

Art in Prison Lecture 8: Populations

It seems important to reiterate that Socially Engaged Art practices are not the norm for artists. Most artists working today still work in traditional ways exhibiting and/or selling artwork in galleries and museums. Social art, as we are studying it, is relatively new. And though there is a history (as you learned reading *Art and Social Change*) the definitions provided by most of our authors indicates an art form not really seen in the past.

This lecture will discuss some other things to consider when analyzing who goes to prison. Prisons are designed to house people who have been accused of breaking the law and keep them away from the rest of society. Here you will find a discussion of mental issues in prison and women in prison to annotate. Then, listed are different populations with links included. Chose one of these to annotate as well.

There are different types of prisons. While this part does not need to be annotated, it might be useful to understand the different facilities designed as part of the Prison Industrial Complex.

Minimum Security—usually reserved for non-violent, white collar criminals.

Medium Security—most people in prison are in medium security facilities. They have more cage-like housing with more guards and regimented daily routine.

Maximum Security—usually reserved for the most violent and dangerous offenders. They have more guards and very little personal freedom.

Psychiatric—those deemed mentally unfit can be sent to psychiatric prisons where patients receive psychiatric help for disorders as opposed to simply confinement.

Military—Each branch of the military has it's own facilities used for military personnel who have broken the law and/or for political prisoners.

Federal Prisons—under the jurisdiction of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, part of the Justice Department. If a person breaks a federal crime that is non-violent, they will often be sent to federal prisons.

State Prisons—As incarceration became the standard form of punishment in the US, states began creating their own prison systems. Each state determines how it's correctional system functions.

Youth Detention Center (or Juvenile Detention)—a facility for incarcerating those offenders who are under the age of majority who have been sentenced through a separate court system.

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/juvenile-detention-center-purpose-characteristics.html>

Immigration Detention Facilities— these are public and private facilities designed to hold individuals suspected of visa violations, illegal entry or unauthorized arrival, and those subject to deportation and removal in detention until a decision is made by immigration authorities to grant a visa and release them to the community, or repatriate them to their country of departure.

<https://www.immigrantjustice.org/issues/immigration-detention-enforcement>

For Profit Prisons— From 2000 to 2016 the number of people in private prisons increased five times faster than the total prison population. Prison privatization has prospered because of claims that for-profit facilities are more cost efficient at providing services than publicly run institutions even though the evidence does not support this assertion.

<http://www.justicepolicy.org/news/12006>

Jail—jails are locally operated, usually short-term facilities mainly used for housing inmates awaiting trial or sentencing.

Please read carefully and annotate this next part. Annotated mental health and women and then choose one other group of your choice.

Mental Health

Deinstitutionalization is the name given to the widespread shift from housing the mentally ill in psychiatric hospitals to relying on community health services. While this began after WWII, the 1960s-80s witnessed significant shifts.

Three main factors initiated this shift:

1. The socio-political movement for more transparency in psychiatric hospitals and mental health services because of less than desirable conditions.
2. New psychotropic drugs allowed individuals with certain types of psychiatric problems a way to manage their illness.
3. A desire to shift costs from state budgets to federal ones.

While some psychiatrists believe deinstitutionalization has benefited patients, others acknowledge it has left many individuals with mental health problems homeless and without care. Many of these individuals end up in prison.

<https://www.nami.org/learn-more/public-policy/jailing-people-with-mental-illness>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/02/03/690872394/most-inmates-with-mental-illness-still-wait-for-decent-care>

Short history.

In the mid-17th century, institutions began emerging to house what were called “insane lunatics”. These individuals were often housed in the basements of prisons and were given little to no care.

In the early 20th century, the “therapeutic model of rehabilitation” was used with the idea that sociopathy could be treated. Inmates were classified by the psychiatric staff and individual treatment programs were developed. Those identified as ‘mentally defective’ were segregated from the general prison population. By the 1950s a dramatic increase in experimentation in treatment methods were being used. The 1960s witnessed a radical shift in rehabilitation of prisoners due to changes in political, social and racial events. The focus on health care began to decline and an increase in housing prisoners for the sake of punishment dominated public opinion.

By the 1980s and 90s, a shift in conservative moral values evolved into an even greater shift toward harsher punishment and more social control.

As psychiatric programs are being eliminated and prisons are being built, mentally ill individuals who commit even minor crimes are becoming criminalized as they are sent to prison. Since prisons often worsen, as opposed to help, psychiatric problems, this creates more illegal behavior leading to longer prison stays. Once paroled, these individuals are unable to obtain help so they tend to repeat offences, returning to prison.

As the treatment setting for the mentally ill shifts toward prisons and away from mental health facilities, the need for psychiatric services grows. However, prisons are not therapeutic environments and few have adequate services or access to medication.

One way to help is through art. Creativity and artistic expression are inherent in these populations. (I witnessed this myself in both the prison setting and in an art program I started for Homeless individuals in Nashville.) The ability to create art is a status builder in a situation where there are few opportunities for constructive self-development.

Awareness of the advantages of art programs within jails and prisons is growing. A study of the Arts in Corrections program indicated that fewer disciplinary reports were written on inmates who participated in the art programs (in one institution the reduction was 80%). The California Department of Corrections also documented a reduction in recidivism for those who participated in the art program.

The focus of most art in prison programs is to help lower protective barriers in order to rebuild healthier egos. However in prison, actual survival depends on developing what might be considered maladaptive behaviors on the outside. Many individuals are in prison because they cannot make it in a conventional social environment. So, learning how to develop trust is essential for breaking through these barriers.

Women in Prison

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, In the last 25 years, the number of women and girls caught in the criminal justice system has skyrocketed; many have been swept up in the "war on drugs" and subject to increasingly punitive sentencing policies for non-violent offenders. There are now more than 200,000 women behind bars and more than one million on probation and parole. Many of these women struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, and histories of physical and sexual abuse. Few get the services they need. The toll on women, girls, and their families is devastating.

Women represent the fastest growing population in prison. Between 1980 and 1993, the growth rate for the female prison population increased approximately 313%, compared to 182% for men in the same period. At the end of 1993 women accounted for 5.8% of the total prison population and 9.3% of the jail population nationwide.

Women prisoners are disproportionately women of color, with African American women comprising 46% of the population nationwide, White women comprising 36%, and Hispanic Women comprising 14%.

Incarcerated women are overwhelmingly poor. The majority of women prisoners (53%) and women in jail (74%) were unemployed prior to incarceration.

When women go to prison, it takes a devastating toll on the family. Sixty seven per cent

of women incarcerated in state prisons are mothers of children under 18. Seventy percent of these women compared to 50% of men had custody of their dependent children prior to incarceration.

Six per cent of women are pregnant when they enter prison. In almost all cases, the woman is abruptly separated from her child after giving birth.

Women prisoners report significant histories of domestic violence. Thirty-two percent of women in prison (approximately 4,000 women) serving sentences for murder were convicted of killing a husband, ex-husband or boyfriend.

Because there are fewer prison facilities for women, an incarcerated woman is ordinarily much farther away from her home and family than the average male prisoner. This increased distance causes substantial transportation problems for children of prisoners and as a result deprives women prisoners of contact with their children.

While medical care for all prisoners is poor, the situation is far worse for women prisoners. Because prison health care systems were created for men, routine gynecological care, such as pap smears, breast exams and mammograms, is extremely rare in prisons. Care is frequently only administered once the situation becomes an emergency.

These statistics just begin to bring attention to the complex and growing situation for women in prison. Women have very different needs than men and are often swept up in non-violent crimes.

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/issues/women/>

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/records/76-women-in-prison>

The elderly in prison

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXnQz2CqzYg>

<https://daily.jstor.org/what-should-we-do-about-our-aging-prison-population/>

LBGQT in prison

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/mar/07/grim-truth-gay-in-prison>

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01I5QMI9G>

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/williams-in-the-news/incarceration-rate-of-lesbian-gay-bisexual-people-three-times-the-general-population/>

gangs in prison

https://people.missouristate.edu/michaelcarlie/what_I_learned_about/prisons.htm

solitary confinement

<https://www.penalreform.org/priorities/prison-conditions/key-facts/solitary-confinement/>

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/the-shocking-abuse-of-solitary-confinement-in-u-s-prisons/>

physical disabilities in prison

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/prisoners-rights/solitary-confinement/prisoners-physical-disabilities-are-forgotten-and>

Juveniles in prison

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/youth2018.html>

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/>