

Children of Incarcerated Mothers: Recommendations for an Ideal Prison-Based Program
Designed to Maximize Mother-Child Bonding to Prevent Future Delinquency

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CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED MOTHERS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN IDEAL PRISON-BASED PROGRAM DESIGNED TO MAXIMIZE MOTHER-CHILD BONDING TO PREVENT FUTURE DELINQUENCY

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Cheryl Banachowski-Fuller

Statement of the Problem

Over the last three decades the nation's incarceration rate has tremendously increased. With this growth it is now estimated over two million children have a parent under state or federal custody. Parental incarceration has a profound impact on children, thus constituting a serious concern for the future of this at-risk population that often goes undetected from schools and child protective agencies. The immensity of this problem is exaggerated by the staggering number of incarcerated mothers, which are often the sole provider of these children. The emotional and psychological impact of parental incarceration is well documented as these children face even a greater risk due to changes in their living arrangement and disruptions in parental communication.

Moreover, as incarceration is traumatic in and of itself, generally it represents one of many problems (i.e. substance abuse, violence, poverty) that threatens a child's development. Maintaining contact with the incarcerated parent is documented as one of the most promising ways to alleviate the emotional and behavioral effects of incarceration on children. Knowing this, the framework surrounding many prison-based parenting programs is maintaining or strengthening maternal bonds. Nonetheless, programs specifically designed to reduce the risk of delinquency with emphasis on teaching parenting skills and relationship building vary

enormously between institutions and are seldom evaluated, thus, lacking any models, which serve as the basis for program development.

Methods

Preventing juvenile delinquency from the perspective of prison-based programs is a relatively new approach, hence it remains under researched. I will utilize information from the National Criminal Justice Resource Service, Bureau of Justice Statistics and Department of Justice. These sources will provide statistical data on the numbers of women under state and federal supervision and estimations on the number of children with incarcerated parents. Criminal justice related text books collected during the course of this graduate program will be used to provide a theoretical framework for explaining the emotional and behavioral consequences of parental criminality.

Additionally, these texts, will be one of many sources on what scholars contend is the association between parental incarceration, weak or detached parental bonds, juvenile delinquency and criminality. Also, the Karmann Library will provide online scholarly publications and empirical research on current prison-based prison programs and practices designed to minimize the influence of incarceration on both the mother and her children. Likewise, online scholarly publications and empirical research accessed through the Karmann Library will be used to find effective components of prison-based programs deemed to have a positive effect on incarcerated mothers and their children both before and after release.

Summary of Results

The significance of effective parenting practices and enhanced parent-child relationships is well documented as the most promising strategy for managing the behavioral consequences of youths with incarcerated parents. Current prevention programs are based on the premise that strong family relationships can divert this population away from delinquent behavior. Nonetheless, these prison-based programs frequently differ in goals with the majority falling within the category of “innovative child visitation programs.”

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Children of Incarcerated Mothers: Recommendation for an Ideal Prison-Based Program Designed to Maximize Mother-Child Bonding to Prevent Future Delinquency

Introduction

There is an estimated three quarters of a million (744,200) incarcerated men and approximately 65,600 women with minor children (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). This means there is an estimated 1,706,600 children having at least one incarcerated parent, which equates to 2.3 percent of the nation's 74 million children. Since 1991, the number of inmates and children with an incarcerated parent has increased at similar rates of 79% and 80% respectively. Yet, between 1991 and 2007, the prison system experienced a 131% increase in incarcerated mothers as opposed to a 77% growth in imprisoned fathers during that same period. While, drug related legislature has influenced the expansion of our nation's prison population, this is especially applicable to female inmates, which in turn has substantially contributed to the ever growing number of children with an incarcerated parent. Additionally, "gender-neutral" sentencing has also contributed to the expansion of female inmates. While, our nation's children are more likely to have an incarcerated father, this issue is far more pressing due to the huge growth in the female prison population. Contributing to this concern is incarcerated women are often the primary or sole caregivers of these children.

The reality is a majority of these mothers and their children will reunite. But, unfortunately some will reach adulthood during their mother's incarcerated. The issue of incarceration is especially vital when evaluating the psychological well-being of incarcerated mothers and their children. The "Attachment Theory" maintains there is a common relationship that cultivates steadily during various periods of a child's life that is determined by the quality, timing, and pacing of mother-child interactions (Dalley, 2002). Like the "Attachment Theory,"

the relevance of parent-child bond is noted as parental arrest, separation and incarceration profoundly affects a child emotionally and developmentally, which often manifests itself through behavioral and emotional problems. The adverse effects of maternal separation, is clearly noted (Luke, 2002; Meyers, Smarsh, Amlund-Hagen, & Kennon, 1999; McGarvey & Waite 1998; Reed & Reed, 1997; and Trice and Brewster, 2004) as adolescents of incarcerated mothers have increased dropout rates and school suspensions (Loper & Tuerck (2006)).

Furthermore, these children are “at risk” of repeating the negative behaviors associated with their parent’s imprisonment during adulthood. McWhirter et al. (2007), defines “at risk” as: A presumed cause-effect dynamics that place an individual child or adolescent in danger of future negative outcomes, which designates a situation that is not necessarily current, but can be anticipated in the absence of intervention.

Additionally, maternal incarceration frequently sets the stage for difficulties in forming or maintaining relationships as these children are frequently cared for by multiple caretakers (i.e. family members, foster care). The mother-child bond has been long researched emphasizing the importance of maintaining this relationship, particularly during incarceration. Even though, researchers have opposing opinions on the success and credibility of such programs designed to maintain this crucial relationship, it is often the basis for many prison-based programs.

Statement of Problem

Sustaining the parent-child bond of incarcerated mothers proves challenging as there are either shortages or absences of programs, as visitation policies hinder the success of programs designed for this segment of our population. Nonetheless, the adverse consequences of parental incarceration are widely known. Some researchers contend (Green et al. 2000; Dalley, 2002; Laughlin et al. 2008; Reed & Reed, 1997; and McGarvey & Waite, 1998) maternal incarceration, prison policies and gender-neutral sentencing may actually worsen preexisting family conditions or facilitate intergenerational criminality.

Nevertheless, this separation may further deteriorate mother-child bond producing social and emotional impairments, in addition predispositions to criminality. Current prison-based programs attempt to minimize the effect of incarceration by encouraging healthy mother-child relations through healthy interaction, counseling, visitations, residing together in prison, visitation activities and post-release assistance. However, developing prison-based programs, which addresses the unique needs of incarcerated mothers has been met with a degree of challenges and criticism. These programs lack uniformity, often differing in terms of purpose, implementation, targeted population or adequate assessment. Moreover, caretaker's compliance (specifically foster parents that are under no obligation to initiate mother-child contact), transportation, prison security (e.g. physical contact etc.), policies or geographical location further complicates the administrating of these programs. The significance of bond enhancing programs is not fully realized as daily prison operations (i.e. head counts, loud speakers etc.) frequently disrupt or cancel these programs, consequently, sending inmates back to their quarters rather than resuming the program, fully demonstrating a lack of institutions to provide an environment free from the distractions of prison operations (Loper & Tuerk, 2006).

With the issue of security at the forefront of prison administration, prisons facilities allegedly operated under an “open model,” encouraging family visitation, yet, current policies and practices designed to “maximize the maintenance of prison-family relationships” is clearly not evident in relationship to current policies or programs designed to maintain the mother-children bond (Sturges & Hardesty, 2005). Perhaps, one of the major obstacles is few states have any clear directives on the topic of inmates and their families, with even less specifically relating to visitation(Laughlin et al., 2008; Tewksbury & DeMichele, 2005). Typically legislation on inmate visitations is under the authority of a state’s Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish and execute all visitation policies, which is problematic in and of its’ because it creates variations between states. More importantly without the necessary legislative oversight visitation policies continue to disregard empirical evidence substantiating the value of visitation on maintain family bonds and family unification.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research proposal is to provide recommendations for improving prison-based programs, designed to enhance or maintain the vital bond between incarcerated mothers and their children. The findings will identify issues that hinder the success of current programs, which will become the basis for developing future prison-based parent-child programs.

Additionally, these findings can support incorporating different services to enhance the functionality and outcome of future programs. By implementing facets of different programs, addressing areas relevant to incarcerated women, it will assist them in moving beyond their imprisonment, unit with their family and successfully reintegrate back into society, hence alleviating the risks of future incarceration and generational transmission of crime. The

recommendations will contain concepts on the causes of criminal behavior and what research has found reduces the effects of incarceration on the inmate and their family. The suggested recommendations will be structured around the feminist theory (Daley & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Daley, 1994), attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1973) and various control theories (i.e. social bonding, Hirschi, 1969; general theory of crime Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; age-graded, Sampson & Laub, 1993; in addition to, Moffitt, 1993; and Sampson & Laub, 1993 developmental and life course theories.

Together these theories will demonstrate the uniqueness and challenges of incarcerated women (victimization, mental health, substance abuse and motherhood) and how the lack of sufficient support primary through prison-based programs makes the future of these women and their families look especially bleak.

Method of Approach

I will utilize information from the National Criminal Justice Resource Service, Bureau of Justice Statistics and Department of Justice. These sources will provide statistical data on the numbers of women under state and federal supervision and estimations on the number of children with incarcerated parents and female recidivism rates. Criminal justice related text books collected during the course of this graduate program will be used to provide a theoretical framework for explaining the emotional and behavioral consequences of parental criminality.

Additionally, these texts, will be one of many sources on what scholars contend is the association between parental incarceration, weak or detached parental bonds, juvenile delinquency and criminality. Also, the Karrmann Library will provide online scholarly

publications and empirical research on current prison-based prison programs and practices designed to minimize the influence of incarceration on both the mother and her children.

Likewise, online scholarly publications and empirical research accessed through the Karmann Library will be used to find commonalities in incarcerated female, which will become the basis for evaluating effective components of prison-based programs deemed to have a positive effect on incarcerated mothers and their children both before and after release. Then, evaluations available from the General Accounting Office (GAO) and through the Karmann Library will be utilized for evaluating prison-based parenting and family strengthening programs.

Summary of Results

The significance of effective parenting practices and enhanced parent-child relationships is well documented as the most promising strategy for managing the behavioral consequences of youths with incarcerated parents. Current prevention programs are based on the premise that strong family relationships can divert this population away from delinquent behavior. Nonetheless, these prison-based programs frequently differ in goals with the majority falling within the category of “innovative child visitation programs.”

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The subsequent section is comprised of four subsections. The first subsection begins with statistical data illustrating the substantial increase in the number of incarcerated women, more specifically mothers in state correctional facilities, followed by the consequences of maternal incarceration. The third subsection will review current strategies to minimize the impact of maternal incarceration. The last subsection will discuss issues hindering the development and overall success of *Prison-Based Parent-Child Programs*.

A. Statistics on Increasing Amounts of Incarcerated Mothers

The crack cocaine epidemic and drug related violence experienced by the United States during the 1980's resulted in a rapid surge in our nations' crime rate. Law makers and the criminal justice system responded by mandating harsher punitive action for offenses contributing to the overall crime wave. Changes in policies and guidelines resulted in gender-neutral sentencing and the unforeseen number of imprisoned women. During the last quarter of a century, the number of females under state custody has far exceeded that of males. While, the extent of the growth varies over the nation, the rate of incarcerated women has risen at a greater rate than the male prison population. This expansion has remained stable over the greater part of the last two decades, with women having yearly averages over and above that of men (Laughlin, Arrigo, Blevins & Coston, 2008, Loper & Tuerk, 2006).

While incarcerated women are few in comparison to their male counterparts, this segment of offenders has experienced unprecedented growth. The female prison population tripled during the timeframe of 1985 and 1995, increasing from 40,500 to 113,100 (DOJ, 1998). By 1997 female offenders comprised 6.4% of the entire prison population growing 106% between 1990 and 1999 (Dalley, 2002). Overall, between 1977 and 2004 the rate for incarcerated women grew

by 757 percent; almost double that of incarcerated men. Substantial research confirms incarcerated females have similar family histories of parental incarceration, substance abuse and/or alcoholism, physical, childhood abuse, and neglect (Dalley, 2002). Moreover, Kazura (2001) maintain an estimated six percent of incoming female prisoners are pregnant.

According to *Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children 2008*, the latest figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, estimates approximately 65,600 mothers are incarcerated. These figures are twice that of the 1991 total, thus representing an increase of 131 %. These figures are staggering, when comparing the numbers to incarcerated fathers that rose by 77%. Moreover, in when considering incarcerated mothers in state and federal facilities the nation's rate of incarcerated women increased 122% in comparison to (76%) for that of imprisoned fathers. Figures in the 2004 prisoner survey show 63% of women in state facilities are more likely to report being a parent, with approximately every 1 in 4 female inmates a mother to at least one child and 41% having more than one child. Additionally, 64% of confined mothers report having resided with children preceding their incarceration as opposed to 43.8% of incarcerated fathers (Laughlin et. al, 2008, Sandifer, 2008, DOJ, 2008).

From a social science, law and public policy perspective, female drug use and mandatory sentencing certainly are a direct influence on the historically high number of mothers in state correctional facilities (Dalley, 2002). According to the DOJ-BJS report (1998), in 1997, 35.1% of imprisoned mothers were serving sentences for drug felonies. Moreover, drug use was more prevalent among incarcerated women with 54% reporting drug use within the thirty days preceding the crime resulting in incarceration as opposed to 50% for men. In fact, between 1990 and 1997 the conviction of women for drug felonies among incarcerated women rose 37%, while misdemeanor possessions increased 41% suggesting drugs were a significant factor in the surge

of incarcerated mothers (Laughlin et al, 2008, Multiple Risk Factors 2005, Parents in Prison, 2008, Dalley, 2002).

B. Short and Long Term Consequences of Incarceration

The enormous amount of incarcerated females' has had a significant impact on families, particularly children. While, it is difficult to state with certainty the number of children with incarcerated parents, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008), estimates incarceration currently affects an estimated 1.7 million children in America. These figures are neither representative of the aggregate amount of children that have not experienced an incarcerated parent during their lifetime, nor include "dual-parent incarceration (La Vigne, 2008). In the face of the obvious pervasiveness and importance of children with incarcerated parents, this population lacks support and is under researched (Wear-Simmons, 2000; Murray, 2007). Researchers Murray, Farrington, Sekol & Olsen (2010) state these children are sometimes referred to as "forgotten victims," "orphans of justice" and "hidden victims of imprisonment".

Increases in the expansion of U.S prison population has generated numerous studies that point out the correlation between incarcerated parents and their children's increased risks of emotional, psychological and behavioral difficulties,; in addition to delinquency and intergenerational criminality. (Bilchik, 2007;Murray, 2007; Wear, 2000;. Laughlin et al., 2008; La Vigne, Naser, Brooks & Castro, 2005; Hairston, 2002; Poehlmann, 2005; Martin, Martin, Dell, Davis & Guerrieri; Bijleveld & Wijkman, 2009; Hagen & Myers, 2003; Lawrence-Will, 2004; Murray &Farrington, 2005; Murray, 2006; Stouthamer-Loeber, Wei, Homish & Loeber, 2002; Greene, Haney & Hurtado, 2000; Davies, Brazzell, La Vigne & Shollenberger, 2008; Phillips, Burns, Wagner, Kramer & Robbins, 2002; Murray et. al., 2010; Wildeman, 2009; Stouthamer-Loeber, Wei, Farrington &Wikstrom, 2002). These cumulative risks have created an

entire at-risk population. The term at-risk youth has systematically undertaken different meanings. In this paper “at risk” will refer to a series of factors that places children and youth in a category of risks that without adequate intervention generally results in a myriad of emotional and behavioral problems (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007).

Additionally, the propensity for the continuation of the cycle of negative family histories and incarceration is considerably greater when children are emotionally and physically cut off from their mothers. While, it is difficult to accurately predict which high risk children will become juvenile delinquents or persistent offenders, empirical research has consistently shown the greater number of accumulative risk factors radically increases the probability of juvenile delinquency and persistent offending (Farrington, 2006). Substance abuse, homelessness, child abuse/neglect and parental history of mental illness are family characteristics frequently present, suggesting incarceration increases the vulnerability of these children.

The physical and emotional well being of children can be jeopardized in numerous ways, moreover, the separation from one or both parents’ by incarceration. Some contend the trauma of parent-child separation may be intensified by repeated episodes of parental incarceration (Wildeman, 2009).

While, divorce for children is troubling in and of itself is, severance through incarceration is considered more profound producing, consequently resulting in different forms of stress that is sometimes internalized (La Vigne et al, 2008). Further, children with incarcerated parents, particularly mothers have special circumstances requiring different services than other children (Dalley, 2002). Some children particularly older children and adolescent males show evidence of externalized problems (i.e. aggression, anger etc.). Some speculate one in every five children is present during the arrest of their mother, with 50% less than seven years of age, (Bilchik, 2007).

Older children merely return from school only to find the absence of their mother. The decision to be forth right about a parent's incarceration is largely debated; nonetheless, the majority of caregivers shroud the parent's incarceration in secrecy. Some experts contend the lack of disclosure merely weakens the child's capability to cope with the parent's incarceration and may attribute to increased levels of fear and anxiety (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Beyond the parent's arrest, the emotional health of offender's children is further endangered when the decision of placement arises. Law enforcement's responsibility for children of arrestees varies as do policies.

A 2001 study of arrest policies in California revealed one in eight agencies resumed responsibility for children by mandating arresting officers to inquire if arrestees were parents and fewer than fifty percent asked about childcare arrangements, even though it was evident by the presence of children they were parents of minor children. Additionally, findings suggest referrals to Child Protective Services occurred in 42% of arrests in agencies with any form of arrest policy. In greater than fifty% of arrests, law enforcement officers followed the parent's request in whom will resume childcare responsibility. Consequently, agencies resuming accountability for children were more likely to displace children of arrestees than agencies lacking any responsibility (La Vigne et al, 2008). While, living arrangements of incarcerated parents and their children differ, some investigators estimate fifty to sixty-four percent of the time mothers and their children reside together preceding their incarceration; this exceeds the reported 44% of fathers in state correctional facilities and their children (Bilchik, 2007). Findings suggest the incarceration of mothers is more devastating; consequently, causing instability, uncertainty and disruptions in parent-child relationships.

In general, instability is to be anticipated as children and siblings are frequently separated by family members or foster care. Some studies estimate maternal incarceration results in separation in 29 percent of arrests involving mothers. The realism of permanent detachment occurs when children remain in foster care for fifteen out of the last twenty-two months and mandates under the Adoption and Safe Families Act (1997) accelerates the termination of parental rights. Having been extensively researched, the correlation between incarceration and increasing risks of children developing psychological problems is well documented (Murray et al., 2010; Dalley, 2002; Phillips et al., 2002; Bilchik, 2007; Laughlin et al., 2008; Murray & Farrington, 2005; Lawrence-Wills, 2004; Farrington, 2007). These consequences generally occur immediately upon the separation of mother and child with younger children acting out aggressively against siblings and the caregiver or developing internalized problems (i.e. anxiety, detachment, depression).

Considerable psychological studies support parent-child bonds are jeopardized as children endure numerous negative outcomes that predispose them to juvenile delinquency (Fragile Families Research Brief, 2008). Related studies state conduct disorder is progressive, with patterns commencing early in childhood with significant consideration given to risk factors and signs particular symptoms. Early warning signs of noncompliance can be markers for early onset of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), and delinquency, with children exhibiting more problematic behavior (i.e. stealing, aggression, substance abuse) as they become older. Family dynamics (i.e. abuse, traumatic experiences, parental separation) and environmental factors are some of the more important variables in the development of Conduct Disorder (CD) (Holmes, Slaughter & Kashani, 2001). Behavioral problems are one of the immediate consequences that generally begin in childhood and have the possibility for progressing into adult criminality.

The impact of Phillips et al. (2002), in the study of 258 youths receiving mental health services confirms family risk factors (i.e. parental substance abuse, low economic status, abuse and neglect, instability, incarceration of one or both parents) are more evident in youth with an incarcerated parent than in youths without. In addition, diagnoses of conduct disorders and attention-deficit hyperactivity are established as negative consequences of parental incarceration. Likewise, the findings of Murray et al. (2010) concurs with other evaluations asserting the increased risk for antisocial and mental health problems in children of incarcerated than that of youths without an imprisoned parent. Wildeman (2009) holds the same opinion, particularly in regards to physical aggression in males. In actual fact, parental incarceration is one of the primary predictors of juvenile delinquency.

The Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development (CSDD) one of the most influential longitudinal studies on family history and delinquency conclusively found parental criminality as a preeminent predictor of unlawful behavior in juveniles; in addition to antisocial behavior and habitual offending in adult males. Furthermore, children of mother's with a criminal history were twice as likely (48.6% and 19.8% respectively) to display some form of behavioral problem in early childhood and later adulthood (Smith & Farrington, 2004). The Pittsburgh Youth Study also demonstrates the link between parental criminal, juvenile delinquency and adult criminality in their off springs. Likewise, Martin, Martin, Dell, Davis & Guerrieri, (2008), in their study of incarcerated juvenile offenders (n=363) found traumatic experiences during childhood and adolescent to be a primary feature among juvenile offenders. Additionally, serious male delinquents often had family histories of abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, and parental imprisonment. Without fail, parental incarceration is a predictor in anti-social behavior in young male offenders that persist to influence them behaviorally into later life (Martin et al., 2008).

Although, less research exists on female offenders, their growing population has generated scientific data revealing histories of trauma and parental incarceration that predisposes adolescent females to risks identical to that of male juvenile offenders. Krisberg & Temin, (2001) reports children that undergo maternal incarceration exhibit substantial difficulties in school and severe mental and behavioral problems, in addition, to increased rates of criminality and incarceration. Dalley (2002) maintains numerous problems exist prior to incarceration of female offenders that are simply worsened by imprisonment, which actually increases the probability for starting or continuing the “intergeneration cycle of family incarceration”. Taken as a whole, an unhealthy family background substantially increases the likelihood of participating in delinquent behaviors than delinquents with dissimilar histories (**Stouthamer-Loeber et al. 2002**).

C. Current Measures to Minimize the Impact of Maternal Incarceration

Mothers comprise a large section of incarcerated women. The dramatic increase in the number of incarcerated mothers has had a powerful effect on the types of assistance to aid the numerous children impacted by this trend. Incarcerated mothers significantly differ from that of incarcerated fathers. By and large, mothers in state facilities were sentenced for drugs or drug-related as opposed to violent offenses of fathers (BJS, 2008, Laughlin et al., 2008). In addition, fathers generally have more convictions. Kazura (2001) reports mother prisoners have more anxiety about communication and parenting while incarcerated than imprisoned fathers. Moreover, incarcerated mothers are more favorable of receiving counseling and support. These dissimilarities implicate the likelihood of mother-child reunification.

Mentoring, parent education and parent-child visitation programs are the more commonly used strategies to minimize the impact of maternal incarceration. The definitive purpose of

every approach is to decrease the risks of delinquency and intergenerational transmission of crime by advancing the emotional health of children impacted by maternal incarceration.

Trauma theorists propose incarceration is detrimental to children, especially when detached from the parent with whom the child is emotionally close. Despite children enduring cumulative environmental risks (i.e. negative family environments, parental incarceration, parental substance abuse and neglect) some children avoid the psychological and emotional consequences of traumatic childhood experiences by becoming resilient (Farrington, 2006). McWhirter et al., 2007 asserts “resiliency” demonstrates some children ability to recover from trauma and have a good outcome in spite of their risks. Individuality, susceptibility and sufficient outside support can determine whether children develop resiliency to prevail over negative risk factors.

Of course, retaining a child’ bond to their incarcerated parent seems to be the most effectual way of enhancing a child’s reaction to parental incarceration as well as decreasing the occurrence of destructive behavior and overall better results (La Vigne, 2008).

Although risk factors and the propensity for juvenile delinquency and later criminality are well established, developmental criminologists contend “risk-focused prevention” is indisputably effective in diminishing risk factors. The premise of risk-focused prevention is: protective factors mediate the effect of negative risk factors. Studies show the most effective strategies reduce risks associated with greater propensity for problematic behavior, while increasing the number of protective factors (Farrington, 2006). It is imperative risks are established and protective factors are in place as soon as possible to minimize and offset risks in the lives of children (Office of Justice Programs; Farrington, 2006; Bilchik, 2007). Poehlmann (2005) suggests, providing

support assists children in overcoming some of the early affects of incarceration (i.e. sadness, worry, anger, sleeplessness, loneliness).

Mentoring

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program (**OJJDP**), mentoring is one of the earliest types of “risk-focused” prevention program, starting in 1904 with the formation of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program. Although, the original purpose of BB/BS Program was to promote socialization and direction to disadvantage children, today’s purpose is “to make a difference in the lives of young people through one on one relationships with caring adults that will assist them in achieving their fullest potential.” Specially created by child development experts and researchers current mentoring programs are purposely targeted at decreasing emotional and behavioral problems in at risk youth by supplying them with positive adult role models.

The federal government maintains mentoring is particularly attractive because of its efficiency and ability to engage community groups in preventing juvenile delinquency and crime (Hairston, 2007). The Office of Justice Programs suggests the strength of mentoring programs is in its contribution in developing resiliency because it simultaneously affects numerous risks and provides protective factors. Likewise, data from the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth “indicate that mentoring programs can help young people with incarcerated parents by reducing their initial drug and alcohol use, thus, improving their relationships and academic performance, and reducing the likelihood that they will initiate violence. Additionally, in working with children impacted by incarceration, mentoring concentrates on the value of bonding and connectedness to a caring adult that promotes healthy development (Office of

Justice Programs). For some at-risk adolescence mentors are the only positive influence, thus, this exposure is the initial step toward changing behavioral problems (Jackson, 2002).

Bilchik (2007) after reviewing data from multiple studies on mentoring concludes mentoring programs are particularly successful in high-risk youths. In regards to children of inmates, when properly executed, mentoring is likely to enhance socio-emotional skills, bonds and overall social and academic performance. The social support provided by mentoring can counter the trauma of incarceration. As a whole, mentoring programs have been established as a protective factor for at-risk children by providing them with encouragement, social support and connectedness to key socializing institutions.

Prison- Based Parent Education

The damaging effect of mother and children being emotionally and physically separated by incarceration has been extensively researched and is well documented (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001; Tuerk & Booker-Loper, 2006; La Vigne, et, al., 2008; Kennon et al., 2009; Laughlin, et al., 2008; Poehlmann, 2005; Dalley, 2002, Krisberg & Temin, 2001). Parenting classes are by far the most common and widely used method of improving the severed mother and child bond. In theory, the concept of parent education for inmates is consistent as research maintains the role of effective parenting in the reduction of juvenile delinquency (Hairston, 2007). Typically offered in women's facilities parent education programs are designed to minimize the overall effect of incarceration, while improving participant's parenting skills as many mothers report histories of family dysfunction (i.e. parental substance abuse/alcohol, physical abuse and neglect) (Sandifer, 2008; Gonzalez, 2007; Dalley, 2002; Loper, 2006; Kennon, Mackintosh & Myers, 2009; Greene et al., 2000). Sandifer (2008) states, "the significance of acquiring parenting skills

is apparent among female prisoners, “whom many were not adequately parented; thus reparenting is an important approach to teaching incarcerated mothers.” Additionally, incarcerated mothers are often the sole caretaker of their offspring. This is indicative that damaging parenting styles are transferred from generation to generation (Dalley, 2002). Further, many imprisoned mothers are oblivious to the extent that incarceration has had on their children and the value of maintaining communication, although upon release they expect to resume parenting responsibilities (Kennon et al., 2009). Therefore, preserving communication and mending damaged relationships with their children is essential. Further, analyses of parent education programs demonstrate the acquired skills are helpful in dealing with behavioral problems. Parenting is an acquired skill that occurs mostly with experience. For incarcerated mothers many whom have been exposed to violence, childhood trauma, parent criminality, substance abuse, social isolation, and low self esteem could definitely benefit from parent education (Thompson & Harm, 2000).

Thompson & Harm (2000) assessed a 15 week parenting class in an Arkansas women’s correctional facility. This parenting class was intended to improve mother-child relationships over the term of the mother’s imprisonment. The subjects covered were support, child development, self-esteem and communication particularly letter-writing. Among the findings were participants had significant changes in the use of physical punishment and improved confidence. Letter-writing is especially essential; with more than half of incarcerated mothers reporting seldom receiving visitations from their children. While, letter-writing is considerably inexpensive and realistic in comparison to face-to-face contact, incarcerated mothers can initiate a sense of consistency in fragile or damaged relationships. Communication through letters is linked with improved parent-child attachment and ability to effectively parent. Tuerk & Loper

(2006) assert, communicating through letters is linked with improved parent-child attachment and their ability to effectively parent. Some mothers reported the desire to continue participating in parenting classes, with some mothers realizing they were not bad parents, rather they had never been taught how to be an effective parent. These findings provide additional support of the benefits of prison-based parent education (Thompson & Harm, 2000).

Consequently, parent classes could be a milestone that decreases the likelihood of their children progressing toward juvenile delinquency and criminality. As a whole, parent education is proven to be an effective prison-based therapy program (Sandifer, 2008). Moreover, these programs are a practicable approach because they commonly entail instructional and interactive components.

Visitations Programs

Laughlin et al. (2008) asserts a distinction between mothers and their children unlike that of fathers. In recognizing this difference, female correctional facilities have undergone changes in visitation policies and procedures to accommodate children and incarcerated mothers. In an examination of visitation policies Sturges & Hardesty (2005) cite Jorgensen et al., 1986, p. 51 that prison visiting policies should be prioritized and practices reviewed to “maximize the maintenance of prison-family relationships.

Although, the lack of communication may disturb the mother-child bond, maintaining contact through frequent visitations is perhaps the best predictor of bettering a child’s reaction to incarceration, in addition to family reunification (Tuerk & Loper, 2006). Similar to other strategies, visitations programs are designed to retain the mother - child relationship, through informal interaction (i.e. games, meals, crafts, extended and overnight visits). Visitation is

critical as an initial move toward community reintegration and family reunification. Kennon et al. (2009) asserts school drop-out and suspension rates are four times greater for children that have less than one contact per month with an incarcerated mother than children having weekly contact. Moreover, visitation programs alleviate the stress of separation and issues associated with reunification by promoting healthy interaction between incarcerated mothers and their children. Prison visitation programs allow incarcerated mothers the opportunity for prolonged or enhanced visits. Participating parents generally having completed parent education, counseling and must remain violation free (Hairston, 2007). Visitation programs are extremely beneficial in overriding institutional constraints of visitor-inmate contact in addition to crowded, filthy and noise by providing specialized visitation areas for mothers to have informal interaction with their children (Block, 1999; Virginia Child Protective Services, 2007). Some prison environments can be especially frightening for children brought to visit, consequently giving rise for caregivers disapproval that ultimately prevents future visitations. For many incarcerated mothers, visitation programs are the one and only way of seeing their children.

D. Issues Hindering the Development and Success of Prison-Based Parent-Child Programs

The preservation and strengthening of families has been entrenched in our nation's law and serves as a key objective for its departments. This ideology has been the premise of governmental agencies that vow to provide services to support, defend and protect children and their families. Though social service agencies in and of themselves are a form of social investment, support for incarcerated parents and their families has not been incorporated into the overall scheme of our nation's governmental agencies and correctional facilities (Hairston et al.

2002; Kazura,2001). Kazura (2001) asserts, traditionally the justice system has focused on the individuality of the offenders, hence disregarding the family unit. The realism for imprisoned mothers is the agencies intended to aid families in dilemma, actually works to severe rather than reunite and mend families. In view of the apparent connection between maternal incarceration and their children, numerous obstacles need to be eliminated before prison-based parent-child programs can be successfully implemented. Policies and practices designed to “maximize the maintenance of prison-family relationships” is clearly not evident in relationship to current policies or programs designed to maintain the mother-children bond that ultimately offsets juvenile delinquency and future criminality (Laughlin et al. 2008; Dalley, 2002). Even though incarcerated individuals are afforded certain civil liberties, there is little to be said regarding families of inmates. As noted previously, incarcerated women are more likely to be mothers and sole caretaker of minor children. While recognizing mothers comprise a large segment of our nation’s prison population, nationally correctional facilities have only recently begun to implement untried policies and inventive practice.

Laughlin et al., (2008) contends, although there are numerous programs on the book only a small percentage is aimed at mother-child visitation or parent education. One weakness of these programs is they do not overtly follow a precise methodology or form, and many are not specific in terms of the troubles they are attempting to concentrate on. In addition, many programs are short-lived, function with limited finances, are underfunded and depend on volunteers to implement the programs. An early national survey of prisons showed only 36 out of 43 prisons offered parenting programs, with 75% of existing programs ran by volunteers (Thompson &Harm, 2000). The majority of the assistance provided to coordinate programs is part of a separate community service agency and nearly all, even when they are managed by prisons are

not included as a part of the financial plan (Finney Hairston, 2007). Another obstacle is few states have any clear directives on the topic of inmates and their families, with even less specifically relating to visitation (Laughlin et al., 2008; Tewksbury & DeMichele, 2005). Typically legislation on inmate visitations is under the authority of a state's Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish and execute all visitation policies, which is problematic in and of its' because it creates variations between states. A 2002 inquiry by the United States Department of Justice-National Institute of Justice found statues concerning incarcerated parent and their children were available in only six states. Two of the six states depended on legislature and although the other four states had statues in place; yet, the department of corrections initiated all guidelines and policies.

The involuntary termination of parental rights through the Adoption and Safe Family Act remains a constant threat for prison mothers with children in foster care and those with sentences exceeding one year (Synder, Carlo & Coats Mullins, 2001; Laughlin et al., 2008). Currently 29 states have precise statutory stipulations that use parental incarceration as the decisive factor when terminating parental rights or placement for adoption (Dalley, 2002). Although, the Adoption and Safe Family Act (ASFA) was created with the intention of preventing children from remaining in foster care indefinitely, this law is clearly a danger to imprisoned mothers, since the average female inmate serves more than six years (Dalley, 2002).

In addition, many states have incorporated the doctrine of "unfitness" in determining whether to enforce involuntary termination of parental rights. Despite the fact that, neglect, abuse, abandonment, long-standing history of alcohol or drug addiction and mental incompetence are some of the more common criteria for determining parental "unfitness." These guide lines specifically adhere to imprisoned mothers that petitions for involuntary termination

can be filed for an inmate's failing to maintain adequate contact with children, and if the period of incarceration is so extensive that it may have an adverse affect on the child/children; in addition, to when foster care is the only option for care (The Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2007). This line of reasoning is contradictory in terms of the encumbering conditions that inhibit imprisoned mothers from maintaining contact (i.e. visits, phone calls).

The 2009 report by the Sentencing Project found less than half of all state and federal inmates received visits from their children. Further, since 1997, the frequency between contact has consistency fallen. An assumed key issue limiting contact is the geographic location of correctional facilities; with an estimated 62% of parents in state prisons are over 100 miles from the inmate's residence, particularly women's institutions that are fewer in number (La Vigne et al. 2005; Sentencing Project; Laughlin et al., 2008; Kazura, 2001; Krisberg and Engel Temin, 2001; Finney Hairston, (2007). Finney Hairston maintains the location of the prison significantly affects the frequency of visits incarcerated mother receives from her children. Consequently, there is a negative correlation between visitations and distance between the inmate's home and the correctional facility. The greater the distance, the more likely the mother had not received a visit within the last month.

Even though, correctional facilities make an effort to put prisoners in locations closest to their family members, the nearest facility commonly exceeds an hour away (Laughlin et al. 2008). Then there are no allowances for transportation. The financial hardship of incarceration is often absorbed by the caregiver that limits the mother's ability to maintain contact (Laughlin et al., 2008). Moreover, prison policies are not advantageous to re-establishing mother-child bonds. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency maintain "official policies and procedures" are irrational and against the well being of children. Visitation policies reduce the value and

regularity of contact and challenges significant contact between imprisoned mothers and their children. Kazura (2001) in an exploratory research evaluating the needs of inmates with families, inmates report inadequate visiting areas, irregular and/or problematic chances for visitations among the barriers that impedes maintaining family relationships. Policies vary greatly between institutions, with some facilities allowing contact meaning there is nothing physically separating inmates from their children. Nonetheless, touching may be limited to a hug or a kiss at the start or conclusion of the visit. Some prisons all together prevented any kind of contact with all visits conducted behind glass partitions. The bureaucracy of some prison's visitation policies makes it close to impossible for inmate mothers to visit with their children. Some facilities allow visits when the attending adult is also the biological child's parent; others insist on certification that the inmate is actually the birth parent of the child (Finney Hairston, 2007). Likewise, there is little consistency in the conditions under which children must visit their incarcerated mother.

In light of the segment of prisoners with children, this population has received insufficient attention. Kazura (2001) states, consequently "few programs exist which are specifically designed to strengthen family functioning during the imprisonment of a parent." La Vigne et al. (2005) in an interview of 233 Chicago inmates, more than half of the respondents reported prison location and cost of telephone calls as the more common obstacles in maintaining contact with family (i.e. partner, children). Findings propose personal visits are more important for contact with children. Further, inmates and their families would benefit tremendously by prison policies that eliminate hurdles in sustaining contact with incarcerated parents (i.e. mothers) and possibly even promote contact by the formation of prison-based programs especially created to strengthen the mother-child bond. Nonetheless, Finney Hairston expresses apprehension concerning the

extent dissimilar prison policies weaken the efficiency of institutional- based programs. Further, stating, “policy barriers could hamper correction-based program.”

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In evaluating the effectiveness of prison-based parent-child programs it is essential to consider various theories. The Attachment, Social Bond and Life Course theories will explain why juvenile delinquency, emotional and behavioral problems occur because of maternal incarceration. Elements of each theory will suggest which protective factors can adverse the effects of maternal incarceration. Lastly, the most effective prison-based mother-child programs will contain elements of each of these theories.

A. Attachment Theory

The attachment theory (1958) was devised by John Bowlby a child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Extracting on ideas from ethology, developmental psychology and psychoanalysts Bowlby devised the basic principles of the attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992, p. 759). The attachment theory transpired from the observation of children separated from their mother by hospitalization and institutionalism. This theory proposes humans innately have the need to form relationships (for the sake of this paper the emphasis will be specifically on child-mother relationships). The premise of the attachment theory is the normal social and emotional development of children is dependent on the formation of a bond with a key caregiver. The bond will provide protection and security during infancy and childhood.

Bowlby like Freud believed all psychological and behavioral problems could be traced to early childhood experiences (McLeod, 2007). Bowlby (p.767) asserted children undergo

separation anxiety whenever the person with whom the child is attached (i.e., primary caregiver) is unavailable. Tuerk & Loper (2006) posit extended or perpetual separation from a primary caregiver induces subsequent responses in children that eventually results in “detachment” that is defined as “a defensive suppression of attachment responses that have failed to produce the person with whom the child is attached.” Furthermore, an interruption in this crucial relationship (maternal deprivation) especially in their early years may produce an increase in the prevalence of juvenile delinquency, emotional and behavioral problems (McLeod, 2007). Bowlby’s primary assumption was in order for children to mature to become mentally healthy, infant and young children must experience an affectionate, close and constant connection with its mother. Bowlby changed the philosophy regarding the child-mother bond and its disturbance during separation and deprivation (Bretherton, 1992, p. 759).

A. Application of the attachment theory

The attachment theory provides a psychosocial perspective for understanding the emotional and behavioral problems, in addition to juvenile delinquency among children of incarcerated mothers. It is well documented that incarcerated mothers are commonly the primary caregiver of their children, consequently resulting in the disruption of the mother-child bond and subsequent events (i.e. changes in caregiver, living environments etc.) (Poehlmann, 2005; Morton & Williams, 1998; Murray et al., 2010). Incarceration challenges the ability for these mothers and their children to cultivate and maintain a healthy nurturing relationship, which increasing the risks for attachment, emotional and behavioral problems (Morton & Williams, 1998). Children affected by incarceration are especially vulnerable to “separation trauma” because the majority of imprisoned mothers are the primary caregiver to their children (Laughlin et al. 2008; Tuerk & Loper, 2006).

Additionally, the likelihood of changes in caregivers during incarceration further inhibits the ability for these children to form a meaningful supportive relationship with another adult. Further, maintaining contact is further hindered by caregivers declining an inmate's desire to visit with her children. High rates of substance abuse in imprisoned mothers indicate the child-mother attachment may have been threatened previous to incarceration. Admittedly, some mothers in prison acknowledge having weak attachments (Tuerk & Loper, 2006). The attachment theory is at the core of many programs offered in women's correctional facilities. Elements of the attachment theory formulate the basis for intervention and prevention programs. Programs founded on the premise of this theory realize the need for incarcerated mothers to maintain contact with their children and the developmental impairment caused by a child's disruptions in its tie to their primary caregiver. Attachment-based therapy is specifically used in treating children and family problems.

B. Social Bond Theory

Developed by Travis Hirschi (1969), the social bond theory is one of the leading theories explaining the cause of delinquency and deviant behavior. Hirschi's social bond theory proposes delinquency is caused by weakened, broken or nonexistent ties to the conventional order (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). As a control theorist Hirschi contends why the law is broken by some youth and not others. There are two major tenets of the social bond theory. First, delinquency and social bonds are indisputably interrelated. Next, attachment, commitment, involvement and belief controls criminal behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2006).

Attachment pertains to a meaningful relationship with others (i.e., peers, educators etc.), in particular a parent. It is these emotional ties to other significant people that youth will be more

inclined to care what these people think about their actions. Hirschi believes attachment is especially relevant during adolescence, when youth are beyond the view of adults (i.e., parents, guardians etc.). Consequently, when the opportunity for unlawful conduct arises, it will be the fear of disapproval or risking a relationship will cause youth to abstain from unlawful behavior. Hence, the possible scrutiny from others “indirectly controls” delinquency (Cullen & Agnew, 2006, p. 219). In the social control theory “commitment” refers to the rational element of conforming to the conventional rules of society. Cullen & Agnew (2006, p. 222) asserts “the concept of commitment assumes that the organization of society is such that the interests of most persons would be endangered if they engage in criminal acts. The person becomes committed to a conventional line of action, and he is therefore committed to conformity.” Future aspirations (i.e., education, career) play a significant part in generating conformity. Any action thought to endanger a person’s future is shunned.

On the other hand, uncommitted youth are open to unlawful behavior. The social bond theory also argues youth’s “involvement” in sports or any recreational activity is crucial in the prevention of delinquency. The supposition is if adolescents are occupied doing conventional activities they will have less time to engage in delinquent acts. Hirschi’s theory maintains the decision to offend depends on the degree of which a person is socially bonded to society. In sum Hirschi asserts (Cullen & Agnew, 2006, p. 213) delinquency rates are higher among youths that are unattached particularly to their parents, have little or no commitment to social institutions (i.e., school, social groups, family, and church) and don’t adhere to traditional morals.

Application of the Social Bond Theory

The social bond theory visibly illustrates the risk factors that are responsible for delinquency among children of incarcerated mothers. The imprisonment of a mother clearly weakens or damages the emotional bond she has with her child(ren). The longer children are deprived of the relationship with its mother the more detached they will become. This bond becomes more essential as children become teens. Because incarcerated women are generally the sole care giver of her children the absence of this bond may increase the likelihood of delinquency. The social values witnessed through a child's parent's criminal involvement will often be contrary to that of the social norm, causing a child not to adhere to conventional norms action, thus increasing their propensity for delinquency. Further, maternal incarceration directly attributes to many life changing experiences for these children (i.e., changes in schools, friends, caregivers) that disrupts a youth's bond to social institutions. Adolescents with imprisoned mothers may care less of the opinion their absent parent has toward any wayward behavior. Martin et al. (2008, p. 609) believe high risks for delinquency is associated with family factors (i.e. single parent, strained mother-child relationship, separation). Likewise, incarceration is a predictor of anti-social and criminal behavior. Additionally, these behaviors persist through later in life.

IV. EXAMPLES OF FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

Literature review contained in Section II identified strengthening and maintaining the mother-child bond, addressing visitation policies of correction facilities are identified as components of the more effective intervention strategies. This section will examine two programs that minimize the effect of maternal incarceration and why they are deemed successful. Moreover, it is only through examining various facets of current programs and incorporating various components of each program can recommendations be made to develop the ideal prison-based program.

A. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars

Girl Scouts of the USA began in 1912 and has served more than 50 million girls. To date there are approximately 300 scouting councils nationally, with over two and a half million girl scouts and approximately one million adult volunteers (Grant, 2006). Over the last decade, GSUSA has begun to focus on youths residing in high-risk neighborhoods. As this organization pertains to incarcerated mothers, it confronts visitation matters that continue to be among a number of institutional constraints. What began in 1992 as a pilot program between Maryland's Correctional Institute for Women (MCIW), Girl Scouts Central of Maryland (GSCM), Maryland' Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) continues to serve as a model for prison-based programming that has since expanded to 17 states serving an estimated 800 girls and 600 inmate mothers annually in women's correctional facilities across the nation.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) is a prison-based program for daughters' ages **7 to 14** of incarcerated women (Block, 1999). The criteria for an inmate's participation include being

violation free for 30 days prior to joining and throughout the duration of the program, in addition, to having a minimum of one year left before release and have a daughter between the proposed ages. Additionally, inmate mothers with offenses against children are excluded from participation. The main purpose of GSBB is to minimize the impact of separation by assisting incarcerated mothers and their daughters to reestablish their relationships through enhanced visitations and traditional girl scouts activities, in addition to increasing the self-worth, to decrease behavioral and reunification problems for participating daughters. In addition, to date Girl Scouts of Appleseed Ridge is the only committee to offer programming in both male and female institutions.

This enhanced visitation facility-based programs was awarded the Unique and Innovative Project Award by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (Block, 1999, p.269). While there are greater than 40 GSBB programs nationally, many programs contain four similar basic practices: (1) troop meetings in correctional facilities with mothers and daughters, (2) girls engage in troop meetings and other activities outside the context of the prison (3) facility based activities for imprisoned mothers, and (4) support services (i.e. community, social services) for caregivers etc. (CRS, Incorporated, 2008).

Moreover, a number of programs mandate mothers to take part in some type of parenting class or counseling prior to or in junction with GSBB. Historically, Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) has operated within normal community settings with the exception of a limited number of facility-based and special needs programs. Additionally, this organization takes into consideration that a large portion of imprisoned mothers receive few or no visits, largely because of either the locale of women's correctional facilities or caretaker's reluctance to bring children for visitations. La Vigne et. al. (2008, p. 10) notes, "maintaining contact with

ones incarcerated parent appears to be one of the most effective ways to improve a child's emotional response to the incarceration and reduce the incidence of problematic behavior." In addition, social worker Elizabeth Johnson (2006) notes, "The social stigma accompanying parental incarceration can produce feelings of shame and embarrassment in children that may lead them to withdraw from social relationships" (cited in Third-Year National Evaluation of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, 2008). Ann Adalist-Estrin (2006) states "parental incarceration can be especially difficult for pre-teens and teens as a consequence of three converging factors: (1) the stigma and shame surrounding parental arrest, conviction, and incarceration; (2) the conspiracy of silence many families maintain as a means of coping with an incarcerated family member; and (3) the loyalty conflicts and family tensions that are exacerbated by the strain of parental incarceration" (cited in Third-Year National Evaluation of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, 2008). In essence GSBB qualifies as an enhanced visitation program.

Generally when visitation does occur, it is in structure environments more appropriately designed for adult-adult visitations, thus, limiting mother-child contact. GSBB overcomes these familiar issues by transporting girls monthly to prisons for visits of 1 to 2 hours. During the 2 hour stay mothers and daughters visit personally, engage in scouting activities and take part in educational class. In between visits, inmate mothers have monthly meetings lead by a licensed social worker developing scout activities and discussing family issues. The girls continue to meet in the community on alternating Saturday's finishing assignments and taking part in field trips. An inmate mother's participation terminates once released, on the other hand, daughters can continue in a troop outside of prison.

A two year program evaluation (1998) of Maryland's Girl Scout Beyond Bars matched visitation reports with inmate mothers meeting the criteria but failing to participate, findings

showed 69% of GSBB mothers obtained visits in contrast to the matched group (49%), in addition, to higher yearly averages (mean= 11.6 versus 6.1, median = 6.9 as opposed to 3). Consequently mothers were visited approximately fifty percent of the accessible months, while the control group got visited 30% of them (Block & Potthast, 1998).

In a later evaluation Block (1999, p.269) surveyed 9 various Girl Scout Councils known to operate Girl Scouts Beyond Bars including Maryland's Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW). Results from the survey found recruitment of potential participants was vital when initiated during intake. The (MCIW) survey indicates the programs are apt to increase mother-daughter communication. The Maryland survey for 36% of inmate mothers GSBB was the sole source of mother-daughter visitations. Moreover, many inmate mothers that had regular visits, GSBB complemented their normal visitations. Twenty-five percent of incarcerated mothers stated GSBB enhanced their relations that resulted in more frequent visits. An additional twenty-five percent thought the meetings substituted normal visits. An examination of Maryland's program qualitative and quantitative improves mother-daughter visitation, assists in maintaining their relationship, increase the daughter's self-esteem and decreases problems associated with maternal separation.

CSR, Incorporated in association with the national Girl Scouts management, program managers and troop leaders representing 18 GSBB programs nationally, designed and conducted a 3 year nationalized evaluation of participating girls, their caregivers and the their incarcerated mothers. Year 1 findings concluded the girl's ages were rather consistent ranging from 9 to 15 years with a small share (11%) ages 15 to 18. Using length and attendance levels of the prior 10 months as measures of involvement in GSBB, approximately one third has been active members for less than twelve months, while 49% had participated for greater than two years. The

remaining girls (26%) had been members for greater than four years. These proportions imply girls generally become members at a relatively early age (< than 9 years) and continue as committed members (CSR, Incorporated).

The most significant results on GSBB evolved from assessments of the regularity of attendance. Using meetings of greater than 6 or less than 5 (in the previous 10 months) as measurements of attendance, slightly more than half (59%) were rated as low recent attendees and the additional members (41%) were high recent attendees. In a comparison of length of membership, members with high recent attendance continuously increased over the course of membership up to the four year when the percentage of high recent attending members substantially decreased. Additionally, there was a noteworthy correlation between incidences of GSBB in prison meetings and visits with their mothers separate from scheduled GSBB meetings. Consequently, the more attendance in GSBB meeting increased the likelihood the girls were to revisit beyond normal meetings.

Outcome assessments demonstrated the girls unmistakably attribute their strengthened relationship with their mothers, improved self-esteem, personal growth and maturity to their participation in GSBB. Moreover, the girls rated high on emotional and attitudinal matters (i.e., enhanced verbal skills, in-school and at-home behavior). Scout leaders confirmed these improvements. Qualitative individual profiles on participating girls showed younger members (ages 6-8) showed marked improvements in their initial responses to the separation (i.e. tearful, confusion, depression) by continual participation in GSBB. With prolong participation the girls began to share and bond with other girls.

One of the primary findings of the Year 1 Study is deep anger experienced by children continues over an extended period and requires a considerable amount of work for children to

recognize, admit, converse and let go of their stress. The Year-2 Evaluation found the mother's of participating girls had better perceptions on the outcome of GSBB for themselves. More importantly, the strongest support of GSBB from mothers was a commitment to stay crime-free and an optimistic outlook (CSR, Incorporated, 2008).

The Year 3 study consists of four prior evaluations the Central Maryland GSBB program (Block & Potthast, 1995, 1996), the GSBB program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (Smart & Mann), an evaluation of the Enterprising Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program of the Girl Scouts Lone Star Council (Grant, 2002-2003) and the CRS, Incorporated's (2008) national evaluation study of 17 GSBB programs. In an assessment of the Central Maryland GSBB by Block & Potthast (1995 and 1996) report 70% of imprisoned mothers and 52% of caretakers stated the emotional and behavioral effects of incarceration (i.e. anger, episodes of crying, misbehaving, and difficulties in school) subsided as the girls continued to participate in the program. The daughters had fewer concerns and fears regarding their mothers. Further, the caretakers found the girls had fewer incidences in school, with some showing academic improvements.

The data collected from the appreciative inquiry on Girl Scout councils in two Washington State correctional facilities (Washington Correctional Center for Women and the Tacoma Pre-Release Center) suggests the amount of activities and the availability of scout leaders were significant components of the programs. Surveys showed the both mothers and daughters sensed they were able to discuss about important and sensitive matters, thoughts and issues. More specifically, the surveys demonstrated both had the chance to settle matters pertaining to the mother's imprisonment. In addition, girls reported having adult social support; hence, showing the relationship building component of the program was definitely a vital outcome.

Another evaluation from the Lone Star Council's Enterprising Girl Scouts Beyond Bars programs echoed that of Washington State (GSBB). There had been minor but positive connection between progress in the girls' thoughts concerning their incarcerated mothers and the girl's development of confidence. Researcher Darlene Grant (2006) in her quantitative evaluation titled, "Resilience of Girls with Incarcerated Mothers: The Impact of "Girl Scouts" uncovered findings suggesting there was moderate evidence of improvements in mother-daughter relationships, self-esteem and developing resiliency to evade their risk of future criminality after a year of participation in GSBB. Nonetheless, the data implicates that the intervention of GSBB provided in diverse segments of this potentially high-risk population can have a profound influence on numerous areas of their performance. However, Grant (2006) admits evaluations of the effect of this prison-based program is yet in its early stages and acknowledges the need for these variables to be assessed over time.

B. Rebonding and Rebuilding (A Parent Curriculum)

Successful parenting is difficult and requires a degree of familiarity about child development and management that is largely gained through experience. Countless numbers of imprisoned mothers were raised in dysfunction families plagued by substance abuse, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and family violence; in addition to parental criminal histories (Sandifer, 2008; Thompson & Harm, 2000; Murray & Farrington, 2005; Tuerk, 2006; Bilchik, 2007). Consequently, imprisoned mother have an increased likelihood for transmitting similar patterns. Moreover, despite that incarceration undoubtedly disturbs family cohesion prison-based parenting programs can enhance and instill the confidence and skills to effectively parent, thus minimizing the adverse consequences of incarceration on children of prisoners (Gonzalez, Romero & Cerbana, 2007; Farrington, 2006; Laughlin et al. 2008; Sandifer, 2008).

Parenting for incarcerated mothers certainly differs and presents significant challenges; hence, parenting curriculum for imprisoned mothers cannot be replicated or designed for mothers in ordinary settings.

Inmate mothers need to acquire instruction on how best to parent from afar, maintain contact, mend bonds and form encouraging relationships with their children and those providing the care. Sandifer (2008, p. 424) asserts:

“The same processes (e.g., family relationships and parenting practices) that may propel an individual’s negative lifestyle (i.e., deviant life course pathway) may also alter a negative life course trajectory by serving as a deflection event (e.g., the establishment of a strong positive family relationship) that guides and supports an individual’s positive pathway or trajectory. (p. 424). Hence prison-based parenting is a useful family intervention.”

In a national survey of women correctional facilities and jails, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 1998) found just 42 programs qualifying as parent education or ground-breaking visitation programs. Parent education within the female prison system has received much criticism for lacking similarity, reliability and assessments. Further, dissimilarity in goals and a need for an interactive component for women to exercise their newly acquired parenting skills is a major concern of existing programs. Sandifer (2008) maintains scholarly evaluations of parenting programs in women’s correctional institutions are nearly nonexistent, particularly those intended to improve parenting skills and mother-child communication.

Furthermore, existing programs are not devised from any reliably models that can guide other women’s prisons in implementing their own parenting program. Another concern is existing versions fail to incorporate both classroom instruction and an interactional module, even though any opportunity for enhancing mother and child relationships are an accepted practice (Thompson & Harm, 2000; Loper & Tuerk, 2006; Loper, 2006). The focus on parenting and enriching the mother-child bond is an adopted treatment strategy for substance abusing mothers

because research has shown increased mother-child relationships promotes abstinence from substance abuse. Being that drugs and drug related offenses comprise the majority of incarcerated women and is a leading contributor for post-release failure, providing incarcerated mothers with the opportunity of learning how to effectively parent is a vital part of corrections for imprisoned mothers. A national examination of released inmates found lower recidivism rates for those that participated in a parenting program (Rudel & Hayes, 1990 cited in Sandifer, 2008, p. 427).

Sandifer (2008) evaluated the parenting program at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women. The program was designed to improve prisoner mother's communication skills, understanding of child development, proper discipline, crisis resolution in parent-child interaction, enhancing self-assurance, parenting ability and emotional and social assistance, in addition to bringing an understanding of the impact incarceration has on children. The program comprised of classroom and an interactive portion using the *Rebonding and Rebuilding* parenting curriculum devised by Doris Meyer & Cathy Moriarty (1995). The classroom portion met twice a week over the course of twelve weeks. Using lectures, worksheets and exercises in print, the curriculum covered "Family and Child Development," "Discipline," "Difficult Topics," "Personal Growth," "Child Abuse," and "Special Lessons for Incarcerated Parents." Inmates were encouraged to use visitations and letter writing as opportunities to apply their recently acquired skills. The interactive segment of the parenting program was extended or specialized visitation (i.e. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, play dates, etc.) that allowed mothers and children to bond and engage in various activities.

To measure program success, corresponding paired *t* tests were chosen to determine the significance of any changes in parenting attitudes and aptitude between the treatment and

comparison group in particular areas of parenting. The Parent-Child Relationship Inventory [Gerard, 1994] and the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory [Bavolek and Keene, 1999] were used to quantify major facets of parenting., while the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) assesses five detailed features of dysfunctional parenting. Moreover, both scales measured variations from Time 1 and Time 2.

The sample was comprised of 161 volunteering inmates. The treatment group (n=64) was chosen during week one of eight different sessions (i.e., twelve weeks) and the parenting inventories were dispensed the first and last day of the parenting course. The treatment group was reassessed (time 2 testing) twelve weeks following the conclusion of the class. The comparison group (n=26) was solicited from mothers at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women meeting the criteria of never having participated in a parenting education course and would remain incarcerated for the next three months. The proposed timeframe for the evaluation was September 2001 to December 2002.

Sandifer's research hypotheses were matched with a minimum of one of the "parenting behavior and attitude" assessment scales of the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2 (AAPI-2) and the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI). Any variations were evaluated by assessing Time 1 and Time 2 averages. To increase the confidence that changes were attributed to the parenting class, identical statistical testing was performed on Time 1 and Time 2 "parenting scores" of a group never participating in a parenting group. Sandifer found measurable but small improvements in familiarity on communicating with children, but significant findings at the .001 level for comprehension of child development after completing parent education, indicating imprisoned mothers became more competent at identifying suitable age related encounters and promoting the development of their children's through these

experiences. Moreover, there were significant decreases at the .001 level in the treatment group's attitude toward corporal punishment (i.e., spanking, hitting etc.) and when and how to administer discipline. The results of the Parent-Child Role Reversal scale after completing for accepting responsibility for their actions, taking on the role of a parent and not anticipate their children to care for them. Lastly, the Parent Empathy Scale demonstrated findings a *t*-value of -2.21 that is statistically significant at the .03 level showing the instructional component enabled participants of parent education to become empathetic to the needs of their children, rather than their individual needs.

Based on these findings three areas of concern emerged. First, Sandifer found parent education neither improved inmate mother's perception of being supported for their efforts of attempting to parent while incarcerated nor overall contentment as a mother. Additionally, parenting classes failed to improve their capability or adequacy to communicate with their children. Later discussions with program participants suggest the inability to produce significant findings in the fore mentioned areas were attributed to the interactive portion of the program. Sandifer found inconsistencies in the visitation component of the program. The visitation portion (i.e. monthly play days etc) were sporadic or occasionally discontinued, in addition, there were limited opportunities for enhanced visits for mothers with older children.

With the ever increasing number of imprisoned mothers, women's prisons have begun to rethink the uniqueness of the mother-child bond and the role specialized programs has on developing effective parenting skills and family cohesion. Children of imprisoned mothers experience a unique set of circumstances in comparison to their peers. They have endured trauma, are often deprived of adequate care and social support. Furthermore, they are at a significant risk for emotional and behavioral problems, low academic performance,

embarrassment and delinquency. According to a number of researchers (i.e. child psychologists, psychiatrists etc.) the main determinate of how children adjust to maternal incarceration is mainly dependent on the quality of their living situation during the separation and the opportunity to maintain contact with their mother. Yet, the opportunity to maintain contact is largely limited by the distance to the facility and the financial burden placed on caregivers. Additionally, face to face visitation is further hindered by visitation policies, lack of child friendly visitation areas and caregiver's inability or reluctance to bring children for visits.

Literature review maintains the most innovative and effective programs include components designed to increase an inmate mother's knowledge of child development, educates on effective parenting, teaches communication skills and strengthens families. The abovementioned programs suggest the ideal prison-based mother-child program contain classroom instruction and mother-child interaction (i.e. enhanced visitations). In the following section recommendations will be made based on these findings.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PRISON-BASED PARENT-CHILD PROGRAM IN FEMALE PRISONS

Based on existing literature clearly the development and implementation of prison-based parent-child programs in women's facilities are still in its infancy. Nonetheless, it has been acknowledged that parent education, enhanced visitations, transportation and support are elements of the more effective programs. While, current intervention and prevention programs are based on the assertion that a strong family bond, in addition to risk and protective factors that can divert adolescents away from delinquent behavior. Nonetheless, there is a shortage of prison-based family-centered programming that specifically addresses the needs of incarcerated mothers and their children. Moreover, current programs have differing goals and organization. Since there lacks an existing model(s) for organizations or prisons to emulate, the development of an ideal program can only occur through identifying and implementing effective components of available programs.

Incarcerated mothers and their children are in dire need of risk-focused and family centered prison-based programs that will result in the betterment of the entire family. Rebonding and Rebuilding (parenting curriculum) and Girl Scouts Beyond Bars are effective innovative strategies currently implemented in various women's facilities. In and of its self these programs contain all of the elements (i.e., social interaction, transportation and parent education) of an effective program. Be that as it may, program delivery, consistency and transportation are areas in need of improvement. Ideally, by improving the fore mentioned shortcomings, an ideal program can emerge that could serve as a model for future parent-child prison-based programs to emulate. Piquero, Farrington, Welsh, Tremblay & Jennings (2008, p.16) assert, "Infancy and

early-childhood programs that prevent delinquency can also prevent a number of other developmental and family problems.”

Recommendations

While, incarceration in and of itself is a traumatic experience for both mother and child, it is an opportune time to implement strategies that can significantly minimize the impact of incarceration and the risk of juvenile delinquency. Further, it will increase the rate of post-release success among former incarcerated mothers. Clearly, incarcerated mothers and their families require extensive services. Intervention for children should occur shortly after separation when the propensity for displaying emotional and behavioral behavior is at its greatest. Yet, these children are under supported and remain virtually invisible until problems arise.

A. Rebonding and Rebuilding Parent Curriculum

The *Rebonding Rebuilding* (Meyer & Moriarty, 1995) parenting curriculum follows the rationale of Hirschi’s (1969) social control theory, which explains the process that propels youth toward engaging in delinquent behaviors. Family bonds, morals, quality of time invested in kids’ are factors that determine the likelihood of children becoming delinquent. The *Rebonding and Rebuilding* parenting curriculum is one of few programs that have a specific objective of strengthening at-risk families, through education and face to face contact during the mother’s imprisonment. The realization a parent’s incarceration is capable of being a turning point, which can trigger a series of events setting youths onto a course of delinquent is unmistakably evident in the premise of *Rebonding Rebuilding* (Parenting Curriculum). Nonetheless, the fore mentioned program has areas in need of improvement. As it stands, the interactive portion of this parenting class is limited to children ages 3 through 12 years of age; however, it would be

more beneficial to program participants and the overall program if the age limit were extended to accommodate older children (up to seventeen years of age), as older children are rarely afforded the opportunity to participate in the social interactive portion of programs (Sandifer, 2008, p 441).

What is more, consistency is essential in the visitation component of any prison-based mother-child program. Therefore, I recommend either the *Rebonding and Rebuilding* program personally oversees the visitation portion or contract this component out to a specific service provider. Further, transportation has to be an aspect incorporated into the interactive component to ensure the program encompasses all the elements of an effective program. As it stands, there is no specific model for prison-based parent-child programs to emulate. Nonetheless with the fore mentioned recommendations, *Rebonding and Rebuilding* would enlarge its capacity to reach its targeted population as an effective program.

B. Parent Education

For the most part existing literature on parent programs for imprisoned mothers are based on similes of different programs and unreliable explanations of the importance of children having contact during a mother's incarceration. Moreover, it is customary for correctional personnel to refer to any form of program pertaining to children of inmates or extended visitations, as a parenting program. While, a portion of programs are merely longer visitations, others consist of nothing more than a class. In all, prison-based parent education has many short-coming; primarily not including both a social interactive component and parent education.

Evidence strongly suggests that parenting programs that consists of both a curriculum and a social interactive component are effective in strengthening and maintaining the parent-child

bond; in addition to diminishing other negative repercussions of parental criminality (i.e. juvenile delinquency, emotional and behavioral problems and adult criminality). Prison-based parent classes are essential considering the countless numbers of incarcerated mothers whom have not been afforded the opportunity of having received adequate parenting and may be rearing their own children in a way that is counterproductive to acquiring a pro-social way of life. Learning effective parenting skills are vital as many imprisoned mothers grew up in dysfunctional families plagued by parental substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse and parental criminality. In spite of the mother's pre-prison parenting, incarceration presents a host of new challenges. Parenting is virtually impossible, as the responsibility for the daily care of their children is transferred to others (i.e. fathers, grandparents, foster parents etc.). In addition, requests to see children are often unwelcomed as the financial and emotional toll of the parent's imprisonment is often absorbed by family members. The role of the caregiver in the lives of incarcerated mothers and their children cannot be overly emphasized. Unlike ordinary mothers, efforts to sustain the mother-child bond for prison mothers are largely dependent on the caretaker's willingness or ability to bring children for visitation (i.e. program participation). Consequently, inmate mothers have limited opportunities of maintaining contact with their children.

Assisting incarcerated mothers to maintain or strengthen the relationship with their children is necessary for any family-centered prison program. While, many women's prisons do offer some form of enhanced visitations, typically mothers are required to partake in or having had completed a parenting class to qualify for many programs that have a social interactive component. Requiring parent education, in and of its self does not pose any challenges; yet, a national survey (USDJ, 1998) on the availability of parent education programs in women's facilities are minimal, in spite of the substantially high numbers of inmate mothers.

The locale of the facility makes visitations sporadic or none existent. Currently, there are few community resources that provide transportation (e.g. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars) and an even smaller number of facility-based programs that include transportation services (i.e. play dates, family days, holidays etc.) have age and residence requirements. Transportation for family to visit is a significant concern for incarcerated mothers. The efficiency of a family-centered prison-based program is largely dependent on including transportation as an element. While, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars considers transportation a major aspect of its program, there is a concern with recruiting and retaining older scouts. For that reason, GSBB could be more effective in reaching and keeping older recruits by extending the present age limit and areas served. As the opportunity of enhanced visitation for older children (i.e., teens) are noted as lacking in many programs (Sandifer, 2008, p. 441).

C. Goals, Missions and Structure

Maternal incarceration clearly disrupts family cohesion but, more importantly, it impacts the wellbeing of their children, as emotional and behavioral problems are common responses that attributes to an ever increasing rate of juvenile delinquency. What is more, the propensity for trans-generational criminality is a reality for children of incarcerated mothers. In spite of the growing number of children affected by incarceration, there is a lack of programs exclusively targeting imprisoned mothers and their children.

The lack of “family-centered” programs categorically contradicts the significance of family dynamics, reunification and post-release success that is purportedly the foundation of prison-based programs. Although, well intended, the few existing prison-based programs frequently have different objectives. Clearly, the primary objective should be to preserve at-risk families and to ensure the healthy growth of children impacted by maternal incarceration.

The fundamental bases of any prison-based programs are derived from the concepts of Hirschi's (1969) social control theory (e.g. strong social ties, attachment, commitment, and beliefs). Therefore, family-centered and community-supported programming is essential. The overall objective must be clearly defined rather than the vague usage of words (i.e. parent or education). Further, the program should address the focal concerns of this targeted population (i.e. damaged parent-child relationships, visitation, caregiver's attitude, transportation and overall impact of incarceration) rather than assumptions or unspecified outcomes. Additionally, the family dynamics must be considered.

Indisputably, the primary goal of a prison-based parent-child program is to strengthen high-risk families. Further, the objective must include provisions for supporting the healthy growth of children with imprisoned mothers. Then, the program must be family-focused strength-based. Taken as a whole, the goal of the ideal prison-based mother-child program is to attain effective family and relationship skills that are likely to diminish juvenile delinquency and post-release failure. To achieve these goals, there has to be an educational component for both mother and their children. Mothers can begin to relearn how to effectively parent through the use of a parenting curriculum teaching child development, discipline, communication and managing children's behavior, while children will receive education through a risk-reduction approach, acquiring knowledge of poverty, delinquency, bullying, substance abuse, stress reduction and/or management, setting personal goals that will assist in building resiliency in this at-risk population. Moreover, the interactive component (enhanced visitations, in-prison activities) will give mothers the opportunity to exercise newly acquired parenting skills and bond with their children.

Lastly, the goal of the program will be further accomplished by assisting these families to establish social ties and engage in pro-social activities (sports, community support, mentors, after-school clubs, tutors, church etc. In general, the effectiveness of any program is contingent on meeting the various needs of inmate's and their children; yet, prison programs are seldom evaluated on an on-going basis to test for, then create effective revised strategies in which these programs can best serve the needs of female prisoners, especially those with children. These families are in need of extensive support and services, which requires a programmatic approach.

VI. Summary and Conclusion

The historically high number of mothers in state correctional facilities has stirred interest, particularly in the segments of the prison population that are mothers. The social control and the attachment theories are means for prison officials to realize the impact of mother-child separation, which can then serve as a guide in implementing mother-child bonding or family-centered programs. Literature review ascertains specific facets which promotes the well-being of incarcerated mothers and their children. The implementation of these specified facets in prison-based parent-child programs are essential components for decreasing the propensity of emotional and behavioral problems; in addition to, school failure, delinquency and adult criminality of children impacted by maternal separation/incarceration. The availability of programs specifically targeting imprisoned mothers and their children are limited.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars and Rebonding and Rebuilding Parenting Curriculum are two exceptional examples of measures utilized to curtail the adverse consequences of maternal incarceration; yet, with a few amendments these programs can be even more valuable in achieving the desired outcome of preserving at-risk families and ensuring the healthy growth of children impacted by maternal incarceration. Prison-based programs need to be family-centered, comprising of a parenting curriculum (i.e. Rebonding and Rebuilding) for the mothers and a community-based risk-reduction component engaging the children in pro-social activities and strengthening their social ties.

Ideally, prison is an opportune time for presenting inmate mothers and their children programs designed to retain family cohesion and post release success. Correctional facilities have been slow to implement effective programs for incarcerated mothers and their children.

Nevertheless, a “prevention model” must be implemented as the guiding principle directed at high-risk children of incarcerated mothers.

VII. References

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