GLOBAL COMPARISON OF INCARCERATION: PUNITIVE V REHABILITATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Rachel DiGangi | Lesley University

Punitive Frameworks

The United States prison system's purpose is to punish those who break the law. However, because the US is focusing so much on punishing and dehumanizing their offenders, when people are no longer institutionalized, they are not prepared to transition back into society.

Incarceration Rate

- Last 40 years: Prison population has increased by 800% in the United States
- The United States makes up 5% of the world's population, but holds 25% of the world's prisoners
- 4 in 10 formerly incarcerated people in the United States become incarcerated again in 3 years

Sentencing Practices

- Smart on Crime Initiative (2013): Created to enforce reforms in the criminal justice system
- Obama administration began phasing out the use of privatized prisons
- Result: Drop from 220,000 inmates in private prisons to 195,000 inmates, allowing safer facilities with better quality rehabilitative services
- Goal: Decrease the use of private prisons by 50%

UPDATE: The Trump Administration ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to return to their original approach, and resume dependency on private prisons
- CoreCivic: Shares have climbed 120%
- GeoGroup: Shares have risen 80%
- **Each business contributes to the operation of private prisons and immigrant detention centers

Rehabilitative Frameworks

- The Netherlands and Germany have a rehabilitative prison system which centralizes around treating their offenders, and preparing them for when they reintegrate into society. Their punishment is simply losing their freedom.
- Normalization: making life in prison as similar as possible to life in the community.
- Rely on fines and suspended sentences (similar to probation)

Mental Health Treatment

- United States
  - 55% of male prisoners in state prisons have a mental health diagnosis
  - 73% of female prisoners in state prisons have a mental health diagnosis
- Germany
  - Convicted offenders with a mental health diagnosis are not imprisoned, but admitted to a psychiatric hospital
- The Netherlands
  - Convicted offenders that are deemed either partially or entirely unaccountable due to a mental health diagnosis serve their time in Forensic Psychiatric Care Units

U.S. Federal Policy

- Smart on Crime Initiative (2013): Created to enforce reforms in the criminal justice system
- Obama administration began phasing out the use of privatized prisons
- Result: Drop from 220,000 inmates in private prisons to 195,000 inmates, allowing safer facilities with better quality rehabilitative services
- Goal: Decrease the use of private prisons by 50%

UPDATE: The Trump Administration ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to return to their original approach, and resume dependency on private prisons
- CoreCivic: Shares have climbed 120%
- GeoGroup: Shares have risen 80%
- **Each business contributes to the operation of private prisons and immigrant detention centers

References