

**Incarceration of Young Offenders:
A Critical Assessment of Institutionalization and its Implications**
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The evening began pleasantly, as for the first time in several weeks, my father, grandmother, two older brothers Richard and David, and I ate dinner together. Our conflicting schedules finally came to a halt for once and gave way to quality time spent together as a close-knit family that I had longed for as a child. Yet things took a different course when detectives took David away for questioning. “Everything will be fine, everyone. Just stay put, and I will be back shortly,” my brother had said, but little did we know that he would not be returning home.

After several hours and no sign of my brother, my father called the precinct twice, only to be denied any information about my brother. On the third try, the officer asked that my father come to the precinct, and thus my father, Richard, and I left the house.

The traumatic events following our drive to the precinct will linger in my mind for time without end, one that will perpetually bring about numbness to my body and my mind. I can still hear the words of the detective after sitting down in the precinct with my father and Richard: “David has been arrested for second degree murder. If convicted, he will serve a minimum of twenty-five years in prison.”

Twenty-five years in prison—That meant twenty-five years of my life without my brother, David. A flash of hot air took over my body. I was speechless; I could not fathom a life without David, my brother, whom I looked to for love, support, security, and guidance as an insecure teenager.

The detective led me to the room that David was in, and when I saw him, I could not speak, cry, nor smile. I simply stared at him, my older brother who was now an alleged murderer, but when I saw that his eyes were red from his effort to hold back his tears, I was broken. I cried uncontrollably, yet David remained composed, and with just a few tears

dripping down his cheek, he said, “I will be out soon.” I could not find the words to respond; confusion, fear, and grief invaded my mind—my heart. Despite the absence of words amidst my torrent of sobs, David asked me to promise him that I would never succumb to negative influences. I nodded and told him that I loved him, and that I would do my best to succeed in life. He looked into my eyes, nodded his head in approval, and smiled once more to assure me that I would be just fine, but I could not believe his words. Now, there was no one to take care of me or shelter me from the world—I was alone.

For many, the allegation against my brother begs the response: *David Lee’s incarceration is justified*. However, before drawing such a conclusion, it is important to examine David’s personal circumstances leading to his incarceration, and the damaging consequences of prolonged incarceration of inmates for both inmates themselves and society.

In 1991, my mother committed suicide and left the family. My brothers and I assumed only one possible certainty: our mother had abandoned us. It is apparent that this idea affected David the most, as a combination of my mother’s suicide, my father’s work schedule, and my grandmother’s concern over nothing but our physical health, essentially left him with limited parental supervision. Therefore, David made it his responsibility to protect me from negative influences and dangerous situations by enforcing strict rules, such as setting an early curfew. To compensate for this limited freedom, David always offered to buy me candy and never forgot to bring me what I wanted. For these reasons, David’s love, loyalty, and honesty combined to provide me with a safe haven amidst my family’s tragedy.

However, David was less fortunate. With my eldest brother Richard taking little responsibility over his own actions, there was no one left to enforce boundaries upon David. His behavior demonstrated the damaging effects of this as the years progressed, which began with his violent drawing in the second grade and led to his first visit with a psychiatrist. After several sessions, David’s psychiatrist concluded that the drawing was a possible

warning sign of mental instability. Yet David discontinued his visits after several months because he believed that the therapy was ineffective. Therefore, the psychiatrist did not have a chance to determine a diagnosis for David, if any.

Such deviant behavior finally resulted in David's arrest in January 2002—he was only sixteen years old at that time. Although he was not physically involved in the brawl that ensued between his friend and another individual, David's presence at the crime scene resulted in several allegations against him, which included murder in the second degree, attempted murder in the second degree, and assault in the first degree. Aware that fighting these charges in court waged far too many risks—a guilty verdict would have resulted in a minimum sentence of twenty five years in prison—David pled guilty to assault in the first degree and received an eight-year sentence with no parole.

For many, this incident provides sufficient reason to label David as a threat to society, as his actions perversely deviated from the norm. In fact, after newspapers published the story of David's arrest, members in my community questioned his mental health, and rightfully so indeed. After all, because such concerns are for the sake of public safety, I painfully admit that society has a legitimate reason to punish David for his actions.

On the other hand, one must understand that David did not commit the murder; rather, he was only involved. Nevertheless, the laws of justice, which enforce societal norms of behavior upon individuals, hold David completely accountable for his actions. Hence, while his eight-year sentence seems legitimate for many, there are many ramifications involved in such prolonged institutionalization.

Therefore, I argue that prolonged institutionalization of inmates is a social injustice that places both inmates and society at risk, given the social and political implications of institutionalization that results in former inmates' unsuccessful reentry into society.

First, I interviewed my father, my grandmother, and my brother David. I explore their experiences with institutionalization, and my findings reveal the pains and struggles of imprisonment on my parents and David, and future concerns about David's rehabilitation.

Given the nature of my relationship with my participants, there were significant advantages to this approach. That is, my experience with David's incarceration provided me with a first-hand account about the effects of institutionalization on an inmate's family member. Therefore, I was able to interview my parents and ask questions that were relevant. In addition, my relationship with all of the participants provided me with access to personal information.

On the other hand, I understand that concerns over bias exist. However, to obtain a sense of purpose and meaning out of my experience, I was determined to think critically about my family's circumstances. Therefore, I temporarily abandoned my views of my participants as my beloved family members and instead adopted a more professional, unbiased approach to exploring the experiences of each individual, all to the best of my ability.

Second, I make a critical assessment of societal norms by examining published sources and drawing consequences of institutionalization. I conclude that due to an inmate's loss of freedom, individualism, and self-agency when incarcerated for prolonged periods, recidivism is likely, which in turn places society at greater risk of increased criminal activity by former inmates.

My first source, Asylums by Goffman, examines the nature of institutions that directly affects inmates' personal freedom and individualism due to rules and regulations that characterize and shape prison-life. My second source, Prisoners Once Removed by Travis and Waul, describes the process by which reentry of socially incompetent inmates into communities increases social disorganization and thus increases the rate of crime and danger

in society. My third source, Transitions of Prison to Community by Visher and Travis, examines the issue of recidivism and provides significant statistical data that conveys the consequences of increased criminal activities in communities. My fourth source, Who's In, Who's Out, and Who's Back by Heide and co-authors, provides a follow-up study on offenders and examines the high rates of recidivism. My fifth source, An Alternative to Traditional Incarceration by Haley, describes the Work Release Program and Group Therapy as two possible rehabilitative programs aimed to prepare inmates for successful reentry into society.

Personal Accounts: Experiences and Perspectives

James: "When humans experience such shock, they are affected by it"

My father James and my mother Sarah lived an upper-middle class lifestyle with three healthy children. As underprivileged children in Korea, they were finally living the American Dream for several years. However, their perfect world began to crumble when Sarah suffered a severe attack of manic depression that eventually led to her suicide on November 4, 1991:

I vaguely remember the year preceding your mother's death, and the years after that. Times were difficult, both emotionally and financially. I am sure that her absence affected Richard, David, and you, given the fact that the three of you were very young. (Nine, seven, and six years old, respectively) Beyond that, because your mother recklessly spent a lot of our money on new furniture, expensive trips overseas, and international phone calls, she completely depleted our funds and essentially put us in debt.

Given the fact that my mother put the family through an emotional roller coaster for over one year, there was reasonable concern over our health. Apparently, the event affected

David the most, which was evident through his behavior, and for this reason James sent him to a psychiatrist:

In the beginning, I sent him to the psychiatrist because the school contacted me first. Otherwise, how would I have known that there was a problem? When the school contacted me, they said that he was drawing violent pictures, so I contacted a well-known psychiatrist in the Korean community. I talked to the psychiatrist and made many appointments, but David did not want to go to the psychiatrist. He said that it was ridiculous, but we finally went there and continued to go for a while.

It was obvious that David did not enjoy talking to his psychiatrist, but after several visits, James recalled: “The psychiatrist said that David improved a lot.” However, James did not entirely believe in the psychiatrist’s assessment:

Honestly, I do not know if he really improved or not. Everything was the same since he first drew the picture. After all, how could I see improvement if I did not even realize a problem? As I said, during that time, there were no specific problems except for the fact that he was drawing violent pictures, but again, I thought he was fine. This is why the situation puzzled me.

With the combination of little visible improvement, and David’s dislike over his bimonthly visits, James permitted David to discontinue his counseling sessions:

At first, I was fine with his visits because David’s school officials recommended them. Any student that draws violent pictures is probably worrying over something. I did not want my son to worry, so I sent him to a psychiatrist to see if he needed any help. I did not want my son to suffer, but after a few months, I did not realize any change or improvement. After all, David hated going there, so we simply discontinued our visits.

In the future, James did not send David to another psychiatrist because “the psychiatrist did not help David.” In the meantime, David successfully graduated elementary school and junior high school. However, things began to take a different course when David entered high school, as James recalled: “He met the wrong people.” It was during this time when David made a critical error in judgment:

The detectives came to the house and asked if they could speak with David. When I asked why, the detectives lied, and said that they had to question him about a car accident. I had no idea what was going on, but David assured me that everything was fine, and left with the detectives.

However, five hours passed, yet David did not return. Concerned, James called the precinct: “When I called, they simply said that he would be home soon, and hung up on me. I waited for another hour, but he did not come home, so I called the precinct again. This time, the detectives said that David was there, and that they would allow me to visit him.”

My father and I drove to the precinct with the notion that he would be picking up his son and driving home. What he did not expect, however, was David’s arrest:

The detectives told me that they arrested David under allegations of murder in the second degree, and mentioned the fact that the minimum sentence was twenty-five years in prison, if proven guilty.

James was shocked: “I never, ever in my life imagined that this could happen. When the cops first came, they never mentioned anything; they just talked about a car accident. And now, he was suddenly locked up.”

After speaking to the detectives, James visited David. He walked in and sat down to speak with his son who was now an alleged criminal. James recalled: “He cried for the first time.” Seeing that his son was suffering tremendously over a future that was now uncertain,

James was in terrible pain: “It felt bad.” This is all that James could say when describing the pain he felt that day, as it was beyond expression.

The day of David’s incarceration was an experience that my family and I will never forget. For James, the experience “was like a dream for the first month.” The beginning was especially difficult because James could not provide David with the simplest things such as time with the family. However, James was steadfast and determined: “I had to be strong for the family. The rest of the family is my responsibility. I cannot shake because I cannot have the family shaking. The family has to step on my back to cross the river—they must use me.”

When considering the reasons for David’s incarceration in retrospect, James believes that David may have “met the wrong people.” However, James does not believe that his son is mentally unstable: “He simply made a mistake, and everyone makes mistakes. He was doing well in school, and did not have any other problems before this. He was just unlucky.”

Fortunately, this experience has taught James the importance of examining a situation before drawing hasty conclusions:

Before, when I read the newspaper, I believed in many stories and thought that people who committed violent crimes were crazy. But now, I do not. After David’s incarceration, I learned that there is always another side to a story. I treated criminals on the news unfairly but now I know that I must always listen to both sides. David is a smart kid; he knows what he did wrong, but people do not know that.

Chae Sook: “I missed him, and felt very sorry for him”

After the death of my mother in 1991, my grandmother Chae Sook left her comfortable lifestyle in Korea, and immigrated to the United States. My grandmother raised my brother and me, so she is well aware of our personalities. My grandmother viewed David as a very reliable, sensitive, and loving child: “He always helped around with chores and

made sure that I was in good health.” Therefore, when my father told Chae Sook about David’s incarceration, she was in utter shock:

I was uninformed about the whole situation in the beginning. The family kept it away from me because they were worried that I might get sick. Well, when I finally learned of David’s incarceration, I was shocked and hurt, but I did not worry because I thought he would be out very shortly. However, when the news came that he would be away a long time, I felt terrible for him because he would lose his freedom. There were many times when I went to the balcony and cried for David because I missed him and felt very sorry for him.

Despite her anguish, Chae Sook did not succumb to a life of despair, and instead pushed forward for the sake of her family members:

I continued with my usual household duties such as providing meals for the family and cleaning the house. For David, the best I could do was to provide him with clean undergarments, shirts, pants, and socks. I was hurt when I visited David one day, and saw that his shirt was no longer white [as it was originally], but [instead] yellow. That is why my job now is to make sure he does not conserve the new clothing I send him.

Chae Sook’s explanation for the possible reasons for David’s incarceration was rather interesting and unconventional:

It is his fate and his destiny to be in jail. There are some things that you cannot avoid in life. David was involved in an accident, and was responsible for a crime he did not commit, but they still sentenced him to eight years in prison. This is not just bad luck; it is his fate. David is destined to live a difficult life, and I knew this from the beginning; that is why he is mentally strong and resilient.

Chae Sook elaborated on these ideas of fate and destiny when describing the symbolism of David's unconventional behavior as a child:

A year before the death of his mother, David was a very difficult child to deal with. He cried often, and always did the opposite of what I asked him to do. This is also when he began watching the violent movies. However, all of this stopped after his mother passed away. That is why I know that David felt his mother's looming death.

According to Chae Sook, David has reason to live with hope: "Despite the difficult life that David is destined to face, he will eventually find success because he is capable of greater things in life. On top of that, he has been reading and studying in prison, and the knowledge he acquires will be a great asset for him in the future."

Whether this is the case for all prisoners or not, is open to interpretation: "Many prisoners are corrupt, and many are incarcerated for reasons that are justified. However, I am sure that there are also good people in prison. Unfortunately, they will have a difficult road toward success because the public will have a negative view of prisoners, no matter what."

David: "Everyone in jail is human like everyone else"

After three and a half years in prison, one would assume that David has adapted to the struggles that prison life presents, yet problems continue to arise. The latest issue began when David had remnants of food wedged in-between his teeth. Flossing would have eradicated the problem, but floss is considered contraband in jail. Thus, David was forced to rip a string of cloth from his thin sheets to use in place of floss.

While such a problem may seem insignificant to many, one must consider the underlying issue. Prison life does more than incapacitate the inmate—it inadvertently but nevertheless humiliates the inmate and degrades the inmate to essentially lead a barbaric lifestyle.

Such a problem is only one of several that David must deal with daily. However, before presenting such issues in depth, let us follow the events that led to David's incarceration.

David recalled the night he was questioned about the brawl:

I realized there was a problem when detectives took me to the precinct for questioning. I did not realize the gravity of my situation until the end of the interrogation when I overheard, behind closed doors, of my involvement in a homicide. My immediate reaction to this was a sense of confusion, disbelief, and shock; I did not know that someone actually died in the incident.

David's involvement in the homicide led to his incarceration on the night of January 6, 2002. He has remained in a correctional facility in New York ever since. There were obvious changes in David's lifestyle after his arrest:

First, I was restricted from movement because the prison confined me inside the facility. When I first arrived as an adolescent—sixteen, seventeen, eighteen year olds are classified as adolescents, and are placed in adolescent housing areas until they turn nineteen and are then moved to an adult housing area—I was required to attend school during the day to earn a GED.

Therefore, on Mondays through Fridays, David woke up for breakfast at five a.m., returned to bed after the meal, and woke up at seven a.m. to go to school. At seven thirty a.m., the correctional officers opened the cells, and David and other inmates exited and formed a straight line to walk to school. Once David entered the school facility, he passed through a magnetometer before walking into class: "The classroom floor was usually out of order with people throwing objects around, people sleeping, people disrespecting others verbally, and a few people trying to learn."

As a result, David had little opportunity to receive a formal education. After school, however, David moved on to other activities:

At eleven a.m., we ate in the mess hall and returned to school at two p.m. Then, we usually returned to the housing area where the officers locked us in our cells until six p.m. After six p.m., we had the option of staying in the dayroom, which was a common area shared by the inmates to converse with others, watch television, play cards, or simply sit down. At ten p.m., we were required to return to our cells.

This is how David typically spent his days during the first six months of his incarceration. A little after this time, David and several other inmates received their GEDs and celebrated their graduation with “New York food” that consisted of Kentucky Fried Chicken, Chinese fast food, and a Carvel ice cream cake.

David considered these the “better days,” but there were indeed occasional twenty-four hour lockdowns, cell searches, and fights that challenged David as a person. On one occasion, for instance, someone ordered David to fight another inmate in a *pit fight*: However, David knew that he could not allow for this degradation and dealt with it by fighting the other inmate. What David learned was to stand his ground, for any loss of respect from other inmates would result in constant battles.

Although plagued with occasional fights, David was thankful for his privileges. Yet these days ended when the facility transferred David into the Central Punitive Segregation Unit (CPSU) for illegal possession of cigarettes: “I was locked in all day except for an hour of recreation inside a cage outside—it was 10 feet by 15 feet.” Although David lost more freedom in many ways, he learned to see the beneficial aspects of this transfer: “I finally picked up a book and discovered the vast knowledge and minds of others that helped shape my ideas.”

This period of isolation also allowed David to reflect on his experiences with greater awareness. He pondered the possible causes of his incarceration:

Instead of significant events, I would rather say that there was a gradual series of events, while growing up, that influenced me along the way, but the problem with this is that gradual series of events is too vast to describe with specific examples. I witnessed many negative acts as the years progressed.

Specifically, David recalls a time when he asked our mother for help with his homework: “When I could not understand the homework after several explanations, she grabbed me by my hair and shook me violently.”

Given other similar events, David had to adapt to and accept these acts:

These negative results may have slowly molded my character. That is why I always feel the need to protect myself and my loved ones. Personally, though I have experienced negative activities and have observed and experimented, I never fully adopted negative practices. I have grown to adopt a set of principles that I believe are important, and I try my best to live by them. I simply abide by my principles of trust and loyalty, which I believe are righteous. However, the act that led to my current situation was a mistake; it was not an intentional act.

Despite his convictions, David believes that society unfairly labels inmates according to societal standards: “The stereotype and misconceptions about inmates are that they are vicious and violent psychopaths who lack morals or positive goals in life. While I recognize that there are stupid, violent psychopaths, not every prisoner constitutes such characteristics.”

Instead, David states:

Everyone in jail is human as any other individual in society; they are normal people who made mistakes, and someone that you know all your life can make a mistake and go to jail. That is why you have to understand that we are like everyone else, but

portrayed negatively because of our admittance in an institution we call jail or prison.

There are also those who did not commit a crime, but are falsely accused.

In fact, David asserted: "I have met some of the brightest minds in jail." He indicates that there are inmates who are well-educated and goal-oriented as well: "There are many inmates who are trying hard to rehabilitate themselves, who want a good future, and want to help themselves. No one is innately violent; many simply lack self-control which leads to negative results."

Some inmates are fortunate enough to make great progress in their lives. Yet despite this effort and desire to reenter society, there is a sense of banishment that inhibits inmates from achieving true acceptance into society:

For those who are trying to change themselves, it is hard to do so in an environment where programs are not in place to assist in positive change. It is difficult in an environment where a system that subjugates us to live as animals expects us to change. Some inmates are here because I believe the system is corrupt. That is, society holds us captive by laws that are nothing but the public's collective belief in what is morally right or wrong, all while failing to consider the opinion of those who disagree with the majority. If a few people do something that is against popular belief, does that make them criminals? Do not get me wrong, some people definitely belong in institutions, but the system fails in truly protecting inmates. I believe there should be a better system that takes into account the views of these people that do not agree with the majority because laws are not divine; man makes them.

Examining the Social Injustices of Institutionalization

Generally, James, Chae Sook, and David all acknowledged the grief that David's incarceration caused, and the social injustices of David's incarceration. However, as my

family provides only a personal perspective on incarceration, further examination is required to draw conclusions about the negative consequences of prolonged incarceration. Thus, in the paragraphs to follow, I examine scholarly works by the following authors: Goffman, Travis and Waul, Visher and Travis, Heide and co-authors, and Haley. I then interpret the findings from my interviews to formulate larger conclusions about social norms.

Goffman defines total institutions as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (Goffman 1).

Two significant phrases within this definition are that inmates are institutionalized for an *appreciable period*, and lead *formally administered* lives. Together, these two factors affect inmates due to three central features of total institutions that can be described as “a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life” (Goffman 6). That is, first, all aspects of an inmate’s life is conducted at the same place under the same authority. Second, each inmate’s daily activities are carried on in immediate company of a large batch of other inmates, and all are treated alike. Third, all phases of daily activities are tightly scheduled.

What this entails is what Goffman calls a process of “disculturation,” which can be described as “the untraining of an inmate which renders him temporarily incapable of managing certain features of daily life on the outside, if and when he gets back to it” (Goffman 13).

Thus, what essentially occur are an inmate’s loss of agency and an inmate’s “mortification of the self” (Goffman 21). Goffman asserts that an inmate’s loss of agency and mortification of the self can occur when he or she loses a role in society, which an inmate may or may not re-establish when he or she returns to society. In particular, prisoners suffer a “civil death in which prisoners face not only a temporary loss of the rights to will money, to

write checks, and to vote but may have some of these rights permanently abrogated” (Goffman 15).

Goffman argues that both injustices anger inmates. He quotes a prisoner in his book: After an offender has been subjected to unfair or excessive punishment and treatment more degrading than that prescribed by law, he comes to justify his act, which he could not have justified when he committed it. He decides to “get even” for his unjust treatment in prison and take reprisals through further crime at the first opportunity. (Goffman 57)

The aftermath of these combined effects leave an inmate incapacitated when reentering society, an issue that Travis and Waul discuss in Prisoners Once Removed. Both authors note that incarceration and reentry destabilize neighborhoods by increasing levels of disorganization:

Social disorganization is the inability of communities to regulate their residents’ behavior because of deleterious environmental conditions. These conditions lead to a disrupted neighborhood organizational structure that subsequently attenuates residents’ ties to each other and to the community. (Travis and Waul 315)

Consequently, high rates of reentry create an environment where residents of a community are isolated from one another, which in turn reduce collective sentiment and action. Ultimately, what occurs is a decrease in what informal social control, or “the willingness to intervene in neighborhood burglaries and rowdy teen behavior,” a leveling factor of crime within a community (Travis and Waul 316). With less social cohesion within a community, the rate of crime increases.

Thus, incarceration can contribute to the very problem it is intended to solve, an issue that Visher and Travis address in Transitions of Prison to Community through the analysis of recidivism of former inmates. According to Visher and Travis, in 2002, over 600,000

individuals left state and federal prisons, and within three years, almost seven in ten will have been rearrested and half will be back in prison, either for a new crime or for violating conditions of their release (Visher and Travis 89).

Supporting such statistical data is a study by Heide and co-authors, one conducted through a follow-up of 59 young offenders who went to jail between January 1982 through January 1984 for one or more counts of murder, attempted murder, or manslaughter. The mean and median times served by the released offenders were five years and eleven months and six years, respectively.

The Department of Corrections staff provided follow-up data on all 59 offenders. Results indicated that 60 percent of the juvenile offenders released from prison returned to prison, and 80 percent of those who did fail, did so within the first three years of release. Researchers then concluded:

This suggests that the public must continue the dialogue on how to handle violent youths. Rehabilitation is not a popular concept with the public today. Punishment and accountability are the “buzz words” that reflect a nation that is increasingly fearful of violent juveniles. (Heide et al. 105)

If juvenile offenders are going to be released from prison at some point in time, however, it would seem to make sense from the standpoint of public safety that they return to a society educated, vocationally prepared, and better equipped to handle life’s challenges than they were prior to their incarceration. (Heide et al. 107)

Given the high rate of recidivism among young offenders who served at least five years in prison, there is some reason to conclude that institutionalizing social deviants does not necessarily eradicate violence in society.

Therefore, society must find alternative methods of rehabilitation for social deviants than simply institutionalizing them for prolonged periods, as Haley suggests in *An*

Alternative to Traditional Incarceration. One possible alternative is the Work Release Program:

The work release program is one, which enables selected prisoners confined in the jail to leave the institution daily for employment at a regular job nearby. The prisoners then spend non-working hours in confinement at the institution. (Haley 24)

The goal is to change the context of the offender's life as well as his personal orientation to the world around him. This will be accomplished not only through the personal involvement of the inmate but also through the involvement of the community in crime prevention through rehabilitation. (Haley 34)

Another possible alternative that Haley describes is Group Therapy:

Group therapy allows offenders to realize that other people "are in the same boat." This may have a great impact upon those offenders who are inclined to be especially isolated because of shame or remorse. (Haley 55)

In group therapy the offender must take more responsibility for his own treatment. He also has some obligation to help others. Anything that increases the offender's sense of social responsibility is helpful. To the extent that criminality may be modified by attitude change the group would appear to be the most attractive vehicle for such change. Attitudes are largely formed in association with peers, and if the group develops more conventional attitudes, so must its individual members. (Haley 56)

These implications of institutionalization beg the question about the effectiveness of prolonged incarceration. With inmates' loss of agency and loss of individualism, there are concerns over inmates' abilities to adjust to life when reentering society.

The Implications of Institutionalization

This study examined the social and political implications of prolonged institutionalization by examining the personal life of an inmate and his family members, and analyzing several scholarly works. I would like to point out several significant consequences of incarceration that are worthy of discussion.

In institutions, there seems to be a morbid cycle of destruction that begins with an inmate's loss of freedom, an inmate's loss of individualism, an inmate's mortification of the self, an inmate's release into society, an inmate's unsuccessful attempts at integration and subsequent status as a danger to society, and finally an inmate's return to an institution. Accordingly, prolonged exposure to such personal injustices clearly hinders an inmate from successfully reentering and integrating into society, which places the public in greater risk.

Yet while it is evident that prolonged institutionalization without adequate rehabilitation programs is more harmful to the public, many inmates do not receive the right treatment before they enter society, as the high rate of recidivism conveys. Specifically, because the process of rehabilitating an inmate includes social injustices such as an inmate's loss of agency and mortification of the self, it is logical to conclude that prolonged institutionalization is counterproductive. Nevertheless, institutionalizing social deviants as a prescription to eliminate the issue continues.

Therefore, society must find alternative methods of rehabilitation for social deviants than simply institutionalizing them for prolonged periods, as my findings suggest that this method is ineffective. However, the effectiveness and practicability of such programs presents another research challenge.

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