



Prison: A Homelessness Factory

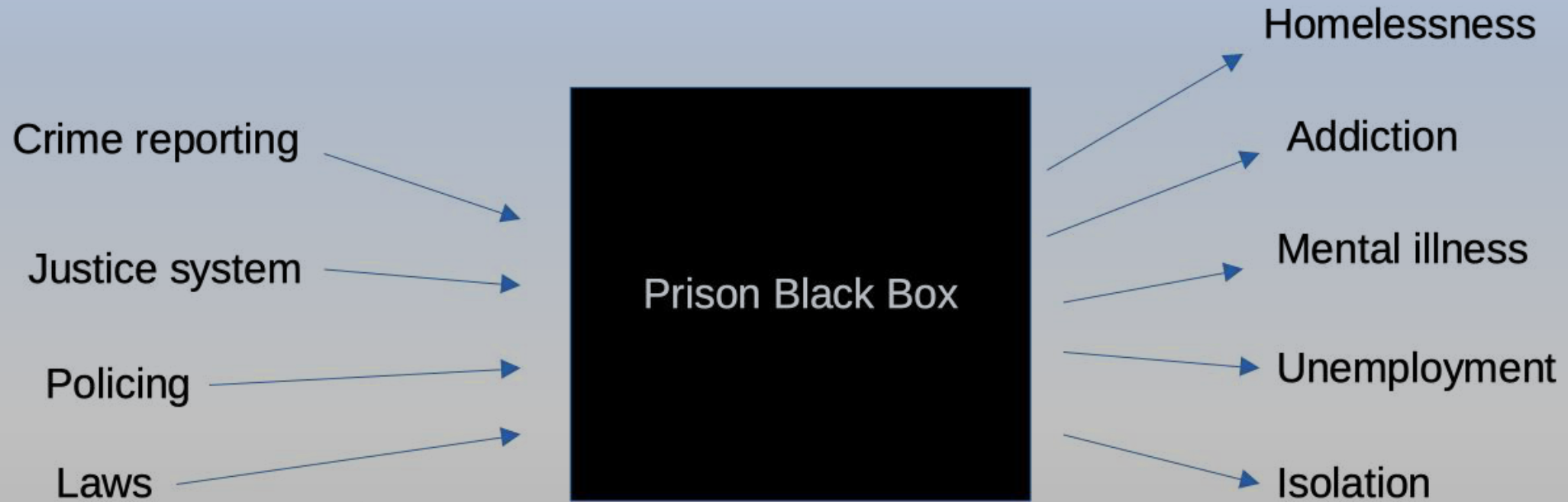
An Introduction to the Canadian Prison System

Introduction

- This presentation is based on personal experience of incarceration
- But there is no singular experience of prison
- Prisoner support
 - Monitoring conditions in our local provincial prison
- Influenced by prison abolition



Why Should We Think About Prison?



Looking upstream

Looking downstream



Types of Prisons in Canada

- Federal Prisons (or penitentiaries)
 - Sentenced to 24 months or more
 - About a third of all prisoners
- Provincial Prisons
 - Either sentenced to less than 24 months or denied bail
 - Larger social impact but less attention
 - Administered separately by each province

Image: Anke Gladnick, NPR

Types of Provincial Prison

- Youth Prisons
 - Sentenced to prison time and are under 18
- Mental Health Prisons
 - Not criminally responsible
- Adult Provincial Prisons



Images: Google Maps, The Hamilton Spectator

Adult Provincial Prisons

- Operated by the provinces
- In Ontario, 25 prisons with around 7,500 prisoners on any given day
- Further subdivided into two groups:
 - Detention Centres (DC): Denied bail or sentenced to less than three months
 - Correctional Centres (CC): Sentenced to more than three months but less than two years

Image: Peter Collins





Detention Centres

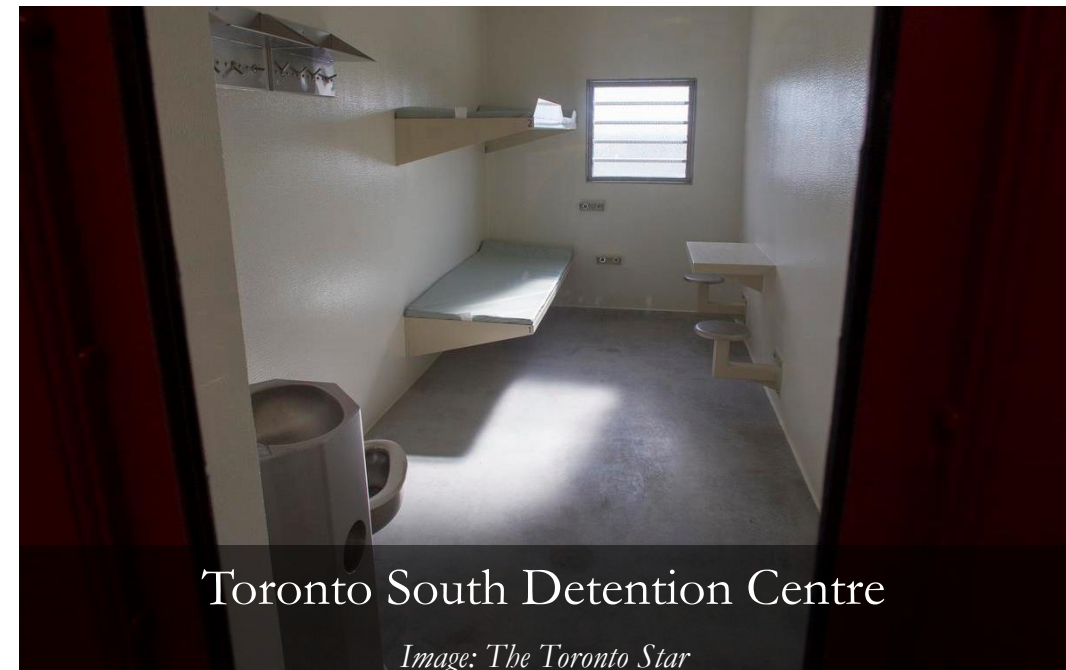
- Harshest conditions of the entire Canadian system
- Over 70% of prisoners are in remand custody
- Also hold immigration detainees
 - About 50% of all immigration detainees across Canada are in DCs

Central East Correctional Centre

Image: The Toronto Star

Conditions in DC

- Overcrowding: Triple bunking
- Frequent lockdowns
- No programs, few books, little yard time
- Violent:
 - 29 people died in Ontario's prisons in 2021
 - 85% of all deaths in Ontario's prisons are in DCs



Correctional Centres

- Generally similar to DCs, but some differences:
 - Less overcrowded
 - Some access to programming, including work or school
 - Longer visits
 - Different daily rhythm
 - More stable, less violent
 - Eligibility for parole

Other Forms of Separation

- Prison functions on the basis of separation
 - Separating people from their community
 - Creating different groups of prisoners who can be treated differently
- Three additional kinds of separation worth considering:
 - Gender/Sex
 - Protective Custody vs. General Population
 - Gang Affiliation

Gender/Sex

- Two gendered forms of incarceration: men's and women's prison
- All prisoners are labeled either “male” or “female,” based on sex at birth
 - “Transgender alert”
- The structure of men's and women's prisons is the same
 - But equal treatment in an unequal system produces different results

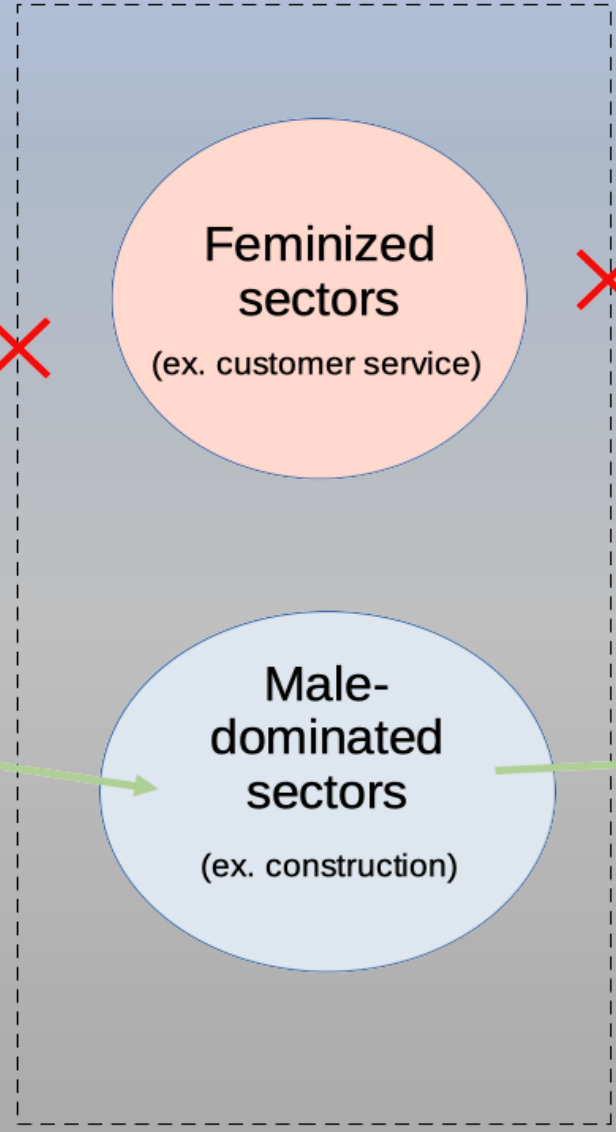
Prison

Job Market

Home Community

Women's
Retraumatization, isolation

Men's
PTSD, macho culture



exiting



exclusion

exiting

marginalization

Dependence
Victimization
Further criminalization

Misogyny & homophobia
Violence
Further criminalization

Why Does This Matter to the Homelessness Sector?

- It leaves a lot of people homeless and creates housing instability
- It contributes to risk factors
- Disproportionate incarceration of people experiencing homelessness
- People experiencing homelessness have worse outcomes at every step
- Lack of understanding creates barriers in the homelessness sector
- Issues of social justice

Thanks for Listening!

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