

# Incarceration and Health: Current State of the Knowledge

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# Why Incarceration?

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- 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\\_DegsCumByDeg\\_1154.pdf](https://registrar.wisc.edu/documents/Stats_DegsCumByDeg_1154.pdf)

# Incarceration as a System of Laws

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## ● 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

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- ◉ 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- ◉ 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

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- ◉ 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, dual income, seasonal, occupational code



# Different Mechanisms

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## ◎ Prisons

- Felony conviction
- Substantial spell of imprisonment

## ◎ Jails

- Meaningful criminal justice contact

## ◎ Felony conviction

- Consequences of legalized barriers & exclusion

# Different Processes

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## ◉ 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

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- 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

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## ● 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)

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## ● 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)

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## ● 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

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## ◉ 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?

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## ● 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

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## ● 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

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- ◎ 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

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## ● 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

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## ◉ 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

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- 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

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- ◉ 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

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- 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

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## ◎ 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

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## ● 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

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- 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

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