

Effects of Access to Mental Health Services Following Release from Custody
(Technical Paper)

The Continuation of Slavery Through the Prison System in the United States
(STS Paper)

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received
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Introduction

Mental health in jails and prisons is a widely unrecognized problem in the United States. Young offenders are more likely to become adult offenders if they do not receive early intervention and care. It is crucial to provide inmates with proper care to rehabilitate them to be contributing members of society. The development of systems that meet the needs of people with mental illnesses requires collaboration between health, judicial, and legislative stakeholders. The technical project will conduct research and provide the Charlottesville jails with statistics to gain insights from the data provided regarding their current implementation of mental health services. The aim is to measure the effects of the mental health services following the release from custody. This starts by efficiently recognizing who has a mental illness when they are first taken into custody and linking them to the appropriate mental health services. Ultimately the team is focusing on maximizing the positive effects of the mental health services to help rehabilitate inmates outside of custody.

Unrelated to the technical topic, the current prison system in the United States shows ties to slavery. Looking at the prison system as a sociotechnical system, one can distinguish the specific artifacts that make up this system. The properties of this system have unavoidable emergent properties that are not predictable. Currently, the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Black and brown people are incarcerated at disproportionate rates due to “hard on crime” laws and the privatization of the prison system after World War II (Gilmore, 2000). The STS research project will dive deeper into the specific artifacts in the prison system that connect it to slavery such as surveillance of inmates and the way jail cells are constructed.

Technical Topic

Millions of individuals living with mental illness sit in jail each year. States with less access to mental health services have higher rates of incarceration. The team wants to measure how access to mental health services affects incarceration. This technical project will help the regional criminal justice system agencies and mental health service providers in Charlottesville understand how best to serve individuals suffering from severe mental illness. This project can be used to emphasize the need for research to help individuals suffering from mental illness in jails and prisons around the United States. Key findings from past teams state that 8,332 individuals were booked into ACRJ and of those, 5,499 were administered the Brief Jail Mental Health Screeners (BJMHS) (Bramham et al., 2020). About 28% of individuals were screened in for a referral to mental health services. This project builds on previous work to provide actionable results to our clients.

The technical project team will focus on individuals released from the Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail. This is a continuation of over a decade of work by students, faculty, and staff in partnership with the Charlottesville community. The goals of this year's project team are to develop and apply measures for assessing the effectiveness of mental health services as they apply to individuals released from custody as they relate to subsequent interactions with the criminal justice system. Additionally, the project will attempt to identify factors, including access to mental health services and the level of treatment for serious mental illness as well as other social and economic factors that contribute to or detract from successful outcomes.

To address these issues, the team will be working with information regarding “In Jail” cases and analyzing effects after inmates are released. Issues of mental health and interactions with the criminal justice system are deeply embedded in a web of systems and interactions. It is essential not to isolate any portion of the process inmates go through and incorporate surrounding circumstances which we will dive into throughout the remainder of the year.

The team will work with the client to determine how to define the success and failure of mental health services received by inmates following the release from custody. Data will be obtained from Region 10 and the Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail. As the necessary data are acquired, the team will analyze them, and seek answers to our capstone projects’ questions. Finally, the research conducted this year will be used to guide Charlottesville jail’s on how to better serve inmates living with a mental illness. This ranges from successfully identifying who has a mental illness, accurately linking them to mental health services, and maximizing the positive effects of these services.

STS Topic

For the first 200 years of its history as an independent republic, the United States’ prisons, both state and federal, were operated by government offices. This all changed in 1994 when President Clinton signed the Crime Bill. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act authorized \$8 billion in state grants for the construction of prisons and boot camps. President Clinton’s budget for 1996 claimed to cut costs through the privatization of prisons (Eisen, 2017). Anti-drug policies of Reagan and Bush, coupled with the tough-on-crime policies of Clinton have swelled the prison population. Due to the vast increase in demand, state and federal prisons could not keep up. Private companies stepped in to fill the gap and the public saw it as a good way to cut public spending. Fast forward to 2020: The United States now has the highest

incarceration rate in the world. This prison boom disproportionately affected black men. By the end of 2002, 12% percent of black men in their twenties were in prison or jail (Harrison and Karberg, 2003). A prison system that used to lease its inmates as plantation labor in the 19th century has come full circle and is once again a nexus for profit. The STS paper will pose the broad question: How do the current subsystems of the prison system have connections to slavery? More specifically, what are the artifacts that make up the larger system that directly link it to slavery? Whether it be prison labor programs or the 24/7 surveillance of inmates, American prison systems owe their cruelty to slavery. Through the lens of a constructivist view of society, the STS paper will analyze this argument.

In the late 1900s, many states began to view prisons as potential profit-making entities for state and local businesses. Under a federal court order to reduce overcrowding, Louisiana either had to lock up fewer people or build more prisons (Chang, 2012). The state began to encourage sheriffs to pay for the construction in return for future profits. The incentives were so appealing that new prisons sprouted up all over Louisiana. This was not just happening in Louisiana but across the entire United States. Private prisons make money by the number of beds that are filled. To keep the beds filled, these companies have to outsource their prisoners (Schneider, 2012). The more empty beds, the more money that prison stands to lose. LCS Corrections Services runs three prisons and is a major donor to the political campaigns of urban sheriffs who supply rural prisons with inmates (Chang, 2012). States such as Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee could not afford to support their growing prison population and were in desperate financial straits and began to turn to businesses to run the facilities. In the past, the

business paid the state for use of its prisoners; today, the state pays the business to manage the prisoners.

The growth of the number of prisoners in private facilities has increased from 1,345 in 1985 to 106,940 by 1997 (Schneider, 2012). The population grew, in part, because of harsh sentencing and drug laws and the racial profiling of Black people. In 2001, Black males had a 32.2% chance of going to prison, while white males had only a 5.9% chance (Fulcher, 2012). Almost two million people are currently locked up and more than 70% of the imprisoned population are people of color (Davis, n.d.). The Anti-Drug Act created mandatory minimum federal sentencing laws that led to an increase in drug arrests and convictions. President Bush created a billion-dollar plan that focused on “stiffer sentences for everyone involved in drugs, from the occasional users to international drug traffickers” and shifted the focus from “stopping narcotics at the border to fighting drug trafficking on the street.” (Fulcher, 2012) These changes in drug sentencing laws both boosted the number of prisoners and increased the period they served in prison. In a journal published by Morenoff and Harding (2014), it stated that incarceration appeared to exacerbate existing racial and socioeconomic inequalities by making those who are already disadvantaged even more so educationally, economically, and socially.

Specific artifacts of the justice and prison system directly link them to slavery. Sentencing disparities between crack cocaine and powdered cocaine along with racial profiling are among some of the reasons Black people became disproportionately represented in the U.S. prison population (Fulcher, 2012). There is a vicious cycle occurring in the justice system. Inside courtrooms, children as young as 13 are sentenced to life imprisonment for nonhomicide offenses (Stevenson, 2019). Through enormous corporate lobbying, the United States passed the

Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program which permitted companies to use prison labor. Consequently, Black men are exploited for profit. Although the 13th Amendment prohibits slavery and involuntary servitude, there was an exception - a loophole for “punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted”, which made prison labor possible (Das and Love, 2017). Prison labor is a billion-dollar industry, and some of the most widely known brands are the corporate beneficiaries of this new slavery. Remnants of slavery can be seen through the subsystems that ultimately make up the prison system. By analyzing these subsystems such as, the privatization of prisons, drug sentencing laws, and prison labor camps, the STS paper will look at links to slavery that are found in the current US prison system.

Some critics oppose the characteristic of the US prison system as a slave labor camp. There are arguments that prison labor is infrequently used, and that corporations are not the sole culprits behind the prison industrial complex. These views can easily be challenged and it is important to understand that these systems in place are meant to profit off of Black and Brown people. Through analysis of the different factors contributing to the larger sociotechnical prison system, the STS paper will conclude that the artifacts found in prisons and jails today perpetuate slavery in the United States.

Timeline and Expected Outcomes

The technical project aims to deliver two sets of presentations, one to the Charlottesville Community Criminal Justice Board (CCJB) and one to the local Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) Policy Team. The first set of presentations will be at the end of the fall semester where progress will be outlined, but more importantly, there will be an explanation of where the project will be taken in the spring. The second set of presentations will be a

culmination of all the work including key findings and data-driven answers to the client's primary questions which pertain to the linkage of people to services, those services success levels, and the optimal service dosage, or frequency, and length. Lastly, the findings will be documented in a SIEDS paper, presented at the conference in April 2021.

Research on the STS topic will continue throughout the remainder of the fall semester of 2020 and will extend into the spring semester of 2021. The research project will illustrate how artifacts in the current prison system contribute to the perpetuation of slavery and what role these artifacts play in the larger sociotechnical system. A successful thesis project will address concerns in the prison system and the artifacts that make up the system given that it uniquely has roots in slavery.

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