Persistence and Desistance Narratives; Returning Citizens and the Freddie Gray Uprising of 2015

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Overview of the Discussion
1. US incarceration rates/ The Carceral State
2. Collateral Consequences
3. Safe Baltimore Communities
4. Desistance and successful reentry
5. Freddie Gray Uprising of 2015
6. Persistence and Desistance Narratives
7. Baltimore’s Safe Streets Program

1. US Incarceration Rates
   - "The Gray Waste"
   - From 1865-1965 184,901 inmates
   - From 1965-1985 increased by 251,107 inmates
   - From 1985 to current a total of 2.2 million inmates
   - A 943% increase from 1865 to the present
   - The US jails Black men at more than 6 to 8 times the rate of the South African Apartheid Regime, an openly racist system
   - BJS incarceration rate for black men was 4,347 people per 100,000 (2010)
   - The incarceration rate in South Africa 612 per 100,000 for Blacks (1984)
   - The Sentencing Project incarceration rate of 851 Black South Africans per 100,000 (1993)
The Rise of the Carceral State

- Legislation/ Regulations
  - 1961 President Kennedy’s Attack on Delinquency
  - 1965 Law Enforcement Assistance Act
  - 1968 Safe Streets Act
- Constituency groups and the rise of the Carceral State
  - “Conservatives”- habitual offender/ three strikes statutes
  - “Liberals”- mandatory minimum sentencing
- The Black Middle Class: Rockefeller Drug Laws, NAACP’s Citizens’ Mobilization Against Crime
- Near Unanimous Complicity

2. Collateral Consequences

- Lack of preparation for release
  - Curtailed education and job training programs
- Structural barriers to reentry
  - Accessing healthcare (substance misuse and mental health services)
  - Accessing housing
  - Employment barriers and financial instability
- Cultural barriers to reentry
  - Stigmatization
  - Moral/ social exclusion

3. Safe Baltimore Communities

- Rose & Clear (1998) and Roberts (2004) describe the interactive effects of high incarceration rates
- High incarceration rates and high rates of returned citizens in neighborhoods with minimal assets, destabilizes these neighborhoods while undermining traditional forms of social control, such as, neighborhood associations, social clubs, and churches
- Safe communities require us to successfully reintegrate returned citizens
Safe Baltimore Communities

**LONDON**
- 8.7 million, average 171 murders
- may reach just under 200 murders
- 14.5 times as many residents
- If Baltimore were London's size w/ current murder rate, ≈4,350 murders

**BALTIMORE**
- ≈620,000-183 murders July 10th
- will have at least 300 murders
- 1.5 times as many murders
- 14.5 times as many residents
- If Baltimore at current size were as safe as London, Baltimore would have less than 15 murders

**Baltimore Policing Budget**
- ≈$500 million accounts for nearly 1/5 of the total city budget
- Cuts to schooling, parks and recreation program, youth programs, sanitation, arts

4. Desistance and Successful Reentry

“If continued criminal activity is dependent on negative self-scripts, then desistance involves reworking self-narratives”

S. Maruna, 2014

Identity Theory of Desistance (ITD)

The transition from persistence to desistance is an internal process
5. The Freddie Gray Uprising 2015

Baltimore, MD

- Rust Belt City
- 55 neighborhoods
- 15,000 abandoned buildings
- Maryland spends nearly $300 million on corrections each year
- Baltimore City accounts for one third of all corrections spending in the state at $100 million

Poverty Rates

- **We call it an “Uprising”**
- Household poverty rates
  - 21 of 55 nearly 20% or more
  - 12 had more than 25%
  - 5 between 35% and 50%
- Childhood Poverty rates
  - 3 communities have more than 70% of the children in the community who live below the poverty line
Life Expectancy

- Average life expectancy in the US is 79 y/o
- In 10 of the 55 Baltimore communities the average life expectancy ranges between 60 to 69 y/o
- North Korea, Iran, Honduras, Turkmenistan
- At ≈73 y/o the City of Baltimore has the same life expectancy as Nicaragua and the Gaza Strip

Other Measures

- Infant Mortality Rates (IMR):
  - US IMR 5.6 deaths per 1,000 live births
  - Baltimore has 28 communities with infant mortality rates of between 11 and ≈20 deaths per 1,000 live births
  - 10 communities with IMR of more than 15 deaths per 1,000 live births which is nearly 3x's the national average
- Essentially, by every metric used to measure a community, much of Baltimore mirrors the Developing World.

The Freddie Gray Uprising 2015

- Freddy Gray lived in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood
- Police took Gray into custody on April 12, 2015, and he died on April 19, 2015 due to injuries sustained while in custody
- August 27 2015, city residents fight back against police
- Unrest swept across the city → State Of Emergency → National Guard called in
Penn North Community Source Center

- University of Maryland Integrated Health
- MUIH started PNCRC in 1993 to provide both free acupuncture services to the community and an urban field placement for its acupuncture students
- GED preparation classes, 170 units of supportive housing, job training/placement, and criminal record expungement assistance


- The new study arose from the findings from my pilot study
- Civic Engagement and Reentry: Returning Citizens Respond During the Freddy Gray Uprisings
- Change in self-perception
  - "For so many years I've been a part of the problem and I figure I'm going to spend the rest of my life being a part of the solution" - Jim
- Much of the current Persistence and Desistance Narratives research is being conducted in Europe
  - Shad Maruna, University of Manchester - Making Good
  - Cid and Marti (2012) Spain
  - Nugent and Schinkel (2016) UK

Persistence and Desistance Narratives/Scripts

- What are Persistence and Desistance Narratives/Scripts?
- Persistence narratives are "condemnation scripts" that include descriptions of obstacles that prevent the offender from "making an honest living" and successfully transitioning back into the community.
  - These scripts relate to and often describe the structural and cultural barriers to reentry.
  - The informant describes feeling condemned to persist/continue a life of crime.
- Desistance Narratives are the "rhetoric of redemption"
  - The RC who desists must explain their previous life of crime.
  - They must then develop a coherent narrative explaining and justifying their turnaround from a life of crime to desistance.
Persistence and Desistance Narratives; Returning Citizens and the Freddie Gray Uprising of 2015

- Qualitative narrative research investigating the life stories of individuals who were formerly under the supervision of the criminal justice system and who experienced the Freddie Gray uprising of 2015.
- Investigating the effects of the uprising as a means for studying whether civic engagement can influence or change how returning citizens integrate back into their communities.

The research seeks to answer the following questions:
- 1) Is civic engagement another turning point in the life course of offending?
- 2) What effect does civic engagement have on identity?
- 3) What effect does civic engagement have on other turning points in the life course of offending?

Data Analysis - Thematic analysis

Persistence and Desistance Narratives/Scripts

- Why is the research important?
- What is its significance?
7. Baltimore’s Safe Streets Program

- Public Health Violence Prevention Strategy
- Mission
  - To end the epidemic of violence by using evidence-based, public health and human service models that impact underlying health, social, and economic disparities, through effective advocacy, collaboration, and programming for, and in partnership with youth, families, and citizens of Baltimore.

Safe Streets

- Violence is a public health issue because it has an enormous impact on the health and wellness of individuals; especially youth.
- Violence is a leading cause of injury, disability and premature death locally.
- Violence is a significant disparity, disproportionately affecting young people and people of color.
- Violence increases the risk of other poor health outcomes.
- Violence is preventable.

Most outreach workers are Returned Citizens (RC)/Credible Messengers.
Baltimore’s Safe Streets Program

• Since 2015, the Baltimore Safe Streets Program has been raided by the AFT
• Outreach workers have been arrested on premises on two occasions

Further Research

• Investigate the long-term desistance rates of participants.
• Investigate and document pro-social bonds, employment, and housing opportunities.
• Developed an evaluation tool in order to differentiate between those RC’s with internal persistence scripts and those with internal desistance scripts.

References


