

Incarceration and Health: Current State of the Knowledge

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Why Incarceration?

- **Penal system as a social institution**

- All the students at UW, and Big-10, Pac-12, Big East, SEC, ACC, Big-12, IVY
- Significant demographic variation

- **Most inmates: Return home/ to community**

- 700,000+/-
 - 678,281 (2008 NCES)
 - ~ 590K : History of UW-Madison
 - https://registrar.wisc.edu/documents/Stats_DegsCumByDegree_1154.pdf

Incarceration as a System of Laws

● Expansion of penal system

- Not a single law or initiative:
 - Pattern of interconnected local, county, state and federal laws, policy changes, and initiatives
 - Enacted at virtually all levels/organizing units of American Society
- Broad legal, social, cultural, and symbolic implications
- Significant for understanding the “impact(s)” of incarceration
 - Intervention points

Organization

- What we know

- Criminal justice involvement and health outcomes
- Too much
 - Lean on other presenters

- Measurement issues

- Data collection

- Agenda for future research

- Gaps/questions

What We Know

- Incarceration “generally” has a negative impact on health
 - Range of outcomes
 - Morbidity to mortality
 - Mental and physical health
 - Functional mental health
 - Host of contingencies
 - Immediate (+) VS long-term effects

What We Know

- Incarceration “generally” negative
 - Individual and beyond
 - Children, partner, and community effects
 - Race effects: Inconsistent
 - Function of differential exposure
 - Some beneficial impact
 - Basic sustenance
 - Removal/protection from other risks
 - Medical treatment
 - Community impact (+/-)
 - Underserved population

Others: More depth

- Hagan & Foster

- Individuals, families, and communities

- Uggen

- Health effects as collateral consequences

- Wildeman

- Unpacking different measures of CJ involvement

- Remainder:

- Measurement issues
 - Data
 - Agenda

Measurement Issues

- What is the treatment variable?

- Literature inconsistent
 - Does it matter?

- Criminal Justice Contact

- Prison
- Jail
- Felony conviction
 - Arrest

- Labor market studies : Employed?

- Full, part time, earnings, duel income, seasonal, occupational code

Different Mechanisms

● Prisons

- Felony conviction
- Substantial spell of imprisonment

● Jails

- Meaningful criminal justice contact

● Felony conviction

- Consequences of legalized barriers & exclusion

Different Processes

● Prison: standard framing

- All offenses : 37.5 months (federal level)
- Convicted of a felony

● Jails

- About 65 percent 1 night or less
- Not necessarily felony conviction
 - No conviction

● Felony convictions

- No institutional time

Dependent variable

- All measures: Important, compelling, and related
 - Jail effects likely conservative and perhaps more compelling
 - But also different
- Identifying/specifying treatment:
 - Test for different effects
 - Identify impact of incarceration from that of felony conviction

◎ Data challenges

- A few data sets widely used
 - Fragile Families
 - National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health
 - National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (79 & 97)

◎ Common themes

- All important, meaningful, and potentially flawed
- ... data collected for other purposes
 - Inconsistent measurement of treatment variables and health measures

Data (health)

◎ Longitudinal measures

- Detailed and health specific
- Multiple sources
 - Self reported illness, diagnosed
 - Creative “get up and go”
 - Health related measures
 - Help seeking behavior
 - Insurance
 - Lifestyle indicators
 - Exercise, legal substance use, life course indicators

Data (CJ)

- Criminal Justice specific

- Longitudinal
- Type of contact
- Length of contact
- Conviction history
- On paper
 - Probation and parole
- Self reported crime
 - Substance use & risky behavior

- Data coordination

- Multiple agencies, collaborative, cross-field

Demanding much of data

- Speak to key questions

- Short and long term impacts
- Mechanisms
 - We know incarceration matters
 - Not just disadvantage, paternal/material absence
 - Unique effects
 - But not clear exactly why incarceration matters
 - Extreme disadvantage
 - Social support
 - Stigma
 - Exposure to stress and illness

Key Questions: Compared to Who?

● Proper comparison groups

- Individuals as their own control
- Matching on criminal justice indicators
 - Incarcerated/just released:
 - Those still incarcerated
 - earlier time periods
 - in jail but not prisons
 - In jail but not convicted
 - Convicted but never incarcerated
 - Arrested

Key ? : Institutional Variation

● Type of confinement

- Most measures blunt
 - Dichotomy: 0/1
- Confinement history
- Length of incarceration
- Type (min/max) of facility and location
- Institutional segregation
 - Solitary confinement

Key ?: Drug Use

- Drugs, incarceration

- And health

- Drug use

- Risk factor

- Incarceration

- Detrimental health impact

- Longitudinal data

- Problems: Long dormant period

- Sustained investigation

- Multiple measures and pathways

Key ?: Scope of problem

● From a health perspective

- Mass Incarceration: Relatively new phenomena
 - As incarcerated population ages:
 - Effects likely to become stronger?
 - Early stages of understanding the incarceration health relationship
- Overlays government programs
 - Medicare
 - Affordable Care Act

Key ?: Positive Effects

● Duration

- Positive effects first?
- Effect inverts (-) over time

● Positive effects

- Stronger for some demographic groups

● Community effects

- Access to care
- Disadvantaged population
- High levels of treatable communicable disease

Key ?: Basic Demographics

- Gaps in basic knowledge base

- Female offenders
 - Fast growing, but data limitations
- Race
 - Confirm earlier findings
 - Focus on Hispanics
- When in the life course
 - Earlier VS later
- Breadth of effects
 - Mental health
 - Spectrum of physical health outcomes

All: Need Population Size

- Incarcerated population
 - Straightforward
- Other populations: Considerably more challenging
 - Unique ex-prisoners
 - Mortality, migration, re-incarceration
 - Felons, ex-felons
 - Counting those “off-paper”

Agenda: Intervention points

● Best practices

- In and out, medically and socially

● Medically

- Health education
 - Safe practices & drug treatment
- Health care in prison
- as part of post release program
 - Coordinated, monitored, supported
- Shift in post-release monitoring emphasis
 - Consideration of health
 - Job, stable residence..... Medical care?

Agenda: Best practices

● Best practices

- In and out, medically and socially

● Socially

- Maintain family bonds
- Family counseling pre-release
- Focused training to address deficiencies
 - Jobs training VS GED
- Social and Medical
 - Mutually re-enforcing
 - Social support can improve health

Agenda: Data

● Data collection

- Longitudinal
 - Detailed, diverse CJ and health measures
- Population driven
 - Non-Hispanic whites and African-Americans
 - Women, Hispanics, Immigrants
 - Nationally representative VS Population specific
 - State DOC's

Agenda

- Beyond main effects

- Next steps: More nuanced understanding

- International research

- Comparatively little

- Intellectual & methodological diversity

- Ethnographic approaches, case studies, life histories
 - Rigorous quantitative models
 - “Natural” experiments?

- Cross discipline

Thank you
