

# Governance without Government: Varieties of Prison Social Order

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Why does prison social order vary  
around the world?

Collective Action and the Problem of Order

Institutional Change and Social Cooperation

Ethnic Identity and Conflict

Evidence drawn from a diverse literature in prison research – academic, legal, professional, NGOs, etc

These studies necessarily have a narrow focus.



Mule Creek State Prison







Q1: What explains the varying degrees of centralization within extralegal institutions?

H1: Extralegal governance will be decentralized if the inmate population is small enough to allow information transmission and enforcement via reputation mechanisms.

Case study: most similar systems design

1. California: past and present
2. Men's and women's
3. California and England



“England...has followed the United States’ punitive policy path by virtually every measure except the death penalty” (Kruttschnitt et al 2013, 20).

Tim Newburn on “policy transfer” from US to UK

Q2: What explains variation in the extent of extralegal governance institutions?

H2: When inmates lack access to high-quality governance institutions (relative to their demand for it), extralegal governance will be more important.

Case selection:

Sample the range → Bolivia & Nordic prisons

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THE

# SOCIAL ORDER OF THE UNDERWORLD

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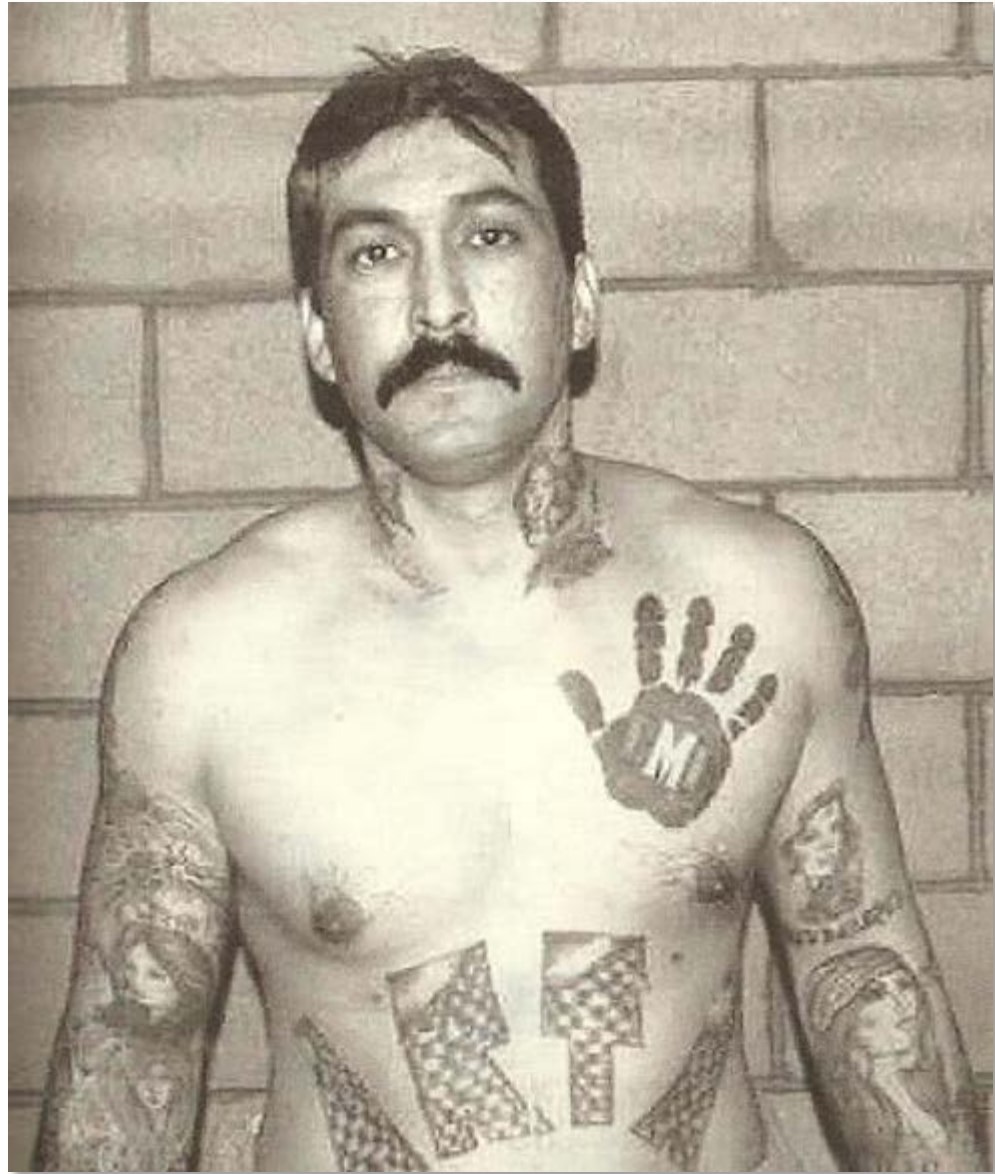
How Prison Gangs Govern the  
American Penal System

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DAVID SKARBEEK

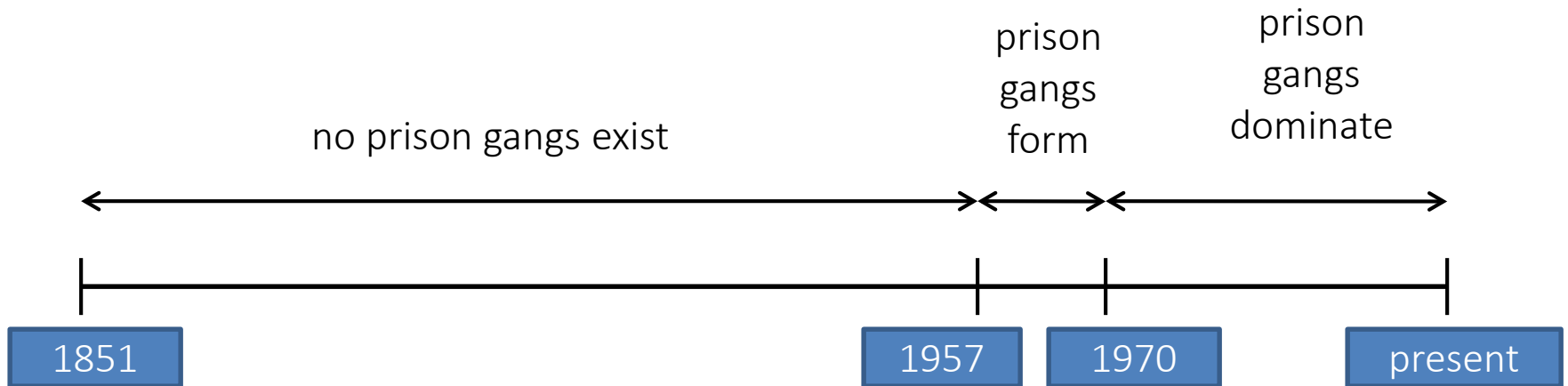


California: past and present





# Institutional Change





# The Convict Code

Never inform.

Don't be nosy.

Don't gossip.

Don't lie.

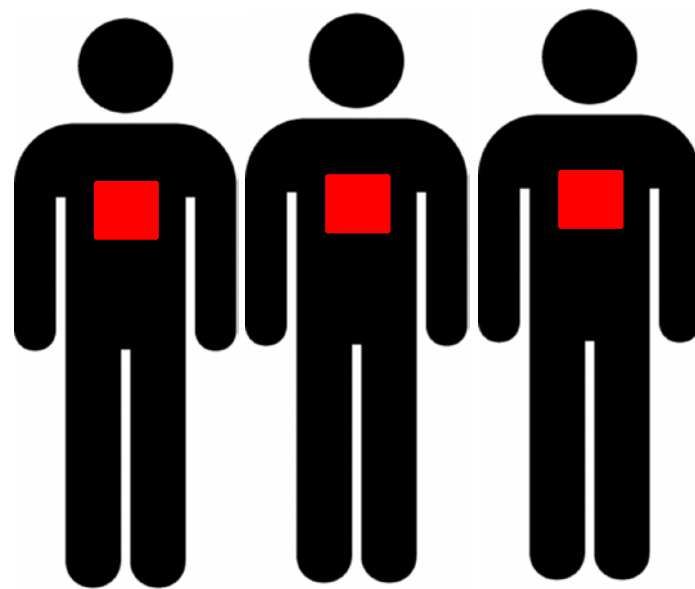
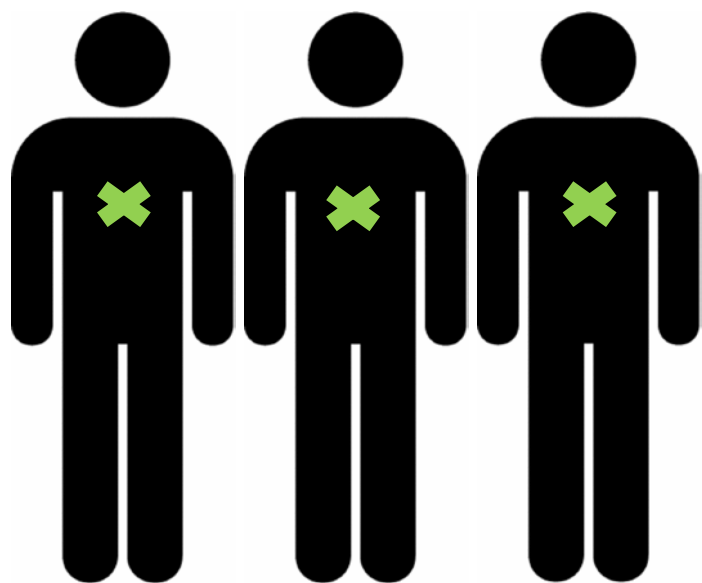
Don't steal.

Pay your debts.

Don't weaken.

Don't whine.

# Gang Governance



“It was my responsibility on the yard to ensure that our people were not harmed by another race.

I took care of the drug debts. If one of our people became delinquent in a drug debt to another race, it was my responsibility to either cover their drug debt or have them stabbed.

In which case, we would send one of ours to stab him.”

[illegible]

## "DISCIPLINES"

CANOGA PARK • 8TH ST ELA • STONERS BELA • NS MONTE • LOWELL ST • QUIET VILLAGE  
VINELAND BOYS • EARL ST • DIABLOS • RADFORD • TRG • ROSEHILLS • HIGHLAND PARK • VILLA BOYS PASA  
WVLS • ELA WHITTER BLVD SIDE • "ALL MARAVILLAS"

## "PERSONALS - H.C."

SMOKEY • HAZARD • GREEDY • MARIJUANO • LS • CLOWN • RASCAL • CARTOON • RAY • HIGHLAND PARK • HUSKY  
SPANKY • L1 ST • ROSEHILLS • BOXER • POPEYE • KILLER1 • KILLER2 • DIAL BLVD PUENTE • RAY • BIG • CITY  
SPARKY • SPIKE • AZUSA • CHINO • WSWILMAS • RAY • RAY • SLEEPY • BENNY • GARCIA • AVE • MUNCHIE • W.F.  
KILLER JOE • RAY • BOBO • CLOWNEY • ALEX • CADONE • JOKER • PADILLA • MONTE FLORES • LIL MAN • JOE HERNANDEZ  
CASPER • LARGO • HORSESHOE • POPEYE • CASPER • LOMAS • CRUZITO • HENRY BEAR • WINK • PICO VIEJO • BOUNCER • WEASEL  
BOBBY HERNANDEZ • WINK • DKS • COSMO • NS REDONDO • TINY • WSW • INDIO • ALPINE • NEST • BLANCO • 18 ST  
SNAKE • GYL • LAZY • F13 • MOLS • PHILLIP • VASQUEZ • SANTOS • ES • BOLEN • CHOCO • JARDIN • LUCKY • F13 • KSS  
HUERO CITY TERRACE • SPEEDY • AKA • PETEY • SANTA RANAS • BARO • PICO VIEJO • LIL CLEVER • WS 18 ST • 655 • YOUNGSTER • RWS  
STRANGER • 213 • SMILEY • HIGHLAND PARK • SHINO WILLIAMS • ALISTO • NUNEZ • RICHARD • FIGUERO • 555 9995 • STRANO • HPS

## PASSES

WINDY • LIL WICKED • WVLS • CONEJO • WVLS • CARTOON • TURTLE DOG TOWN

"GYPSY, LIL MAN" KANPOL 213.314.5489  
3400 GANG MOD. IF THERES ANY QUESTIONS CALL



## Governance and Prison Gangs

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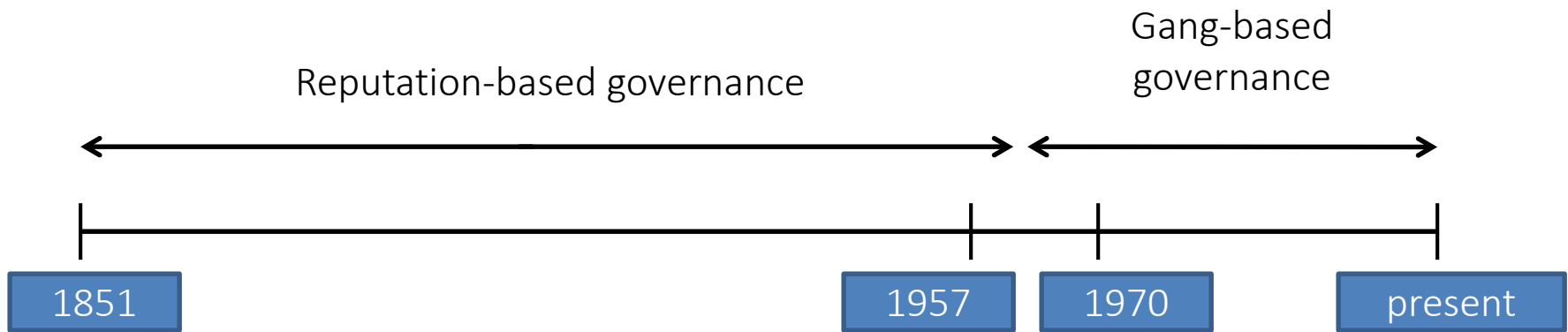
*How can people who lack access to effective government institutions establish property rights and facilitate exchange? The illegal narcotics trade in Los Angeles has flourished despite its inability to rely on state-based formal institutions of governance. An alternative system of governance has emerged from an unexpected source—behind bars. The Mexican Mafia prison gang can extort drug dealers*

“The Department of Corrections has pretty much given over control of the general populations to gangs”

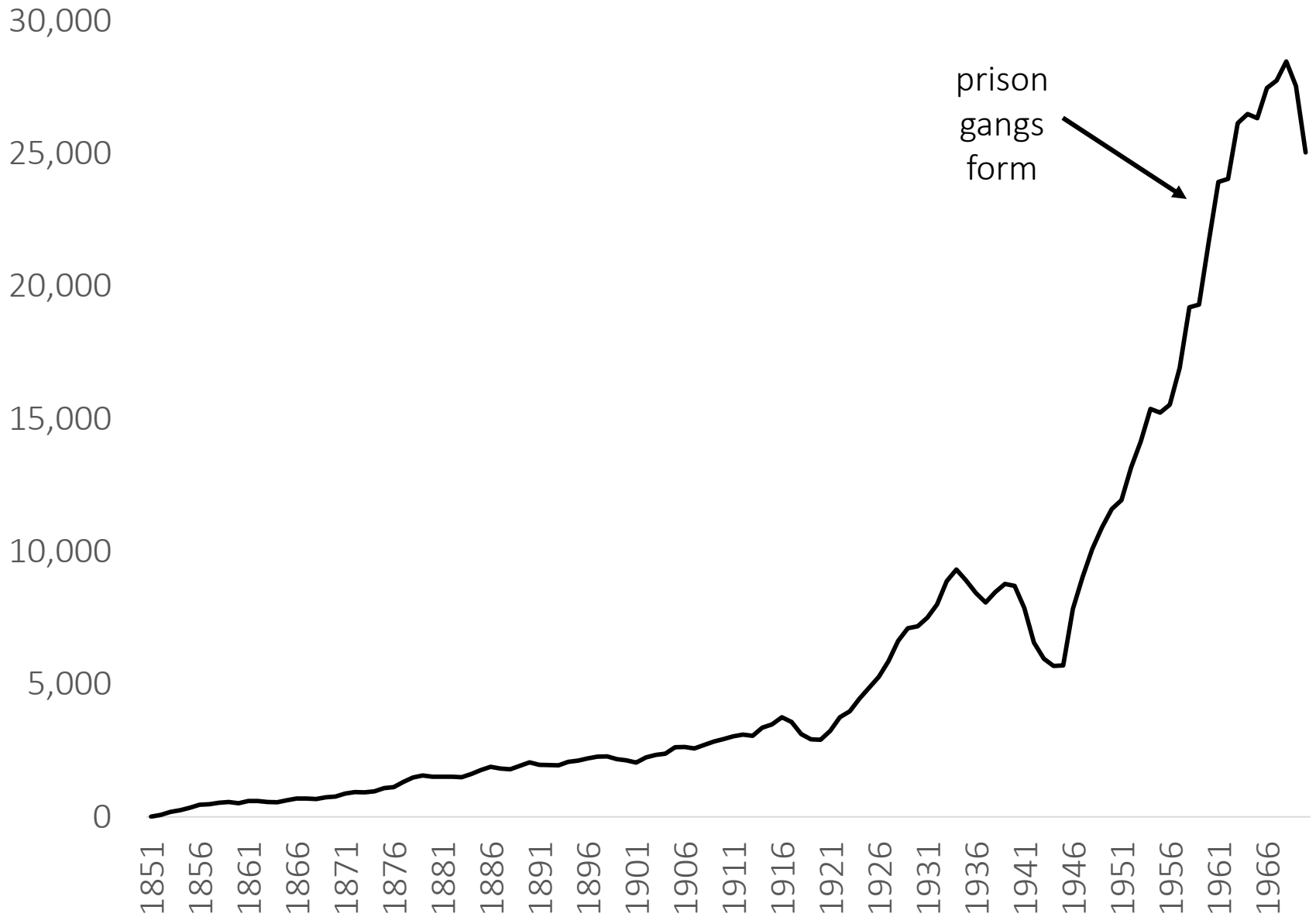
Warden, San Quentin Prison



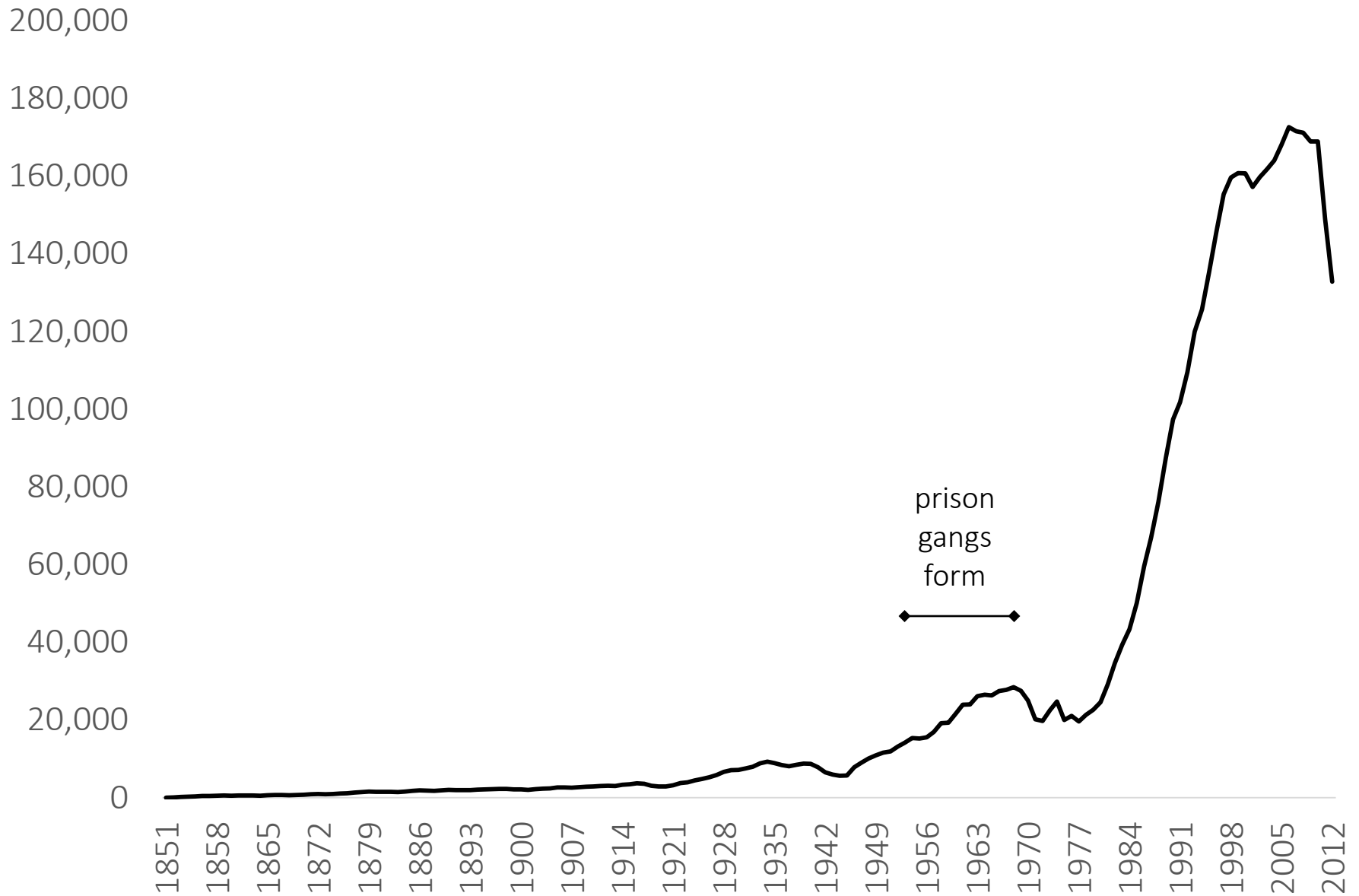
# Institutional Response to Demographic Change



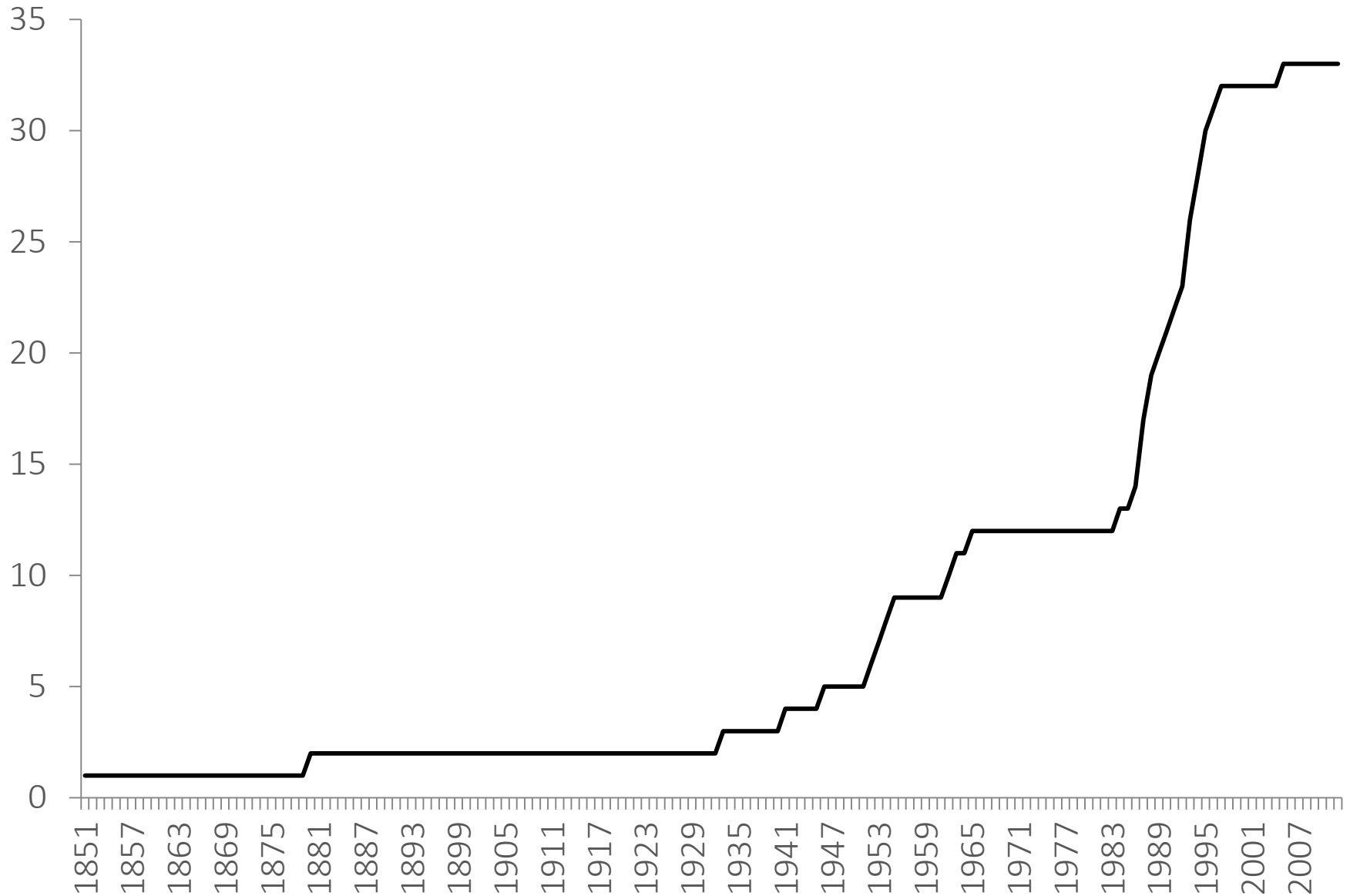
# Total California Inmate Population, 1851-1970



# Total California Inmate Population, 1851-2014



Number of Prisons in California, 1851-2014



Membership is:

restrictive

mutually exclusive

permanent

race-based

These characteristics facilitate community responsibility.



“Well, we don’t fight in a riot and stuff unless we have to...If I’m locked down, then I’m not working. You can make some serious bank in prison and shot-callers hate it when you’re in lockdown”

England

“there appears to be no recognizable equivalent of the organized US gang” (Phillips 2012)

‘there’s definitely not a gang scene going on’

‘It’s not really like there’s a gang that runs the prison’

‘where you heard of this gang thing?, I don’t know nothing about that’

‘It ain’t nothing like America with the Bloods and the Crips’

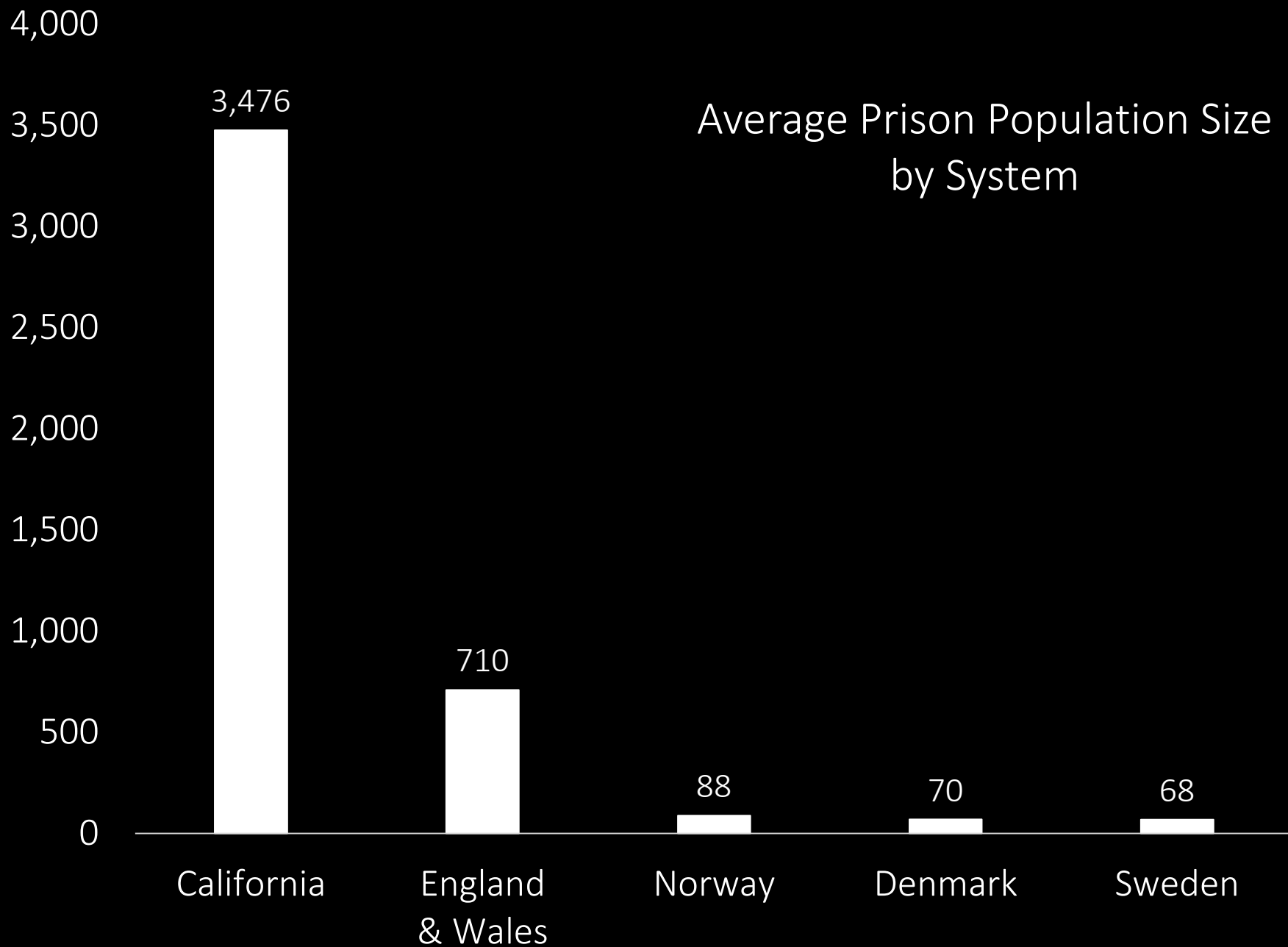
Individual reputations matter

Loose affiliations with no central organization

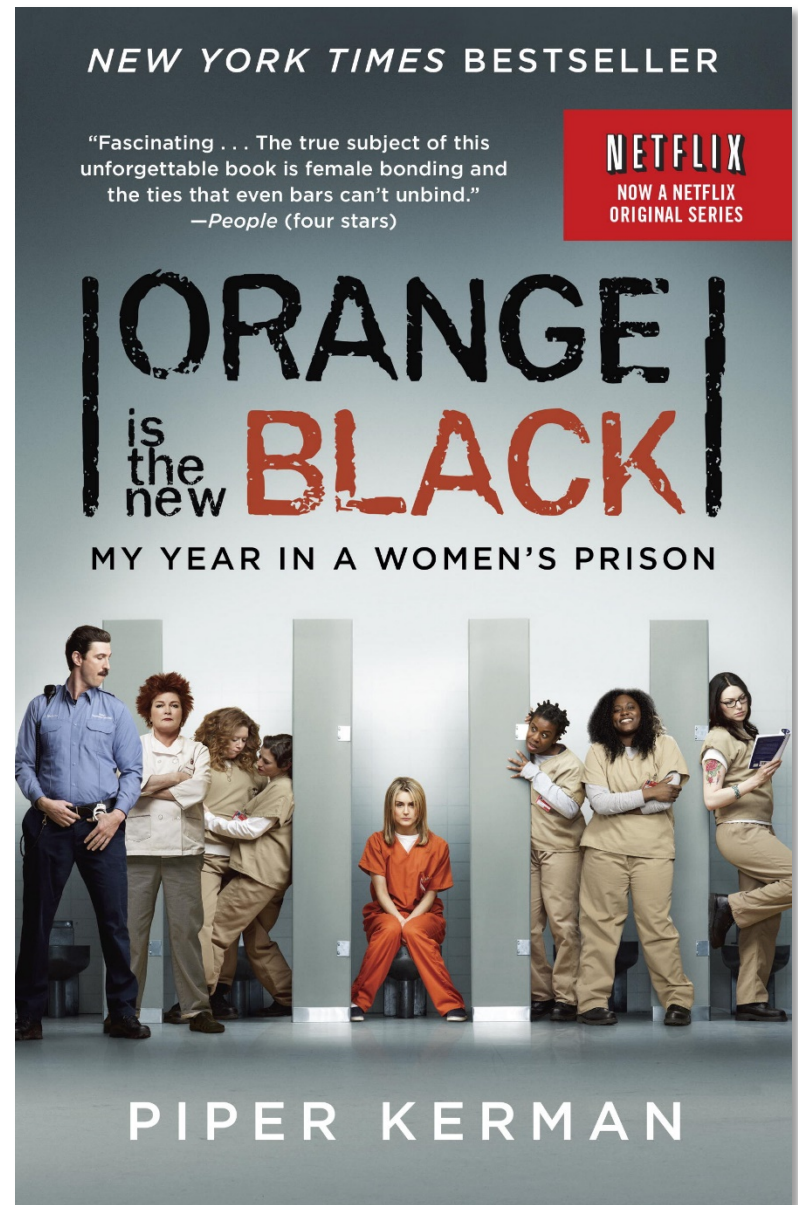
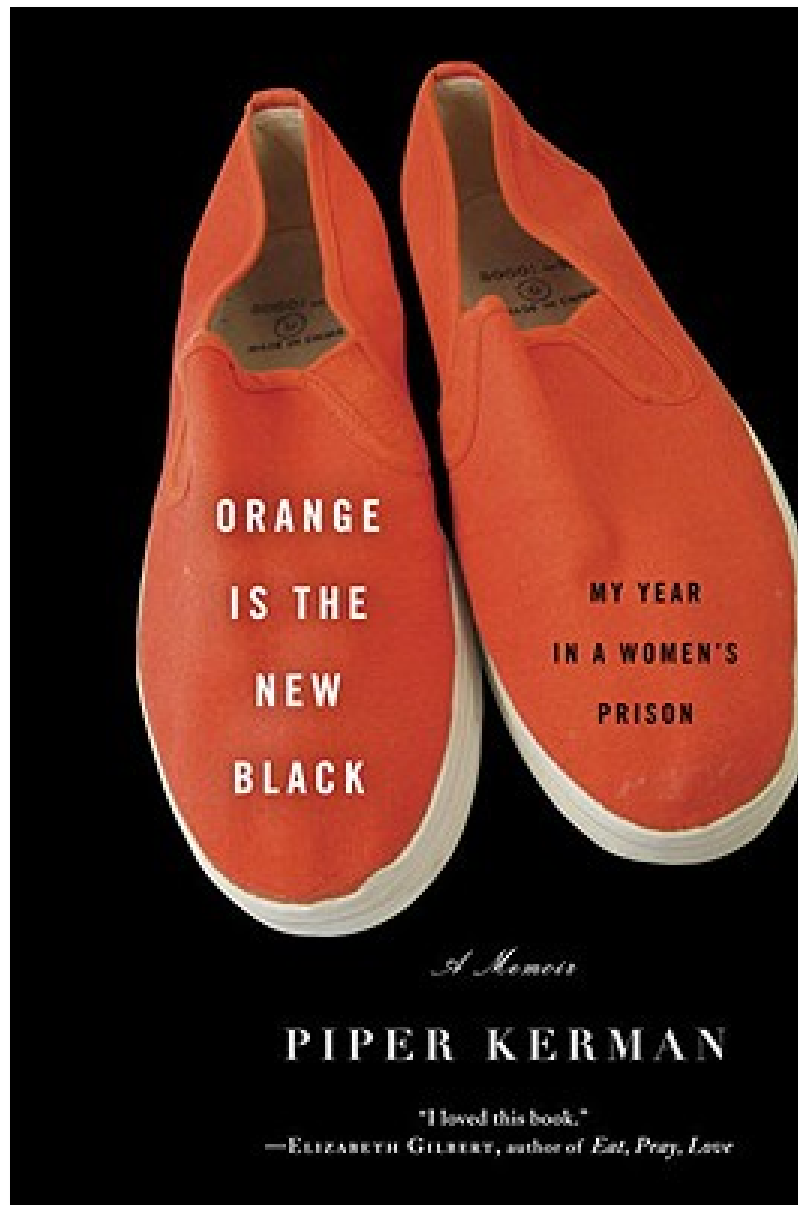
Associations based on postcode

No permanent or exclusive membership

Sole proprietorships



# Women's Prisons



Some women form “families”

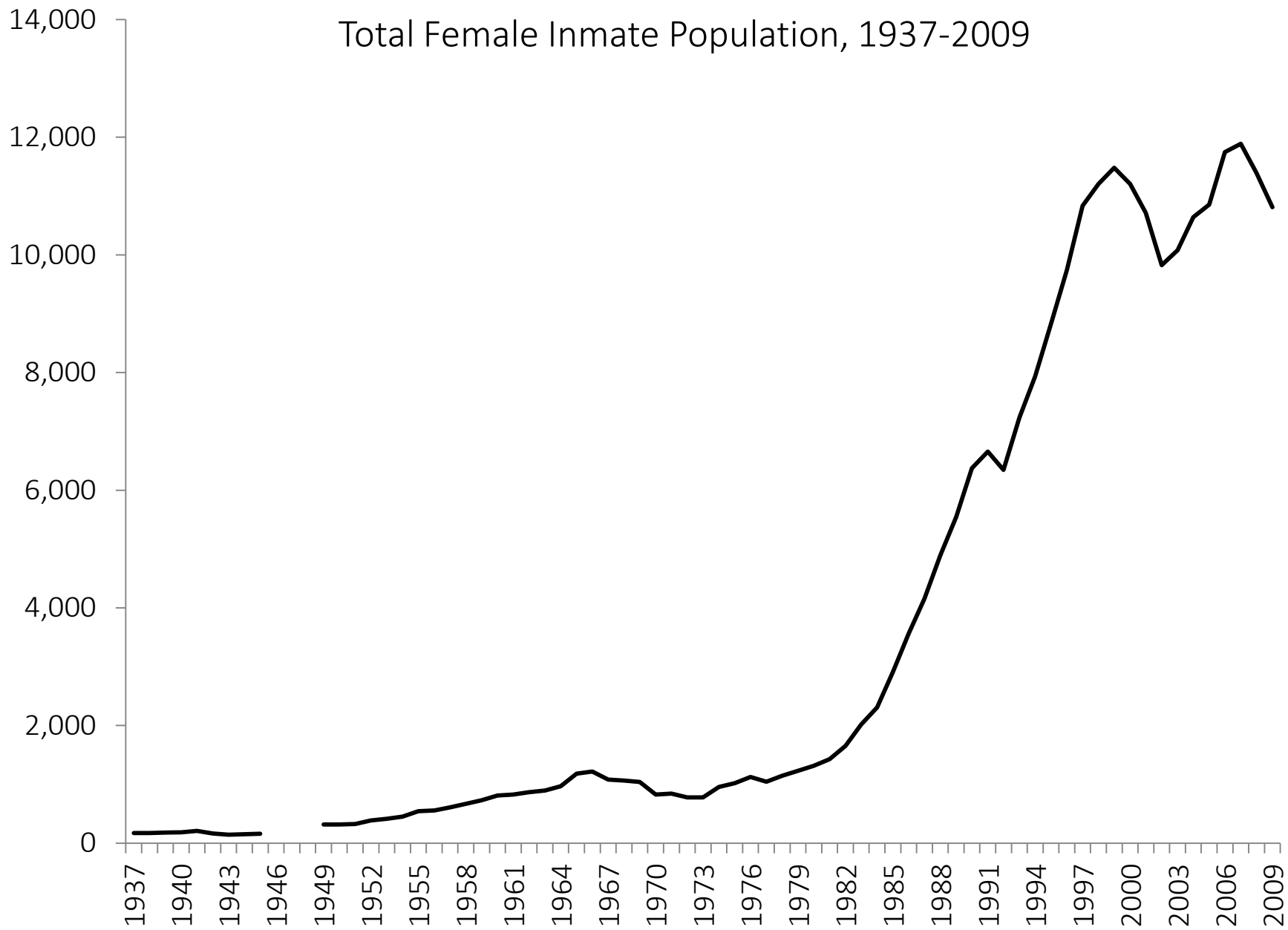
Fleeting, loose affiliations

Not mutually-exclusive

Not racially-segregated



Total Female Inmate Population, 1937-2009



Male and Female Inmate Population, 1937-2012

