

BACKGROUND

The United States is the most incarcerating country in the world (Douglas and MacKenzie 2010)

- There are 2.3 million individuals in prisons and jails in the U.S. (Douglas and MacKenzie 2010)
- 7 million under supervision under probation or parole
- 700,000 individuals are released from prisons annually (Hattery and Smith 2010).

**Research Questions:** Existing literature suggest that family members are positive and supportive this is very likely to be true however,

- 1) Are there instances where families are not supportive ?
- 2) How do these positive and negative experiences with family vary by gender?

DATA AND METHODS

**30 in-depth interviews:**

- 20 Men
- 10 Women
- 23-55 years
- 41.6 average
- 22 African American; 6 Caucasian; 2 Hispanic

**Qualitative Analysis:**

Thematic coding for a specific theme based on three headings:

- 1) Children
- 2) Extended Kinship ties
- 3) Partners

RESULTS

Common themes for both men and women:

1. Children
  - Being away from their children made many of them realize that they had to get their life back on track, it became an easier transition when they had the support and love of their children.
  - The primary incentive for change was knowing that their children counted on them and that they looked up to them as role models.
2. Family
  - Both men and women not only experience the support of family but also the dysfunctional and harmful family environments.
    - Family provided financial and emotional support to released prisoners
    - Family was a bad influence and stigmatize them for their criminal conviction.

QUOTES

- I'm happy to be free. Like my youngest daughter said. I just need you out here. And that's what woke me up. During that time I said I was going to change my life, I can't do this no more. But my daughter my youngest daughter was the one that really touched me. (Damian)
- I attribute a lot to them, you know, 'cause that's what gave me my strength. I don't think if I had kids, I probably would still be in and out of jail. (Veronica)
- I think my family support that was a big one. I think honestly, if I didn't have the family support, I probably would have stayed in Texas and went back to the same people and either end up dead or in prison for the rest of my life. (Derek)
- I used to, manage all of my mom's money. And as soon as the rest of the family found out that I got arrested, they changed all the passwords on all the accounts and everything so I couldn't manage it anymore. Cause they were afraid that I'd steal from her. And, so yeah, I had a lot of negative ramifications. (Jay)

RESULTS: GENDER

**Gender Differences**

Both genders maintain a different relationship with their children.

- Fathers: Role Reversal
- Mothers: Maintain parental role

**Abuse**

Women were the ones that most reported being abused by either a family member or their partner.

QUOTES: GENDER

- My kids they really behind me. They basically are trying to guide me not to go back down that road. Every time I see them, they call me, what you doing? They want to make sure I'm not doing the wrong thing.(Damian)
- Mothers do not belong in jail. I'm a mother; I can't keep going to jail. I'm a grandmother I want my grandkids to look up to me. (Veronica)
- It's been helpful, but I don't have no help right now because I don't leave my kids with anybody and my mom been very busy and so it's like as soon as I got in there, it's like she got busy, so I just ain't been doing nothing. But now I'm going to try to find somebody I can trust with my kids until I can get a job. (Latasha)
- My grandfather sexually abused of me. And even to this day, if I go around him, he'll make little remarks and try to rub on me and feel on me and I'm grown now. (Yoyo)

CONCLUSION

Research has focused only on the positives of family ties without recognizing ways in which those family ties can be harmful. Family experiences can also vary by gender and those gender differences are important because they help shape the reentry process of individuals. This matters because it effects issues such as

- Recidivism
- Maintaining health families
- Termination of parental rights