Punishment, Incarceration and Reentry

How the system exacerbates, reduces or prevents the contagion of violence
Violence in Prisons

- Prisons are significantly more violent than the general community (Wolff and Shi, 2007).
- Perpetrators are both staff and other inmates.
- Inmate perpetrated violence often gang related.
- Men more likely to be a victim of physical assault than women – 2005 research found that 25% men and 20% women experienced violence during current period of incarceration.
- Victims tend to be young and black. Other factors include: time served (for physical assault), and mental illness or other disability, sexual orientation (for sexual assault).
- Violence in youth facilities highlighted by CRIPA investigations.
Prisoner violence and prison violence

• Much debate in the literature about whether people who committed violent crimes are more likely to be violent in prison.

• Evidence suggests some criminal histories, such as assault or robbery, increase risk of violent misconduct while in prison. Homicide, however, does not increase the risk.
Psychological Impacts of Imprisonment

• Incarceration has numerous psychological effects – ‘institutionalization’ or ‘prisonization’
• Psychological effects vary from individual to individual and not necessarily permanent (Hayney, 2002):
  – Dependence on institution, loss of capacity/judgment
  – Hyper-vigilance, distrust, suspicion
  – Emotional over-control, alienation, and psychological distancing
  – Social withdrawal and isolation
  – Incorporation of exploitative norms
  – Diminished sense of self-worth and personal value
Reentry

• 93% of prisoners return home, 700,000 are released from prison each year (West & Sabol, 2009).
• Recidivism rates are high – within 3 years, 67% of returning prisoners were rearrested for a serious offense and 52% were returned to prison for a new criminal offense (Langan & Levin, 2002).
• Recidivism rates highest for non-violent criminals (robber/burglary/larceny, motor vehicle theft). Lowest recidivism for homicide, violent sexual offences.
• Released prisoners do contribute to violence in community, however – 1990’s data showed that released prisoners had at least a 53 times higher homicide rate than the general population.
• Unclear whether people imprisoned for non-violent crimes more likely to commit violent crimes than they were before – either because of violence in prison, or exposure to other more violent offenders.
Reentry for Youth

• Incarceration for youth also does not work - Within three years of release, around 75 percent of youth are rearrested and 45 to 72 percent are convicted of a new offense. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011)
• Especially harmful for low-level offenders
• Ohio study, low- and moderate-risk youth placed into correctional facilities were five times more likely to be incarcerated for subsequent offenses than comparable youth placed in community supervision programs.
• Florida, a 2007 study found that low-risk youth placed into residential facilities not only re-offended at a higher rate than similar youth who remained in the community, they also re-offended at higher rates than high-risk youth placed into correctional facilities.
• 2009 study of juveniles exploring peer effects of incarceration (exposure to other criminal youth)- main effect was reinforcement of existing criminal behavior, especially for less crimes requiring skills and networks (property offences, drug offences). BUT no evidence that exposure to peers with particular criminal histories significantly increases an individual’s propensity to recidivate in a crime category in which the individual has no prior experience.
Wider Impacts?

• Some evidence of increased violence among parolees and domestic partners.

• White, Gondolf, Robertson, Goodwin, and Caraveo (2002) reported that 1 in 3 men incarcerated in federal prisons for low risk crimes admitted recent physical violence against intimate female partners and 1 in 10 reported severe violence toward women.

• Domestic violence related to frustration at joblessness, changed relationship circumstances, displaced anger at incarceration (Oliver and Hairston, 2008).

• In a study of the social-psychological processes affecting recidivism and desistance from crime, Zamble and Quinsey (1997) found that interpersonal conflict with heterosexual partners was a common problem mentioned by recidivists.