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BLACK CRIME IN MICHIGAN 1993-2000

by

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## ABSTRACT

The problem of black crime deserves attention on the part of researchers, criminal justice professionals, and law makers and other. Information regarding arrests can contribute to a greater understanding of the nature and dimension of the problem. In this paper, the 1993-2000 data relative to arrests for crimes against the person (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and property crimes will be examined. The data has been drawn from the state of Michigan for the years 1993 through 2000. Questions to be addressed include the following: What changes, if any, have occurred between 1993 and 2000 in the number and percentages of arrests of black offenders as compared to white offenders? What has been the effect on crime as it relates to education, unemployment and poverty? What effect has this overall process had on the prison population in the state of Michigan? What are some of the needed changes that need to be implemented to foster change?

Black crime in the 90s continues to be a matter of grave concern for all Michigan residents. Blacks comprise 14.2 percent of Michigan's population, yet a disproportionate percentage of blacks are being arrested for crimes (Census of Population, 2000). This paper will assess the nature and changes in black crime in Michigan between the years 1993 and 2000. Attention will be given to the differences that exist between whites and blacks relative to crime. Special attention will be given to arrest rates, the victims of crime, the causes of crime, and treatment by the police and courts. In addition, the prison system will be examined.

### Arrest Rates

Tables 1 through 5 present data on the numbers and percentages for blacks arrested for index crimes in Michigan. Numbers and percentages are examined for blacks for the time period 1993 through 2000 (Uniform Crime Reports, 1993-2000).

The number of blacks arrested for crimes involving murder showed a decline over the time period. The percentage of blacks arrested for murder remained fairly constant. For whites, the numbers during the time period showed an fluctuating decline as did the percentages. The numbers and percentages of arrests for blacks and whites for forcible rape and for robbery declined over the time period. For aggravated assault, the numbers dropped for blacks and the percentages remained fairly constant. With regard to whites, the numbers went down markedly and the percentages remained fairly constant.

**TABLE 1**

**Number of Persons Arrested, Black and White\*, and Percentage of Total Persons Arrested, Black and White, for Murder in Michigan 1993-2000.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>%Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% White</b>
1993	1709	1480	86.6	216	12.6
1994	1674	1342	80.2	311	18.6
1995	1419	1215	85.6	195	13.7
1996	1209	1051	86.9	147	12.2
1997	1262	1077	85.3	272	21.6
1998	1514	1287	85.0	214	14.1
1999	1316	1136	86.3	175	13.3
2000	1356	1194	88.1	156	11.5

\* Not shown are numbers and percentages for "other" minorities.

**TABLE 2**

**Number of Persons Arrested, Black and White\*, and Percentage of Total Persons Arrested, Black and White, for Rape in Michigan 1993-2000.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>%Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% White</b>
1993	2015	1037	51.5	929	46.1
1994	1971	1118	56.7	819	41.6
1995	1711	1028	60.1	655	38.3
1996	1721	1003	58.3	682	39.6
1997	1493	826	55.3	640	42.9
1998	1574	749	47.6	792	50.3
1999	1547	748	48.4	772	50.0
2000	1428	726	50.8	679	47.5

**TABLE 3**

**Number of Persons Arrested, Black and White\*, and Percentages of Total Persons Arrested, Black and White, for Robbery in Michigan 1993-2000.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>%Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% White</b>
1993	4893	3930	80.3	885	18.1
1994	4735	3839	81.1	818	17.3
1995	4092	3292	80.4	768	18.8
1996	3731	2915	78.1	767	20.6
1997	3548	2749	77.5	762	21.5
1998	3343	2554	76.4	759	22.7
1999	3094	2469	79.8	598	19.3
2000	3015	2354	78.1	635	21.1

**TABLE 4**

**Number of Persons Arrested, Black and White\*, and Percentages of Total Persons Arrested, Black and White, for Aggravated Assault in Michigan 1993-2000.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>%Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% White</b>
1993	14678	7625	51.9	6462	44.0
1994	15241	8273	54.3	6659	43.7
1995	15487	8669	56.0	6536	42.2
1996	14546	8545	58.7	5780	39.7
1997	13825	8070	58.4	5561	40.2
1998	14682	8385	57.1	6078	41.4
1999	13296	7901	59.4	5191	39.0
2000	12245	7156	58.4	4919	40.2

In turning to property crimes, the numbers for blacks declined over the time period and the percentages showed little fluctuation. The same was true for whites.

**TABLE 5**  
**Number of Persons Arrested, Black and White\*, and Percentages of**  
**Total Persons Arrested, Black and White, for Property Crimes in**  
**Michigan 1993-2000.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>%Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% White</b>
1993	50952	20189	39.6	28693	56.3
1994	50513	20421	40.4	28354	56.1
1995	46174	23315	50.5	25795	55.9
1996	43861	17675	40.3	24891	56.7
1997	40954	16459	40.2	23379	57.1
1998	38906	15403	39.6	22459	57.7
1999	37157	15292	41.2	20841	56.1
2000	35129	13962	39.7	20434	58.2

For the state as a whole, then, blacks were arrested for a higher number and percentage of violent crimes than whites and whites were arrested for a higher number and percentage of property crimes. For all of these comparisons it should be remembered that blacks comprise 13.9 percent of the total population of Michigan.

Victims of Crime

People tend to commit crimes against persons who live closest to them. The housing situation in urban Michigan continues to be segregated. Thus, most blacks live in mostly black neighborhoods and most whites in mostly white neighborhoods. Given this reality, it is clear why the victims and offenders are usually of the same race. In the case of blacks, close proximity, unemployment and poverty, interact to result in a higher percentage of black victims of crime.

The data for 1993 shows that approximately seventy percent of the victims of confirmed murders in Michigan were black. In 2000, this figure remained constant

(Uniform Crime Report 1993:9; Uniform Crime Report 2000:12). This is in line with statistics nationwide. On the national level murder is the leading cause of death for young black males and one of the leading causes for young black females (Petersilla, 1983:V). Nearly twenty years later the situations that existed in 1983 continues to be about the same. The newspapers nationwide and in Michigan constantly focus on drive-by shootings and individuals accidentally shot in the line of fire. What is clear to the author is that one can almost assume that in the case of drive-by shootings in our urban areas that the perpetrators will probably be black and the victims will also be black. Our urban areas are becoming killing grounds and the process seems to be a self-inflicted genocide. The biggest enemy for a young black male in our urban areas is usually another young black male. The drive-by shootings and random killings lead to other drive-by shootings and random killings in retaliation. Another fact that seems to come to the forefront is that the perpetrators of violence are getting younger and younger, and the weapon of choice is usually some form of handgun.

Our urban areas appear to be becoming war zones where gunfire is a daily occurrence. Most black youths either know someone or are related to someone who has been killed by a handgun. Homicide by the use of a handgun is becoming an epidemic in the black urban population. This is a problem where no end is in sight.

What all this suggests is that individuals who are black, poor, and live in the inner city have an increased probability of being victimized by violent crime. In addition, the victimizer in most cases will also be black.

## Causes of Crime

The causes of crime have been explored and discussed many times. Such issues as unemployment, lack of education, and poverty are those most mentioned. There is an interaction among these factors, and they cannot be viewed as isolated phenomena. When a person is undereducated, the possibility of being unemployed is greatly increased. Quite naturally, unemployment leads to poverty. Deteriorating neighborhoods in the cities of Michigan and the United States are breeding grounds for crime. Crime evolves from the varying kinds of discrimination that most affect the black population.

Urban crime is entwined with the socioeconomic situation that exists in our country. When people have no jobs, they do what they feel they have to do in order to survive. Often this means committing crimes. This is not an attempt to offer justification, but simply to indicate that crime is related to unemployment and poverty. A critical point is that blacks are at the bottom of the economic ladder. The kinds of jobs held by many urban blacks are those most affected by negative economic swings. These are the so-called service-related jobs. In these kinds of jobs, the work force tends not to be unionized and is subject to more layoffs when business slows. Blacks often fall victim to the sequence of last hired, first fired. In addition, urban blacks seem to be disproportionately affected by plant closings. This means that blacks are often faced with the fact that the possibility of employment does not exist.

At the present time, the unemployment situation in Michigan has improved for blacks but is still significantly higher than unemployment for whites. Unemployment

statistics reveal that the unemployment rate for the black population in Michigan is over two and a half times that for the white population. The gap between whites and blacks is still quite significant; but, there has been some improvement over the last few years.

The annual average unemployment rate for whites in 1985 was 7.6 percent and for blacks 27.8 (Current Population Survey, 1985). In 1991, the respective figures were: 5.8 and 16.8. For 2002, the respective figures were 4.7 and 12.8 (US Census, Summary File 3). Thus the data indicates that the situation for whites is fluctuating slightly over the period discussed and the situation for blacks has improved; however, the gap still remains quite wide. Spohn and Holleran (2000) note that young black and Hispanic males face greater odds of incarceration than middle-aged white males, unemployed black and Hispanics are substantially more likely to be sentenced to prison than employed white males. Other research has found that blacks, males and offenders with low levels of education and income receive substantially longer sentences (Mustard 2001). Other research notes that criminal behavior is influenced by lack of income, job experiences, and perception of a blocked opportunity structure. While labor market conditions and reactions to those conditions have some affect on crime, findings tend to suggest that long periods of unemployment, job experiences and a lack of income work in tandem with anger and external attributions to increase street use of criminal activities (Baron and Hartnagel 1997). Numerous other studies focusing on sentencing suggest that race and ethnicity do play an important role in contemporary sentencing decisions. Black and Hispanics offenders, particularly those who are young, male, or unemployed, received longer sentences or differential benefits

from guidelines departures than do similarly situated white offenders. (Spohn 2000 and Free 1997).

With respect to poverty in Michigan, blacks are far worse off than whites. In terms of numbers and percentages in 1989 there were 717,111 whites below the poverty level or 9.4 percent. For blacks, the number was 419,921 or 33.7 percent. The percentage of blacks below the poverty level is more than three and one-half times that of whites (Census of Population, Income and Poverty Survey, 1990). In 1999 the respective figures were 338,492 or 25.2 percent for blacks and was 925,057 or 7.5 percent for whites (Census 2000 Summary File 3). Though the overall situation has improved, the difference between whites and blacks is quite evident.

With respect to education in Michigan in 1990, the census data show that for whites, twenty-five years and older, 3,931,969 or 78.7 percent at least had graduated from high school. The respective figures for blacks was 454,788 or 64.9 percent (Census of Population and Housing, 1991). For 1999 the respective figures for whites were 4,525,360 or 85.3 percent and for blacks were 599,216 or 74.1 percent (Census of Population and Housing, 2000).

In viewing the percent of white and black student enrolled in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade from 1993-2000, the data show that there was little fluctuation in the percentage of blacks during this period.<sup>1</sup> From 1993 to 2000 the percent of white high school students enrolled in twelfth ranged from 83.3 percent in 1993 to 82.7 percent in 2000. The

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<sup>1</sup>Graduation data was not available and only 12<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment was available.

percent of blacks enrolled in twelfth grade ranged from 11.9 percent in 1993 to a slight fluctuation in 1998. The data show that in the state of Michigan there was an overall increase in the number of students enrolled in the twelfth grade due to a increase in the number of individuals in the state school system over the past five years (Jones; Bureau of Administration, Michigan Department of Education).

**TABLE 6**  
**Numbers and Percentages of Black High School Graduates**  
**and White High School Graduates: State of Michigan 1982-1992**

		White H.S. Graduates		Black H.S. Graduates	
Year	Total	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1993	91,734	76,386	83.3	10,893	11.9
1994	90,768	75,444	83.1	10,756	11.9
1995	91,704	76,730	83.7	10,625	11.6
1996	93,032	77,687	83.5	10,846	11.7
1997	95,147	79,338	83.4	11,311	11.9
1998	100,269	82,930	82.3	11,818	11.9
1999	102,282	83,306	83.1	12,149	12.1
2000	101,833	87,197	85.3	11,912	11.9

Source: Jones, Bureau of Administration, Michigan Department of Education.

Environment has a great deal to do with an individual's life chances. In the areas of employment, education and income, blacks are at a deficit when compared to their white counterparts. These factors are interrelated and must be viewed in this context. A poor education leads to limited employment possibilities and limited

income. Unemployment is a way of life for the undereducated black living below the poverty level. This leads one to look at the relationship between crime and economic factors. Petersilla (1983:75) found in interviews of black and white offenders that a greater percentage of black respondents indicated that losing their jobs, being unable to get a job, or needing money for self support were very important in causing them to turn to crime. White offenders were more likely to report that their crimes resulted from taking drugs or alcohol, or from trying to get money for drugs. Given that the urban environment has changed very little with regard to the poverty syndrome in our urban areas, then the kinds of things that separated white and black offenders ten years ago are still valid in 2000.

Many times individuals act in a desperate manner when they view their situation as being desperate. Young blacks in the ghetto feel that their chances of getting jobs and pulling themselves out of poverty are minimal. Often times the young black person has less than a high school education, and this means that the only kind of job, if any, that can be secured is entry level. When the economic situation is not good, even this kind of job is hard to find.

### The Criminal Justice System

In the examination of blacks in the criminal justice system, the focus will be on the police, the court system, and the prison setting. These questions will be addressed: Are there differences for blacks and whites in treatment by police? Are there differences for blacks and whites in the length of sentences for the same kinds of

crimes? What kinds of changes have taken place in the prison system in the last ten years?

### Police

Affirmative action programs have increased the percentage of black officers on police forces across the nation. This increase has led to a lessening of the discussion of the practice of racism by white police officers.

More attention is being focused on the prevention of crime in the black community than was the case a few years ago. It should be noted however, that there still is some concern about the interaction between white officers and blacks in the ghetto. For example, a white police officer may have some unfavorable experiences with blacks on a few occasions, and may, therefore, come to the conclusion that all blacks are dangerous in the ghetto. When a police officer begins to think in this manner, response to black suspects will be different. Differential treatment on the part of white police officers leads to difficulty between the white police officer and the black community.

With regard to this issue, some may argue that since there is more crime in the black community a police officer must be aware of this and must view contact in the ghetto as being potentially more dangerous than contact in the suburban white community. Crime rates in the black community are high, and the police officer must act accordingly.

This issue is a double edged sword. The black community is concerned about police brutality; but, it is also concerned about crime in our urban areas. The police

stand between a continued escalation of black on black violence. It is clear that police brutality cannot be tolerated; but, police interaction in the community is critical.

Police officers often feel that going into the black community is like going into a war zone, and they need to protect themselves. When a white police officer goes into the black community with this kind of posture, the response of blacks often will be negative. This negative response will then reinforce the police officer's view that blacks are dangerous. Although the process is cyclic and both sides are to blame, the pendulum probably sways more towards law enforcement's lack of tolerance when it comes to the negative feelings that exist between white police officers and the black community.

### Sentencing Procedures

Are blacks treated differently from whites in the courts? Petersilla (1983:67-72) investigated the criminal justice systems of California, Michigan, and Texas and found that judges tend to impose heavier sentences on Hispanics and blacks than on whites convicted of comparable felonies and with similar criminal records. She found that in California, the average sentence was five months longer for Hispanics and 2.4 months longer for blacks than for whites. In Michigan the sentences averaged 1.7 months longer for blacks. (She did not give any data on Hispanics in Michigan because of the small sample size.) In Texas sentences for blacks averaged 7.7 months longer and for Hispanics 8.1 months longer.

As we move into the 1990s the issue relative to sentencing may be changing at least in California. Klein, Petersilla, and Turner (1990:816) note:

Taken together, our findings indicate that California courts are making racially equitable sentencing decisions. The racial disparities apparent in the in/out decision are not evidence of discrimination in sentencing - once we control for relevant crime, prior record, and process variables. This finding held for five of the six prime studies (assault, robbery, burglary, theft, and forgery). Drug crimes were the exception, Latinos faced a higher probability of imprisonment. We found no evidence of racial discrimination the length of prison terms imposed for any of the crimes studied.

It is also clear that the other variables are not proxies for race - that is, they are not masking what are actually racially influenced decisions. Moreover, sentencing decisions were predictable, even though our data base contained some of the many variables that legally can be considered in imposing criminal sentences.

The issue presented by the above authors presents a new viewpoint; but, this

view does not go unchallenged as is noted by Heaney (1992:792):

It appears that three factors are important in the longer sentences for young black males. The first factor is the weight given to criminal history, even when the criminal history involves prior arrests for relatively minor offenses. Unfortunately, because of conditions in the inner city, a young black male is likely to have a longer criminal record than his white counterpart in the suburbs. Second, a gram of crack is given 100 times the weight as a gram of powder cocaine... . Even if crack is cheaper and more addictive, is it 100 times worse; because crack may be the inner city drug of choice, this distinction can reduce harsher sentences for black crack offenders than for white traffickers in powder cocaine. Third, many communities concentrate their law enforcement activities in the inner city. Certainly strict law enforcement in the inner city should be encouraged, but law enforcement in and of itself cannot solve the inner city drug problem.

In line with the above thinking focusing on the race effect the disadvantage experienced by black defendants is often strongly represented in drug offenses and for property crimes that have relatively high victimization rates for whites (larceny, burglary) (Crawford et al 1998).

A lot has been written discussing the intersection of race and crime. In most of these discussions race signifies African American and issues of disproportionate incarceration and arrests are the most familiar starting points (Wolpert 1999).

Zimring and his colleagues (1976) suggest that society places a higher value on whites than on blacks. They note that blacks receive sentences of life imprisonment or death more than twice as often when the murder victim is white rather than black. Smith (1987) in analyzing patterns of capital punishment in Louisiana found that a pattern of discrimination by race of victim, but not by race of offender existed, even when a number of legal and extralegal factors were controlled. Amsterdam (1988) pointed out in a study of the death penalty in Georgia that it was less important to know whether or not the individual committed a homicide in the first place, but it was more important to know that if he did whether he killed a white victim or a black one. Forty percent of Georgia homicide cases involved white victims, in eighty-seven percent of the cases in which a death penalty is imposed, the victim is white. White-victim cases are almost eleven times more likely to produce a death penalty than are black-victim cases. In 2000, there were 3,593 prisoners on death row. Of that number 1,535 or 42 percent were black. This should be viewed in the light that blacks comprise only 14 percent of the population in the U.S. (Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

In viewing sentencing guideline standards, blacks have experienced some adverse effects. The mandatory minimum statutes have had an adverse effect blacks and this is corroborated by the literature. Research shows that blacks are more likely than whites to be convicted under mandatory minimum provisions in sentencing

guidelines and more likely than whites to be sentenced to at or above the indicated mandatory minimum. Much of this disparity is apparently a consequence of the differential treatment accorded crack cocaine offenders. The disparity between sentencing involving crack and powder cocaine has recently been investigated by the U.S. Sentencing Commission (Free 1997).

Another study pointed to the fact that homicide cases involving black defendants and white victims fared worse than any other racial combinations. They were more likely to result in first degree murder charges and to proceed to capital trial (Sorensen and Wallace 1999). It was found that blacks convicted of cocaine offenses and Hispanics convicted of cocaine and marijuana offenses were sentenced more harshly than white offenders (Herbert 1997).

These findings suggest that black human life is not valued as highly as white human life. Until recently, killing or assaulting a black in the South was not always considered a crime. It may have been a crime on the books, but many times individuals were unpunished if the victim was black.

Unnever and his colleagues (1980) suggest that bias can be found in some places and times and not in others, and it may be expressed outside the public view. They note that it is important for sociologists to take into account the possibility of discrimination in criminal courts and to be aware that recommendations by court officials can function as a way in which racial bias and sentencing is introduced. Gilbert (1998) reflects on the concept of a black tax in the American justice system. The prominence of stereotypes means that black people pay a price when they are in

the presence of whites. The non negotiable inflation-proof cost borne by African Americans is discrimination.

Needed Changes in the Prison System

1984. Recidivism has been a factor in this increase in prison population.

Recidivism is a problem that must be dealt with if the prison population is to be reduced. In order to lower the rate of recidivism, rehabilitation is necessary. The Michigan Department of Corrections has a number of programs both academic and vocational which are geared toward the rehabilitation of prison residents. (Michigan Department of Corrections, Annual Statistical Report, 1984) (Table 7).

Based on the number and kind of programs offered, it was clear that the Department of Corrections had a commitment to rehabilitation. It is clear, however, that programs for inmates did not keep pace with the increase in the prison population. There was a big increase in basic education 0-8, and in the GED preparation.

However, there has been a decline in the college academic program. The basic education 0-8 has been the program that has kept pace with the increase in the prison population. Two aspects of the academic program that need special attention are the GED preparation (high school diploma equivalency), and the college components. In December of 1984, the prison population was 14,604. Of that number 1,274 or 8.7 percent were in the GED preparation component and 1,646 or 11.3 percent were in the

**TABLE 7**  
**Michigan Department of Corrections**  
**Institutional Program Statistics: November 30, 1984**

Programs	Residents
Academic	Totals

Basic Education 0-8	1,286
GED Preparation	1,274
Life Role Competency	590
Chapter I. Remedial Math and Reading	340
College-Academic	1,646
Vocational	1,628
On-the-Job Training & Apprenticeships	224

Source: Annual Statistical Report, 1984, Michigan Department of Corrections.

**TABLE 8**  
**Michigan Department of Corrections**  
**Institutional Program Statistics: November, 1991**

Programs	Residents
Academic	Totals
Basic Education 0-8	3,069
GED Preparation	2,213
Life Role Competency	524
Chapter I. Remedial Math and Reading	210
College-Academic	2,237
Vocational	1,742
On-the-Job Training & Apprenticeships	224

Source: Statistical Report, 1991, Michigan Department of Corrections (See Table 8).

college academic component (Michigan Department of Corrections, Annual Statistical Report 1984:42).

1991. In December of 1991, the prison population was 36,019 and of that number 2,213 or 6.1 percent were in the GED preparation component and 2,237 or 6.2 percent were in the college academic component which represented a decline from 8.7 percent in 1984 (Michigan Department of Corrections, Annual Statistical Report, 1991:136-137). The GED preparation component is of critical importance because with the GED certificate a resident can be admitted into a degree program in a community college or a four year college.

There were a number of community colleges and four year institutions that had academic programs in various correctional facilities across the state. Table 9 identifies each college and community college and the correctional facility that housed its programs.

Community colleges and four year institutions offered the prison resident the opportunity for obtainment of associate and baccalaureate degrees. The community colleges and four year institutions were spread all over the state and served various camps and institutions on a statewide basis.

2000. By the end of 2000 the prison population had risen to 45,715. Of that number, 19,200 or 42 percent were white and 24,915 or 54.5 percent were black. The Department's total appropriations for fiscal 2000 was \$1.6 billion dollars (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2000 Annual Report). It also should be noted that the Department of Corrections is fiscal year 2000 received 15.4 percent of the state general revenue funding and that is up from 3 percent in 1980. The number of staff was 18,788 including 9,522 corrections officers. Correction staffing represents thirty percent of the total state government work force as opposed to seven percent in 1980.

The community college and four-year institution programs came to a halt in the mid-90s. The Pell Grant Program that paid for inmates tuition was discontinued. For all intents and purposes the associate and baccalaureate possibilities are for the most part nonexistent at this point in time. In 2000, approximately 22 percent of all offenders in prison and camps were enrolled in formal education, such as adult basic education (ABE), vocational training, General education development (GED) and college level

classes. The latter is a very small portion of the educational program at this time. The state has a new program at the Newberry Correctional Facility in the upper peninsula. This school is one of the most prolific in the nation, graduating hundreds of prisoners each year with the GED diploma. In 2000, approximately 300 offenders earned the high school equivalency certificate. Newberry was designed as a specialized education prison when it opened, a place where the focus would be on guiding prisoners toward completion of their high school degrees, a major educational goal for the Michigan Department of Corrections. Since 1996, more than 1200 prisoners have earned their GED at Newberry. The Department of Corrections provides ABE and GED courses at all prisons, six of the thirteen camps including the state's boot camps also offer ABE and GED. The Department overhauled its educational system in 1995, retooling its educational programs with an eye towards insuring that all prisoners, with some exceptions, earn a high school degree or its equivalent before parole or discharge from parole. As a result, the number of prisoners earning GED has steadily increased. By department policy and with some exceptions, GED completion is required for parole or discharge from parole (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2000, Annual Report).

#### Promoting the Idea of Educational Betterment

It is of critical importance for the inmate to be aware of the fact that if he is to be rehabilitated, they must be the prime mover in this process. Education in the outside world is the key to economic security and employability. This is even more true in the

prison setting. When the inmate goes to prison, he basically steps off the world. The world continues to move and the inmate is stagnate in time. If that individual does not

**TABLE 9**

**Post-Secondary Educational Institutions with Programs  
in Michigan Correctional Facilities, 1993**

Post-Secondary Educational Institutions		Correctional Facilities	
Name	Location	Name	Location
Jackson Community College	Jackson	State Prison of Southern Michigan Egler Correctional Facility	Jackson Jackson
Kellogg Community College	Battle Creek	Crane Women's Facility	Coldwater
Kirtland Community College	Roscommon	Camp Lehman	Grayling
Montcalm Community College	Sidney	Marquette Michigan Reformatory Scott Correctional Facility	Marquette Ionia Plymouth
Spring Arbor College	Spring Arbor	State Prison of Southern Michigan Egler Correctional Facility Scott Correctional Facility	Jackson Jackson Plymouth
Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo	Scott Correctional Facility	Plymouth

Source: Rivers, Administrator, Michigan Department of Corrections.

do something to improve his situation and to be better off at his release than he was when he came to prison, the probability of return to prison is almost guaranteed. Oftentimes the inmate coming into the prison setting is reading at the elementary level. Because the individual cannot read this does not mean that the individual does not have potential. With a great deal of time and effort the inmate can move through an academic program that will culminate in his receiving his GED. It is important to impress upon the inmate that whatever his academic level was upon entry into prison that it behooves him/her to do whatever possible to raise that educational level. The basic idea is that the individual must be able to do something upon his release to earn

a living and avoid a return to the kinds of behaviors that led to incarceration in the first place.

### Diploma Attainment and Degree Completion

The incarcerated resident should be able to feel that receiving a high school diploma or completing a college degree can become a reality. However, college is out of the reach of almost every inmate at this point in time. Practically every institution has a GED program. Being transferred usually does not mean the end of an educational experience; but, it will usually mean that the attainment of the GED will be delayed because the new institution to which you have been transferred has no openings at the time of your arrival. The problems lies in the resident's adjustment to a new set of teachers and expectations. If the individual is transferred too often then he or she may just give up and feel that the frustrations are not worth it.

From a pure economic standpoint, it benefits society if the individual becomes productive and does not return to prison. The taxpayer is footing the bill for the inmate in prison. One only has to look at the increase in the budget of the Michigan Department of Corrections over the past few years and it is clear that Michigan nor the United States as a country, can continue to build prisons and pour money into the housing of prisoners. We as taxpayers cannot continue to withstand the massive budget increases that have been necessary to imprison individuals. If educational betterment is the key to reduce recidivism, then educational betterment for our children is the key to the future. It costs a lot less to send an individual to college than it does to send him/her to prison.

## Recommendations

It is clear that definite changes need to take place, both in the community and in the prison setting. Reduction of crime and of recidivism is of paramount importance.

Education is an important key to reducing crime. Special efforts must be made to improve the educational opportunities for black children in ghetto schools. The kind of education the black child receives in an inner-city school does not match what is offered in suburban schools. There is a need to close the gap that exists between suburban and inner-city schools. Improving educational opportunities for black youngsters will increase the probability of their being more employable as adults and their ability to work in the kinds of jobs that will keep them above the poverty level.

In the prison setting, a critical key is more education. Although control will always be the primary goal in the correctional setting, it is hoped that providing residents with more educational opportunities will become more valued within the department of corrections. Specifically, there needs to be an expansion of the GED preparation component so that more residents can receive high school diploma equivalencies. The fact most inmates no longer have a real opportunity to obtain an associates or bachelor's degree is a major set back. There is a need to reinstate the Pell Grant that pays for the college education of inmates.

The GED program is quite important; however, the fact that the community college and four-year programs have been eradicated is a major step backward. The GED program should have as one of its major components the act as a feeder into community colleges which can result in a degree and also can lead to enrollment in a

four-year institution. This type of process that was available in the late 80s and early 90s is a necessary component to help individuals who return to the community to succeed and not return to prison.

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