Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration: Improving Data Collection and Methodology to Advance Theory and Knowledge

“I’ve Risen Up from the Ashes that I Created”: Expungement and Female Offenders’ Narratives of Desistance and Self-Reinvention
Elsa Chen, Santa Clara University and Ericka Adams, North Central College

This study uses quantitative and qualitative analysis of interviews of 40 ex-offenders to examine the differences between women and men in motivations to desist from drugs and crime and expectations and experiences of criminal record expungement. Both men and women seek opportunities for personal gain through desistance and record clearance, but women are more likely to be motivated by moral and religious influences and concern about their reputation. Caregiving is especially important to women as a personal obligation and a professional aspiration. During efforts to desist and to move forward with a law-abiding lifestyle, women are more likely to express desires to break from the past and replace their criminal identities, but they also experience greater difficulty than men do in their efforts to change their living environment and associates. These findings emphasize the importance of both individual decision-making and gendered social roles and contexts in the reentry process.

Formerly Incarcerated Men’s Negotiation of Family Support
Johnna Christian, Rutgers University-Newark

Prior research about prisoner reentry has identified an assortment of needs for formerly incarcerated men. In addition to concerns such as finding employment, securing housing, and complying with supervision requirements, they must navigate complicated family relationships. These relationships are especially important for men reentering society after a period of incarceration because family members often provide support and assistance that is not readily available through other channels; a place to sleep, transportation, job leads, meals, and encouragement. Yet, the provision and receipt of support requires substantial negotiation of fluid and shifting relationship dynamics. Through analysis of preliminary, in-depth interviews with formerly incarcerated men in Newark, New Jersey, this paper examines how formerly incarcerated men identify potential avenues of familial support, how they maximize resources gained from family members, and how they manage strains in family relationships that potentially jeopardize their access to support. Implications for understanding both the benefits and limitations of family support for formerly incarcerated men will be discussed.

Sentencing-focused Reentry Practice: Lessons from Policy, Research and Practice
Alexandra Cox, SUNY New Paltz

In the U.S. criminal justice system, few individuals accused of crimes are provided with an opportunity to present the court with information about their social history in a manner which demonstrates their potential to desist from offending. Thus, sentencing determinations, from
community penalties to imprisonment, are rarely informed by our knowledge about what forces may lead an individual to desist from offending. Additionally, these court-level justice practices, particularly in rural jurisdictions, are rarely informed by a knowledge of the relationship between resource availability, policy, and practice. Drawing from over ten years of experience as a sentencing mitigation specialist for criminal defense attorneys in both urban and rural parts of New York State, both before and after receiving a doctorate in criminology, I will discuss the role that criminological research can play in informing sentencing practices. I will also discuss the relationship between the sentencing-level decision-making processes and reentry planning and practice, and make an argument for desistance-informed sentencing practices.

The Prison Project: A Longitudinal Panel Study on the Effects of Imprisonment in the Netherlands
Anja Dirkzwager and Paul Nieuwbeerta, Leiden University

The Prison Project aims to (1) describe the development of criminal behavior and life circumstances of (ex-)prisoners and their families before, during and after imprisonment, (2) examine the effects of imprisonment on further criminal behavior and post-prison life circumstances of (ex-)prisoners and their families, and (3) empirically test theoretical mechanisms assumed to explain effects of imprisonment. The Prison Project’s design is a longitudinal and nation-wide cohort study among 1,904 male participants, aged 18-65, who were born in the Netherlands and put in pre-trail detention in the period October 2010 until March 2011. Baseline interviews were held in all 32 pre-trail detention centers in the Netherlands as soon as possible after the detainees entered the remand center. Participants still in custody were approached again after 3, 9 and 18 months, and all respondents were approached for a face-to-face interview 6 and 24 months after their release from prison. During these assessments elaborate information was gathered on background characteristics, criminal behavior (pre- and post-prison), life circumstances (pre- and post-prison), detention characteristics, contacts with other Criminal Justice actors, criminal attitudes, and perceptions. The findings of the Prison Project contribute to societal and political debates on punishment and more adequate and effective treatment of offenders by the criminal justice system.

The Shifting Landscapes of Adulthood, Masculinity, and Crime: A Case Study of a High Reentry Community
Jamie Fader, Temple University

Criminologists know so much more about crime across the life course than we did two decades ago, largely thanks to longitudinal data sets that have followed offenders in and out of criminal careers. Ironically, though, the more comprehensive a longitudinal data set, the less precisely it can account for history -- especially economic, cultural, and other social changes. The well-known Glueck sample, which Laub and Sampson (2003) followed into their 70s, for example, is theoretically bounded by the fact that the men came of age during the economic prosperity of the post-WWII period. As with many samples, it also suffers from a lack of racial diversity. In this presentation, Jamie Fader discusses the shifting social and cultural landscapes of
adulthood, masculinity, and crime. Drawing on findings from two previous qualitative studies of marginalized men in Philadelphia, she will describe a new book-length research project focused on men aged 25-34 living in a community characterized by a constant churn of departing and returning prisoners. The project will provide an in-depth investigation of the role of both race and community in navigating adult masculine roles, including desistance from crime.

**Unpacking the Black/White Dichotomy: Examining Narratives of Reentry Among African American, West Indian, and Hispanic Mothers**

Janet Garcia-Hallett, Rutgers University-Newark

Existing research on prisoner reentry has extensively demonstrated the various burdens individuals encounter post-incarceration. Yet, criminological literature is often constructed along a black/white dichotomy that blurs racial-ethnic variations in reentry narratives. African American, West Indian, and Hispanic women are typically considered together as “minorities,” with little attention to how social and cultural differences might impact the reentry process. This study draws on semi-structured interviews to unpack the experiences of groups viewed collectively as “minorities.” In doing so, it examines racial-ethnic variation in narratives of reentry among African American, West Indian, and Hispanic formerly incarcerated mothers. Although there are shared obstacles across all three racial-ethnic groups, the women discussed reentry experiences that consisted of ethnic clashes, a “foreigner” experience, and cultural distinctions in familial acceptance and assistance. The findings demonstrate issues with the homogenization of minority groups and also suggest the importance of examining racial and ethnic variation in narratives of reentry.

**Missouri Sex Offender Fail to Register Model**

Beth Huebner, University of Missouri-St. Louis

The criminal justice system treats offenders who have committed crimes of a sexual nature much differently than virtually any other type of offender (Edwards & Hensley, 2001). Due to the especially heinous nature of crimes committed by sex offenders, preventing reoffending is especially important to ensuring the safety of the public. A broad scope of legislation has been passed with the goal of controlling the sex offender population. The Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), Title I of the Adam Walsh Act, became law in 2006. SORNA established baseline criteria for jurisdictions to follow pertaining to their registration and monitoring of sex offenders. A broad body of literature concerning the efficacy of registration requirements suggests they have done little to reduce sexual reoffending (Tewksbury & Jennings, 2010; Huebner et al., 2014). By comparison, much less is known about the factors that influence compliance with these laws among sex offender populations. With few exceptions (Levenson, Ackerman, & Harris, 2014), the extant literature has only started to focus on the factors associated with an increased likelihood of absconding or violating registration agreements. The current project aims to determine the characteristics most useful in predicting compliance with sex offender registry requirements among a sample of registered sex offenders in Missouri.
The Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE)
David Kirk, University of Oxford

Over 600,000 prisoners are released from U.S. prisons each year, and roughly one-half of these individuals are back in prison within just three years. Non-experimental research suggests that a key contributor to the vicious cycle of recidivism is the fact that many released prisoners return home to the same problem-filled locations with the same criminal opportunities and criminal associates that proved so detrimental to their behavior prior to incarceration. The Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE) seeks to examine the counterfactual scenario—that is, the causal effects on criminal recidivism of residential migration far away from former neighborhoods. In this randomized controlled trial, residential migration is incentivized through the use of housing subsidies. A pilot of the MOVE program was launched in February 2015, with twenty newly released prisoners randomly assigned to receive a housing subsidy in the jurisdiction where they resided prior to incarceration (i.e., stayers) and twenty randomly assigned a housing subsidy in a jurisdiction at least 25 miles from where they resided in the past (i.e., movers). Details of the experimental design will be discussed, as will the successes and challenges of the program to date.

A Different Approach to Examining Prisoner Re-entry: Life as a Film
Candace Kruttschnitt, Phil Goodman and Timothy Kang, University of Toronto

Criminologists studying persistent offenders traditionally couch their work in one of three paradigms: (i) criminal career trajectories; (ii) life course; and (iii) Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model. While these approaches have contributed to our understanding of offending rates over the life-course, they shed less light on how offenders understand their lives, and how those understandings, in turn, condition criminal behaviour. We seek to understand the process of persistence by examining the social contexts (e.g., relationships, employment, children, and experiences with incarceration), self-evaluations, and reflected appraisals that chronic offenders associate with their own patterns of offending. We interviewed 89 persistent offenders currently incarcerated in Pennsylvania. We used a multi-method approach to uncover how these offenders view their lives and their prospects for re-entry. In this paper we explore how our use of the narrative technique, “Life as a Film,” reveals some of their most intimate life experiences, their reflected appraisals, and their prospects for successful re-entry.

Assessing the Evidence: What Works in Prisoner Reentry and How Can We Build a Stronger Body of Knowledge?
Nancy La Vigne, Justice Policy Center, The Urban Institute

This presentation provides an overview of the knowledge base on what works in prisoner reentry. Drawing from the Urban Institute's systematic review of literature associated with the What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse, the results of efforts to screen and assess evaluation literature on all manner of reentry programming, treatment, policy, support, and supervision are presented. Highlights include the fact that less than a third of reentry evaluations were
sufficiently rigorous for inclusion in the Clearinghouse, with the primary reasons for exclusion being employment of program completers rather than all treatment subjects (including attritors), insufficient controls, and the absence of a comparison group. Moreover, only 30 percent of studies that were found to be sufficiently rigorous included any information on program fidelity and almost two-thirds of them examined only recidivism outcomes. These findings have important implications for the field and demand attention in order to shore up the quality of our knowledge base in the interests of guiding more effective efforts at improving reentry outcomes and thus enhancing public safety.

An Ever-present Dilemma for Former Prisoners: If, When, and How to Disclose (or Conceal) One’s Criminal Past
Thomas LeBel, University of Wisconsin

In managing information about his or her criminal past, a formerly incarcerated person must decide “to display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where” (Goffman, 1963, p. 42). The process of if, when, and how to disclose or conceal one’s “ex-con” status may be an ever-present and ongoing dilemma. This paper examines formerly incarcerated persons’ use of concealment as a coping strategy when interacting with people and in filling out applications. The sample consists of approximately 250 formerly incarcerated persons and staff involved in receiving or providing reintegration-related programming in New York State. To assess who conceals one’s criminal past, statistical analyses are utilized to examine the relationships between a concealment scale and a question about the frequency of avoiding indicating a felony conviction on written applications, and measures for perceptions of stigma and discrimination, demographics, criminal history, social bonds, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, criminal attitude/identity, and the forecast of rearrest. Implications of the findings about the concealment of one’s criminal past for prisoner reentry research, policy, and practice are discussed.

The Meaning of Place and Space for Returning Prisoners
Andrea Leverentz, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Neighborhood and place are key concerns in prisoner reentry and desistance literature. Residential change may serve as a turning point for those who want to desist from offending or minimize visibility as a “known” offender by law enforcement and neighbors. Yet choices of where to live are often dictated more by limited housing options than by preferred neighborhood characteristics. In addition, people are more or less stably housed upon release, and more or less socially tied to places. Still, much of our research relies on residential neighborhood as a construct, rather than looking at how people actually use and move about space. This paper draws on repeated interviews with men and women returning to the community from a county correctional facility in Boston. In this paper, I begin to pull apart the varying relationships that this group of returning prisoners has to place, and the varying ways they navigate space. Many of the people interviewed are homeless or tenuously housed and move frequently; some are more stable (often living with family). While some have very small activity spaces, largely traversed...
on foot, others move about large sections of the region, as they move and go about daily travel for work, programs and services, and supervision. Most rely on public transit and walking to get around, which exposes them to social networks, information, temptations, and surveillance. I discuss the implications of these patterns for how we think about the impact of neighborhoods on reentry.

**High-Level Implementation: Key Factors to Promote Successful Comprehensive Reentry Initiatives**

Jeff Mellow, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Comprehensive reentry initiatives have gained momentum in recent years. All too often, however, implementation challenges are not addressed at the start of an initiative or only acknowledged at the point of implementation failure. This article describes key features of comprehensive reentry initiatives, their goals, and 23 critical indicators, identified from the literature and experience, that must be considered to ensure the success of high-quality, multifaceted reentry initiatives. These factors can provide a roadmap to practitioners when they consider the time, resources, and engagement levels needed to successfully implement a new reentry initiative.

"You're in a Room Full of Addicts!" Prisoner Reentry as a Social Institution and the "Making Up" of the Ex-offender

Reuben Miller, University of Michigan

Keeping pace with the swollen U.S. prison census, the number of former prisoners living in poor urban neighborhoods has increased precipitously, transforming urban poverty in the United States. High rates of recidivism mean that a cycle of arrest, incarceration, reentry, and re-arrest is a normative experience in many low-income neighborhoods, making prisoner reentry a key social institution in the life worlds of the urban poor, and the reentry program, an important, yet under-examined organizational form. Drawing on a three-and-a-half year ethnographic study of prisoner reentry on Chicago’s near west side, I show how the process of reentry and the legal, institutional and organizational arrangements that support and maintain it, in part produce the "ex-offender" as a novel social class emergent in the age of carceral expansion. Using the reentry program as a case study to demonstrate one way this novel social arrangement is expressed, I trace the processes of classification at work during reentry, revealing how classifications of the ex-offender are produced, altered, internalized and resisted. I conclude with a discussion of reentry's broad implications for how race, poverty and criminality are embodied and understood in the United States.

Pitfalls, Strengths, and "Saves" for Women Leaving Prison

Merry Morash, Michigan State University

This talk focuses on findings about 100 women after they are released from prison. Challenges
and strengths are described. They include some that many prior studies have recognized, such as unsafe housing and markers of extreme poverty. They also include unique challenges such as contending with lack of transportation and welfare cut backs. Quantitative predictors of success on parole are identified. Based on the quantitative analysis, two question arise: (1) Does women’s exercise of agency differentiate those who comply with requirements of supervision and avoid police contact? (2) Exactly what are women trying to do when they exercise their agency to improve their lives? To begin to answer these questions, exploratory case studies are presented to illustrate the agentic moves of women who succeed on parole and avoid additional justice system contact.

Disparities in Neighborhood Attainment After Prison
Jessica Simes, Harvard University

Each year over 600,000 people leave prison and become residents of neighborhoods across the United States. Neighborhoods are spatial contexts to which people are socially connected, but imprisonment is fundamentally segregative. When this period of total institutionalization ends, people leaving prison have to forge new relationships to the labor market, with family and friends, the welfare system, the political system, as well as neighborhoods and communities. Due to challenges in observation and measurement, we do not fully understand how individuals establish relationships with place after prison. Combining census data and prison records with a longitudinal survey of people leaving prison and returning to the Greater Boston area, this paper examines mechanisms explaining the disparities in neighborhood attainment after a period of imprisonment. In the context of Greater Boston, black and Hispanic men and women leaving prison move into significantly more disadvantaged areas than their white counterparts, even after controlling for levels of pre-prison neighborhood disadvantage. Mitigating factors such as histories of employment and moving away from former neighborhoods improve neighborhood quality immediately after release from prison. Household dynamics are an important neighborhood sorting mechanism: living in concentrated disadvantage was more likely for those living in non-traditional households or group quarters. While 40 percent of respondents initially moved to only one of two neighborhoods in Boston, nearly 25 percent of respondents left prison and entered formal institutional settings, returned to prison, or lived in extreme social marginality throughout various locations in Greater Boston. Racial and ethnic differences in neighborhood sorting by household type—and the conditions of extreme marginality— are key mechanisms of neighborhood attainment during the precarious of period reentry.

Utilizing Smartphones to Study Disadvantaged and Hard-to-Reach Groups
Naomi Sugie, University of California-Irvine

Mobile technologies, specifically smartphones, offer social scientists a potentially powerful approach to examine the social world. They enable researchers to collect information that was previously unobservable or difficult to measure, expanding the realm of empirical investigation. For research that concerns resource-poor and hard-to-reach groups, smartphones may be particularly advantageous by lessening sample selection and attrition and by improving
measurement quality of irregular and unstable experiences. At the same time, smartphones are nascent social science tools, particularly with less advantaged populations that may have different phone usage patterns and privacy concerns. Using findings from a smartphone study of men recently released from prison, this article discusses the strengths and challenges of smartphones as data collection tools among disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups.

Reentry Challenges: Building Capacity in the Community
Faye Taxman, George Mason University

While the "what works" literature is rich, the "how to implement" is less so. An understudied and infrequently discussed issue is the lack of social capital in the communities that are most affected by mass incarceration, reentry, and people churning through the justice system and the culture of justice organizations. Using data on over 400 community based programs, we will examine the issues related to building capacity in the community to provide support for justice-involved individuals. Using a Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) approach, this paper will explore the data needs to better answer the question of "how to implement" and the challenges inherent in building capacity. The paper outlines 12 principles of getting a better grip on the "how to" question for agencies and programs that are transforming practices and trying to make appreciable indent in the issues related to recidivism. The role of transportability in the implementation process is presented as a tool to achieve sounder implementation that can be sustained.

Conducting In-Depth Interviews with Jailed Fathers and Their Family Members: Opportunities and Challenges
Kristin Turney, University of California-Irvine

The rapid growth of mass incarceration in the United States, a phenomenon characterized by its concentration among already marginalized individuals, means that a historically unprecedented number of individuals experience the incarceration of a family member. In this paper, I describe the Jail and Family Life Study, an ongoing longitudinal and qualitative investigation of the complex and countervailing ways that the incarceration of fathers creates, maintains, and exacerbates inequalities among families and children. The Jail and Family Life Study includes in-depth interviews with 120 fathers incarcerated across three jail facilities—about half of whom are serving jail sentences and about half of whom are awaiting trial—in Orange County, CA, and their family members (including current and former romantic partners, children, and mothers). Fathers and family members are interviewed both during the father’s incarceration and after his release. First, I suggest that jails are an understudied yet critically important aspect of the criminal justice system and that jail stays have unique implications for family life. Second, I describe challenges to navigating access to jailed fathers, an especially vulnerable population, and their family members (including children, another vulnerable population). Third, I discuss challenges associated with interviewing multiple members of the same family, including navigating strained relationships, building rapport, and maintaining the confidentiality of all
participants. Taken together, this ongoing data collection effort will contribute to the growing literature on the spillover consequences of incarceration.

The Prison Inmate Networks Study (PINS): Using Social Network Analysis to Understand the Incarceration and Reentry Experience
Sara Wakefield, Rutgers University-Newark and Derek Kreager, Pennsylvania State University

The Prison Inmate Network Study (PINS) is a longitudinal study of inmates in a medium security prison in Pennsylvania. PINS participants completed traditional surveys with interviewers and a global network survey about their connections to other inmates. The reentry portion of the PINS study (R-PINS) includes interviews with PINS participants just prior to release and two follow-ups in the community; both sets of interviews include social network components. We describe the contribution of social network analysis to the study of incarceration and reentry experiences using preliminary results from the PINS. In so doing, we address the following: 1) challenges to social network data collection in a prison context, 2) incorporating SNA into mixed method designs, and 3) the utility of SNA for answering theoretical and empirical questions about the conditions of confinement and successful prisoner reentry.

The Chicken or the Egg: What Came First, Policy or Research?
Kristen Zgoba, New Jersey Department of Corrections

This presentation will explore the historical context of sex offender law implementation prior to and/or despite research that has contradicted the efficiency of the law's design. The study compares the nationally recommended Adam Walsh Act (AWA) classification tiers with actuarial risk assessment instruments and existing state classification schemes in their respective abilities to identify sex offenders likely to reoffend (“high risk”) as well as to examine the distribution of risk assessment scores within and across tier categories as defined by the AWA. The results indicate the AWA tier was unrelated to sexual reoffending, except in one state, where it was inversely correlated with recidivism. Actuarial measures and existing state tiering systems, in contrast, identified recidivists with marginal to modest accuracy. The results indicate that use of the federal policy, the AWA classification scheme, is likely to result in a system that is less effective in protecting the public than those currently implemented in the states studied, and that substantial revision of the AWA classification system is necessary. The policy and research implications will be discussed.