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Title

David J Harding, Jeffrey D Morenoff and Jessica JB Wyse. On the Outside: Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0x09m6hw>

Journal

Punishment & Society, 22(3)

ISSN

1462-4745

Author

Sugie, Naomi F

Publication Date

2020-07-01

DOI

10.1177/1462474520904992

Peer reviewed

On the Outside: Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration. David J. Harding, Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Jessica J.B. Wyse. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2019. 304 pages, including index. Paper: \$30.00, ISBN: 9780226607641.

By now, it is well recognized that reentry is a critical life transition in the lives of many people in the United States. Experienced by over 600,000 people each year, it is chaotic and unstable, involving disruptions to all aspects of life at the same time—e.g., work, housing, health, and relationships with family and friends. Because of this instability and complexity, researchers find various methodological ways of studying this key event, such as focusing on one domain like employment or using administrative records to follow people's experiences over time. These approaches provide key insights on reentry, but by themselves, they are often incomplete or fragmented.

In Harding, Morenoff, and Wyse's book, *On the Outside*, we see a more comprehensive picture of reentry, with its complexities and variations. We read about individuals who are navigating multiple contexts of families, neighborhoods, and institutions. We hear about the importance, but also the strains and stresses, of family relationships and support. We see how health issues and substance use and addiction are intimately tied to housing and employment instability. These are important contributions in a literature that is sometimes focused on recidivism.

Methodologically, the book's findings are based primarily on in-depth interviews with six focal participants, who were followed for up to three years after their release from prison in Michigan. The six were chosen from a group of 22 people, who were followed over the same period, totaling over 150 interviews for the group. The experiences of these participants are complemented with a quantitative, longitudinal study of every state prisoner in Michigan released on parole during 2003 and followed over seven years. The book, therefore, presents an in-depth longitudinal study of reentry that is buttressed by data on an entire cohort of people recently released.

A main take away of the book is that the reality of reentry in the present day does not look like the turning points and stabilizing trajectories of the Gluecks' cohort, who were coming of age in the mid twentieth century when marriage, the military, and finding good work were viable options to reintegration (as noted by Robert Sampson and John Laub). Instead, we see the stressors of reentry against the backdrop of a parole system oriented away from rehabilitation, a contemporary housing market that is beyond the means of most poor people, and a low-wage labor market that is characterized by high turnover, irregular hours, and physically unsafe and demanding work.

The contemporary setting's analytic importance is explained by the book's conceptual framework, which focuses on the fit between individual resources and contexts of reception. Drawing from scholarship on immigrant incorporation (such as work by Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut), the authors describe the various ways that contexts can be assessed, including by considering the context's economy, culture, local community, and institutions. Reintegration depends not only on individual resources, such as educational attainment, work experience, and social support networks, but also on how these resources intersect with the reception context. The importance of context is evident in reentry scholarship on neighborhoods and collateral consequences, but adopting this analytical approach offers a promising way to more systematically analyze the interplay between the individual and the larger social, economic, and political environment in reentry research.

The case of employment is a clear example of the importance of fit between individual resources and contexts of reception. In the minds of many people – policymakers, researchers, and people leaving prison – employment is often viewed as the critical piece to prevent re-arrest and re-incarceration. But, as we are increasingly aware, and even more so after reading *On the Outside*, failing to find work in the contemporary era is not strongly linked to recidivism.

The reason that employment is no longer a protective factor becomes obvious when we see the types of jobs that people released from prison are able to obtain (e.g., the “fit” between individual resources and contexts of reception). Work is unstable and irregular on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis. It is physically demanding. It pays next to nothing. Sometimes, it exposes people to supervisors who are abusive and coworkers who are themselves struggling with addiction, homelessness, and instability.

Apart from the types of jobs themselves, the experience of finding work and then losing work is also anything but a protective factor. In *On the Outside*, we hear about Randall who submitted over 50 job applications, about Lamar who submitted over 200, and Leon who submitted over 40 applications. These numbers take on new meaning when we consider the transportation difficulties of traveling from place to place, and the numerous other daily commitments that people have to parole, community providers, and their families. Once a job is finally found, it often ends a short time later. The job might have been temporary, by definition, as temp agencies are often the most accessible path to finding work. Health issues, including chronic conditions that limit physical abilities, mental health, or substance abuse, may get in the way with maintaining the position. Even parole requirements, such as wearing a GPS monitor that is not easily amenable to the irregularity of jobs and shifts, prevents people from accessing jobs with changing schedules. The cycle of finding work, losing work, and searching again is a consuming process and employment itself is often not a pathway to

successful reintegration in the context of labor market polarization and precariousness.

On the Outside offers a comprehensive, easy-to-read portrait of reentry in the contemporary era. It is well suited to any undergraduate or graduate course on reentry, inequality, and the criminal justice system. Alongside these contributions, it offers a conceptual framework—emphasizing the correspondence between individual resources and contexts of reception—that promises to bring greater analytical insights to how neighborhoods, institutions, and cultural contexts influence reintegration.

Naomi F. Sugie
Assistant Professor
Department of Criminology, Law and Society
University of California, Irvine
nsugie@uci.edu