions of community-based groups, reentry advocates also engage with the belief that broader social change is on the horizon as changes in people's ideas around race introduce the potential for more flexibility in what is considered "acceptable" reentry politics. Belief in the possible impact of these attitudinal changes is present within participants statements at reentry conferences about how COVID has brought issues of racism in policing and incarceration to the "forefront of discussion." Brenda expresses this belief particularly powerfully as she credits of the isolation brought about by the pandemic with possibly changing people's racial attitudes and consequently, inciting change in race-related politics, including reentry-related politics. She remarks:

> During the George Floyd murder, and just how when people had to *sit still* and *see things, because of COVID*, organizing took on a whole new face - because young white kids, young black kids, people all across America, look and see things for what it really was, and they became involved. People that were unconsciously asleep, were awaken. People that were consciously asleep couldn't stay asleep anymore because it was right in their faces. So I think over this last year, people that never would have gotten involved in protesting and organizing became protesters and organizers because of their hearts. They knew that something just was not right […]. And that pushed so many people into this movement and into this work that never would have been in it before. So I think that was a huge change within the last year and a half.

Ultimately, in this declaration, Brenda claims that COVID, in forcing the nation to a standstill, led more people to pay attention to issues like police violence that disproportionately harm black and brown communities. In having to witness these atrocities and actually take them in, Brenda believes people were awakened to the racial injustices endemic to the American "justice" system. Making this assertion not only demonstrates how Brenda contextualizes reentry organizing within a broader narrative of racial justice, but also attributes potential changes in reentry to larger changes in national consciousness around race.

Such a perception, like the perception that small-scale actions are powerful in change-making, again assumes a flexibility in reentry politics, and this perception of flexibility ultimately aids reentry advocates in maintaining their imagined, transformational realities despite the disheartening challenges presented by their real, institutionally-constrained reality. This finding underscores the importance of centering the perspectives of individual actors as they navigate complex, yet flexible organizational fields. Moreover, given hybrid-focused reentry actors' perceptions motivate their actions, which as discussed, present the possibility for field innovation, further inquiry into individuals' imagined realities constitutes an appealing avenue for generating more intricate understandings of organizational actors' actions within a hybrid field.

Conclusions

Overall, my research offers an empirical account of reentry organizing and provision explained within its organizational context. This paper explored how reentry politics concerning funding, legitimacy, and goal expressions shape and are shaped by organizational actors within the field and a broader political context outside the field. By doing so, I revealed the centrality of Minkoff's (2002) hybrid organizational form in characterizing reentry field interactions and varying organizational capacities across the field.

The challenges of garnering funding, legitimacy, and support for one's goals are endemic to reentry programming given the multitude of actors, whose competing approaches and beliefs surrounding reentry, are in competition with one another. However, my research has shown that organizations that embody a hybrid approach – committing to both service provision and political advocacy – experience these challenges to a heightened degree. This experience was most embodied throughout my research by community-based reentry organizations, which were

often black-led, as their incorporation of political advocacy in their work diverged from
authorities' and stakeholders' accepted understandings of what reentry service provision *should*
be. While reentry authorities and stakeholders, who are primarily located within the state,
continue to cling to a reformist vision of reentry and the prison system where the "necessity" of
incarceration remains unquestioned, community-based reentry organizations strive to challenge
this narrative in strategic ways, whilst simultaneously working within the institutional field to
provide services to formerly incarcerated populations. Because of their organizational hybridity
which positions them both within and outside the institutional field, they must both negotiate
with and challenge the status quo.

   Their institutionalization and subsequent dependence on formal avenues to resource
procurement, like formal legitimacy-building and goal alignment with stakeholders, requires they
negotiate with status quo approaches to reentry programming. However, this negotiation has less
to do with the types of services that these organizations offer and more to do with the face
organizations present to those in power, like elected officials and DOC leadership. Moreover,
while organizations present a face of conformity with the structural field by emphasizing assets
that are valuable within an institutional context, like their legitimacy and the political salience of
their work, they depart from this status quo-based presentation in their non-reformist approach to
reentry. Telling of this approach, they express goals and underlying beliefs about the nature of
incarceration and policing that are anti-institutionalist and push other actors, like elected
officials, to reject the institutional logic of the carceral system that punishment through
confinement is necessary for addressing crime.

   While some scholars (Mijs, 2016) might suggest this discrepancy between the
organizations' presentation and ideological approach indicates that organizations only

performatively engage with radical politics, I reject this simplification of the reentry actors'

actions within the complex field they navigate. Instead, I understand this discrepancy in

organizational presentation and approach as a necessity in the survival of reentry organizations

embodying the hybrid form, namely community-based groups that are often composed of black

leaders.

In order to maintain organizational viability, these organizations must appeal to

stakeholders in the field in a language that they understand. This language is one that emphasizes

the organization's "legitimate" connections to power and frames their objectives through a lens

of political relevance and opportunity, which presents the possibility of offering political

advantages to government officials who wish to remain in harmony with public opinion.

However, the conformity of organizations to this language in their presentation fails to impact

the radical visions that organizations strive for in practice, as a hybrid form grants reentry actors

within these organizations the flexibility to introduce innovation into the field and disrupt

institutional logics through the promotion of political advocacy. Ultimately, through the primacy

of advocacy-based orientation within conceptions of service provision, community-based

organizations embody their subversion to traditional conceptions of reentry that continue to

dominate the institutional field. Therefore, this thesis has shown that Minkoff's (2002) hybrid

organizational form can be applied as a conceptual tool to understand organizational interactions

within the reentry field. The heightened tensions community-based groups face around resource

procurement, legitimacy-building, and goal attainment, as well as the strategic actions they

employed to gain influence can be understood as the product of their dual commitment to both

service provision and political advocacy.

This account further uncovers an important theoretical contribution to reentry research

because it challenges a static understanding of the reentry field. Such static conceptions undervalue the agency of organizational actors, whereas my study illustrates the ways in which organizational actors engage in strategies to leverage their ideas rather than simply concede with state funding-favored models, as is suggested in extant studies (Beaty, 2021). In all, by taking this agency seriously despite the structural constraints of an organizational context, future research can better understand the capacities of actors to engage in disruptive change-making from within and appreciate the hope that sustains them.

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Appendix

Interview and observation information tables

Interviews				
Person Pseudonym	Date	Organization(s) Pseudonym	Length, hour:minutes	Organizational Role
Calvin	April 8, 2021	Justice & Equal Opportunity Union (black-led coalition, nonprofits)	00:30	Policy-focused advocacy leader
Calvin	April 23, 2021	Justice & Equal Opportunity Union (black-led coalition, nonprofits)	00:30	Policy-focused advocacy leader
Julia	April 28, 2021	Current - State Agency 1 (non-punitive); Former – State Agency 2 (punitive); Former - Justice & Equal Opportunity Union (black-led coalition, nonprofits)	00:51	Service leadership team (current)
Brenda	May 11, 2021	Ending Violence & Organizing Freedom (black-led coalition, nonprofits)	00:32	Political organizing leader

| Ken | May 23, 2021 | Current – reentry organization unaffiliated; Former – unnamed nonprofit; Former – State Agency 3 (punitive) | 00:42 | Grassroot service volunteer (current) |
| Sandra | May 23, 2021 | Current - Lifeline Services & Support (nonprofit); Former – State Agency 3 (punitive) | 00:43 | Service leadership team (current) |

Meeting Observations				

Meeting Type	Date	Organizations Involved	Length, hour:minutes
Statewide conference (morning plenary)	March 4, 2021 (video record)	- State Agency 1 - State Agency 2	1:05
Statewide conference (afternoon plenary)	March 4, 2021 (video record)	- State Agency 3 - State Agency 4	1:00
Statewide check-in meeting	May 19, 2021	- County Agency 1 - County Agency 2 - City Agency 1 - City Agency 2 - Justice & Equal Opportunity Union - Lifeline Services & Support - Ending Violence & Organizing Freedom - Religious Reentry Services 1 - Religious Reentry Services 2 - Religious Reentry Services 3 - Good Samaritan Network - Prison & Community Health Providers - Community Reentry Innovators - Reentry Employment Advocates	1:50

		- Reentry Food Security Advocates - Alliance of Brothers & Sisters in Struggle - Reimagining Reentry Futures - Building Legacies: Reentry & Community Empowerment	
Coalition for Community Empowerment & Racial Justice meeting	April 23, 2021	- Alliance of Brothers & Sisters in Struggle - Reimaging Reentry Futures - Good Samaritan Network - Prison & Community Health Providers - *Independent members*: state agents, university researchers	1:55