Punishment and Inequality

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June 2020

\textsuperscript{1}This research was supported by NSF, NIH, Pew Research Center, and the Russell Sage Foundation.
Outline

- Mass incarceration
- The Reentry Study
- Conclusions and Implications
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I. Mass Incarceration
International Incarceration Rates, 2011

- Spain: 156
- United Kingdom: 152
- Australia: 130
- Canada: 114
- France: 111
- Italy: 111
- Greece: 110
- Belgium: 108
- Austria: 104
- Germany: 87
- Switzerland: 77
- Norway: 72
- Sweden: 72
- Denmark: 71
- Netherlands: 70
- Finland: 61

Incarceration Rate
0 200 400 600 800
International Incarceration Rates, 2011

- United States: 716
- Spain: 156
- United Kingdom: 152
- Australia: 130
- Canada: 110
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Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 1972
Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 2012

- Imprisonment Rate per 100,000
- Trends show an increase from 1925 to 2012.
Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 2012

By 2013:
Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 2012

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* 1.57m in state or federal prison
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* 853,000 on parole
Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 2012

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* 3.91m on probation
Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 2012

By 2013:
* 1.57m in state or federal prison
* 731,000 in jail
* 853,000 on parole
* 3.91m on probation
* 6.90m under correctional supervision
Men's Risk of Imprisonment by 30–34

Cumulative Risk of Imprisonment (%)

1979

Whites

All: 1.2%
Non-college: 1.8%
Dropouts: 4.2%

Blacks

All: 9.0%
Non-college: 12.1%
Dropouts: 14.7%
Key Finding

Mass incarceration criminalized social problems related to racial inequality and poverty on a historically unprecedented scale, contributing to the reproduction of poverty and racial inequality.
National Academy of Sciences Report

The Growth of Incarceration in the United States
Exploring Causes and Consequences
Given the small crime prevention effects of long prison sentences and the possibly high financial, social, and human costs of incarceration, federal and state policy makers should revise current criminal justice policies to significantly reduce the rate of incarceration in the United States.
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Limitations of Research

- Analysis lacked realism, thin statistical portrait of those at risk of incarceration
- Under-coverage, little detailed analysis of social process of community return
- Little direct guidance for policy
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II. The Reentry Study
The Boston Reentry Study

- Data collection over three years in collaboration with Anthony Braga (Northeastern) and Rhiana Kohl (DOC)
- A longitudinal interview study with 122 men and women released from Massachusetts prisons and returning to Boston
- Collected data on employment, housing, health, family, drug use, crime and justice system contact
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Three Findings

- Exposure to violence and other trauma in childhood
- Poor physical and mental health in adulthood
- Associated with poverty and material hardship after prison
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Childhood Trauma

- Family Drug Use
- Hit by Parents
- Witnessed Death
- Parents Lost Custody
- Family Crime Victim
- Domestic Violence
- Depressed/Suicidal Kin
- Sexual Abuse
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**Adult Frailty**

- Substance Abuse
- Depression
- Chronic Pain
- Chronic Disease
- Heroin Use
- Anxiety
- PTSD
- Psychosis
Childhood Trauma is Related to Frailty in Adulthood
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Abuse in childhood
Hard Drug Use

Frail
Not Frail

Percent

0 20 40 60 80 100

One Week
Two Months
Six Months
Twelve Months
III. Conclusions and Implications
Conclusions and Implications

- Incarceration is a function and a cause of poverty and racial inequality.
- Poverty is multidimensional encompassing low income, poor physical and mental health, and exposure to trauma.
- Racial inequality is spatially organized, morally freighted through the stigma of criminality.
- Reversing mass incarceration must address a variety of social needs, not just low-income, and will involve cultural project of humanization.
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