Women in Prison. A Theoretical Approach about Mothers Profile, Family Communication, and Parenting Programs

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Abstract: Our study represents a theoretical approach of the incarcerated mothers profile and family communication. Incarcerations represent the consequences of their illegal activities. In this case they have taken them out of society and into the criminal justice system. In the final we'll emphasized the role of parenting programs as temporarily solution for incarcerate mothers.

Keywords: incarcerated mothers profile, imprisonment impacts, family communication, parenting programs.

INTRODUCTION

The challenges of parenthood for women who are incarcerated can be overwhelming. Our study represents a theoretical approach of the incarcerated mothers profile and family communication. Incarcerations represent the consequences of their illegal activities. In this case they have taken them out of society and into the criminal justice system. In the final we'll emphasized the role of parenting programs as temporarily solution for incarcerate mothers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of incarcerated mothers: Women are a small minority of the prison population, but a minority that is growing at a disproportionate rate, their needs, and indeed their rights. Imprisonment impacts on women differently than on men. According to Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2005) the average female offender is: under the age of 35 years, a member of an ethnic minority, either divorced or never married, poorly educated, unemployed or underemployed, on welfare prior to incarceration. Figure 1 below, shows that 'theft and handling stolen goods' was the most common crime that women in Târgsor prison were convicted of, followed jointly by homicide and robbery. Drug offences are relatively low.

The following factors which influence women criminal behavior have been documented: violence, trauma, and substance abuse, patterns of offense and re-offense, the impact of responsibilities for children and other dependent family members, reduced ability to support self and children, race and ethnicity and the impacts of these in terms of crime, violent partners (Guevara, 2008). Two factors associated with crime are high impulsivity and low intelligence (Braithwaite, 1999). Both may be linked to a poor ability to manipulate abstract concepts, which may also be related to other individual factors such as egocentricity and low empathy.
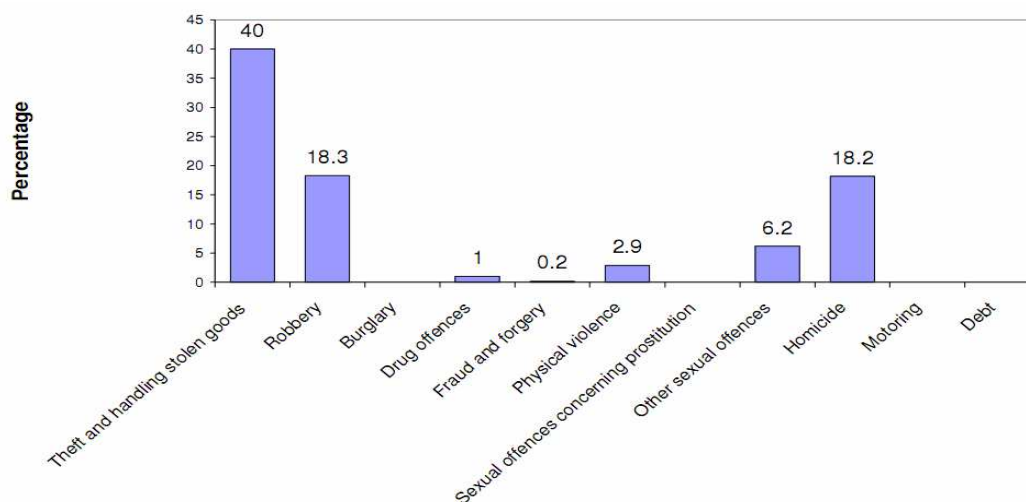
Fig. 1. The most common crime that women in Târgsor prison

When a mother is imprisoned, her baby and/or young children may go into prison with her or be separated from her and left on the 'outside'. Both situations can put the child at risk. The following are some of the key areas of concern (Quaker United Nations Office, 2006, www.quno.org) :

a) Problems with accommodation
b) Inappropriate staffing
c) Lack of family contact
d) Lack of education and work programmers'
e) Lack of proper healthcare
f) High proportion of women prisoners with a history of mental, physical or sexual
1. abuse
g) The adverse impact of imprisonment of mothers on their children
h) Disproportionate representation of indigenous women and foreign women

Women in prison experience an unparalleled sense of isolation. Added to the pains of women's imprisonment (Sykes, 2007) are the frustration, conflict, and guilt of being both separated from and unable to care for their children.

The statistic on the crime of murder (Vintileanu, 2000) shows that in 1997, 82 women were held in 1998-58 for women in 1999-54 and in 2000 (the first 9 months) 43 women. Crime of infanticide is a special chapter on women's crime, is according to normative rules of criminal copyright offense only one woman. Data presented by the author show that the number of female infanticide is the offender relatively low, representing 0.3% of all women prisoners. The dynamics of this number is heterogeneous: in 1997-36 the women have committed infanticide, in 1998 their number decreased to 23 that in 1999 increased again to 30. It also noted increasing age and women who commit murder: if in 1997 a majority women accounted for up to 40 years, in 2000 this type of crime falling within 40 years and older category, registering an increase category over 50 years (18% in 1997 to 37% in 2000). Regarding the status of women who commit crimes of murder, grievous causing death and injury, most women authors had / have a partner life, be it spouse or paramour. In cases of infanticide, most women are singles, with, however, increasing the share of people living in

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concubine. Women who have suffered prolonged physical and emotional violence from partners their lives were actually subject to events that have traumatized.

Prisoner-Family Communication: How mothers see their roles in families and how they understand their obligations as mothers is a combination of social and cultural influences. The children of female prisoners' experience greater disruption as a result of incarceration than those of male prisoners, as women are often the primary caregivers and in the majority of cases, the sole parent before imprisonment. Also parental beliefs and values were correlated with ethnic and social class membership (Xiao, 2001). In conclusion, mother is the most significant person in the lives of her dependent children (Farrell, 1997).

Families are an integral part of the mechanisms of informal social control that constrain antisocial behavior. The quality of family life (e.g., the presence of supportive parent-child relationships) is significant in predicting criminal delinquency (Loeber and Farrington, 1998, 2001). By allowing infants and children to live with their mothers in special facilities during their incarceration periods, women can serve their sentences, maintain strong bonds with their children, and develop the skills for future employment and family care.

Maintaining meaningful contact with a partner in prison was described in the literature as being almost impossible. The prison environment distances parents from their family relationships, physically and emotionally and can impede the capacity of the inmate to be a supportive parent and partner. Several studies reported that marital and de facto relationships often do not survive the imprisonment period (Farrell, 1997).

Communication between prisoners and their families provides the most concrete and visible strategy that families and prisoners use to manage separation and maintain connections. Families visit their imprisoned relatives at the institutions where they are held, talk with them by phone, and exchange cards and letters as a means of staying connected. These contacts allow adults and parents and children to share family experiences and participate in family rituals, e.g., birthday celebrations, religious observances, etc. and help them to remain emotionally attached. They help assure incarcerated parents that their children have not forgotten them and children that their parents love and care about them. They allow prisoners to see themselves, and to function, in socially acceptable roles rather than as prison numbers and institutionalized dependents.

Departments of corrections permit communications between prisoners and their kin and encourage the maintenance of family ties, in theory, as desirable correctional practices. As a rule, prisons allow families and children to visit though prisoners in administrative segregation or super maximum prisons may be restricted to televised and other types of noncontact visits. Some jails allow only non contact visits and/or prohibit children from visiting. Facilities are typically located in out-of-the-way areas and often long distances from where the children and caregivers live making visiting extremely difficult for families with limited resources. The small number of women's prisons and juvenile detention centers means that many women and   are incarcerated hundreds of kilometers from where their families live (Farrell, 1997). Travel and accommodation costs are cited as being significant barriers to visiting.

Difficulties in maintaining relationships with their children have ramifications for the prisoners' parenting roles. The most commonly identified issues are: the prisoner's loss of parental authority over their children, the prisoner's inability to protect their children, the physical separation of parent and child contributes to emotional, distancing in parent-child relationships, there are severe constraints within the prison system that impact on a prisoner's capacity to participate in decision-making regarding their children, losing day-to-day contact

with their children usually results in prisoners getting out of touch with the detail in their children's lives (Healey *et al.,* 2000).

For many prisoners telephone contact is their only means of talking directly to their children. Prisoner access to telephone calls depends on the facilities in the particular prison. Often prisoners need to queue to use the limited number of phones. Some phones are only available at certain times and the working hours of prisoners may also restrict their access to the phones (Farrell, 1997).

Many families indicate that distance from the prison and related problems of transportation are a major factor prohibiting frequent visitation. Prison visits often take place in environments that are not friendly or hospitable. They are typically tense, stressful situations involving pat and frisk searches, long waits, a lack of privacy, intense scrutiny, and surveillance. Some visitors indicate that the process makes them feel like prisoners themselves. Visiting a family member can be a difficult and often traumatic experience for children. The security measures can frighten and intimidate, and sometimes a family member is subjected to body searches which families described as humiliating.

The benefits of parenting programs for incarcerates Maintaining family contact can have important benefits for all prisoners, but takes on particular significance for women who are the primary or sole career of children and, as mentioned previously, most women in prison are mothers. The Special Reporter on Violence against Women stated in her recommendations that the authorities must ensure that: "female prisoners have access to their basic rights, including the right to family visits." It is important that the right to family visits is recognized as such and that this is taken to include a prohibition on punitive denial of family contact, as this can violate the rights of prisoners and the rights of their children.

Parenting competency classes could dramatically alter the lives of offenders and at the same time dramatically impact the lives of their children who, without meaningful intervention, might otherwise become offenders themselves (O'Neill, 2006; Sheehan, McIvor and Trotter, 2007). The impact of a mother's imprisonment on her children is likely to be greater than the impact of a father's imprisonment as research has found that children of female prisoners are unlikely to be cared for by their non-incarcerated father. Healey *et al.* (2001) found that the non-incarcerated partners of women prisoners were often unreliable and unable to look after their children due to drug or alcohol addiction and mental illness (Healey *et al.,* 2001).

Antisocial parents are more likely than conforming parents to use dysfunctional parenting practices. Corporal punishment, harsh and inconsistent discipline, aggressive and rejecting behaviors encourage the development of antisocial behavior in children. Some research conducted by Whitbeck *et al.*, (1992) found support for the intergenerational transmission of negative personality traits, which increases the likelihood for strained parent-child relationships. For many of the offenders, having strong ties to their family is the safety net they need to survive long enough to face the task of becoming acclimated back into society.

Research over several decades supports strengthening family bonds through parent education as an effective correctional rehabilitation strategy that reduces recidivism. Parents who are lacking in resources and struggling to meet the basic needs of their family are less likely to attend parenting programs. When low-income parents are concerned about issues such as housing or medical care, parenting skills, and child development are often overlooked (Forehand, 2002; Powell and Eisenstadt, 1988). Additionally, judicial systems have endorsed, and in some cases mandated, parental attendance at seminars which address the impact of divorce on children (Ainsworth, 1996; Landky, 2003; Schaffner, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

Naturally, all studies are moving towards finding methods and most effective techniques for reducing stress separation between mothers and child. Our conclusion are: continuing to be active in the role of parent, child, or sibling while in prison enables individuals to see themselves as more than just inmates and eases their transition back into these social relations after release. Constructing the role and identity of a mother under these conditions is a matter of work and active negotiation by the inmate mother and many other parties as: family, partner, prison staff and professional also.

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