

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Mass Incarceration and the Effects on Education

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ABSTRACT

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration and while there have been numerous studies addressing the overwhelming problem. Recidivism has been the focus what can be done to help those that are released in this study we will look at Incarceration and the effects on education. The effectiveness of a program implementation in schools to help with the students that exhibit behaviors. To help breakdown the pipeline to prison policy that seems to play a major role in why majority of those incarcerated have less than a high school education.

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Introduction

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration. Between the government and the families of those incarcerated it's estimated that \$182 billion dollars a year is spent on inmates with the US spending an estimate of \$60,000 per inmate (Prisonpolicy.org). Some research shows that a considerable number of inmates are incarcerated and not even convicted of a crime but sit in jails because they cannot afford to pay the bail. With each presidency efforts have been made to change the policies currently in place within the criminal justice system and have not been successful in the meantime Incarceration continues to effect families in overwhelming ways.

Statement of the Problem

The prison population is an estimated 1,505,400 between federal and state facilities, this number does not include those in local jails, private owned jails and then there are those that are under supervision of probation or parole. The breakdown of those incarcerated are 7% of non-Hispanic white males in state and federal prison were ages 18 to 24, compared to 13% of non-Hispanic black males and 12% of Hispanic males (Bureau of justice2018). There are 2.7 million children in the US that have one or both of their parents incarcerated. A significant amount of those incarcerated have below a high school diploma. During the War on drugs era under the presidency of Ronald Regan, the incarceration rate more then tripled. The implementation of zero tolerance policies was put in place to enforce penalties on those that chose to use illegal drugs, distribute and or trade. The effects of these policies were greatly seen in the low-income areas affecting mostly minorities especially African American men. The emerging use of crack cocaine contributed to the incarceration rate because of the Anti-drug abuse act that convicted

drug users and gave them a minimum mandatory sentence instead of addressing the problem of addiction. For communities that are already struggling with oppression and systemic racism the criminal justice system adds to the oppression harsher sentences to people of color that are arrested for the same crime as their white counterparts. Another contributing factor is the pipeline to prison policy this is when schools have a no tolerance policy for those children that act out with behaviors are disruptive they are suspended and even expelled. This sheds light on the more than half of the prison population that has less than a high school diploma. Teachers not wanting to deal with the behavior and not skilled to address the behavior will have them removed out of the classroom and in some states these children are placed in detention centers so that starts their road to incarceration. This policy in place shows that there is a problem within the education system and that with social workers in schools more should be done to address the behavior. Fast forward to today and these injustices are still prevalent.

Purpose of the Study

There have been numerous studies to date addressing the effects incarceration has on the individual their family, children and community. When looking at the effects on the individual it can have a mental effect that not all are able to handle and can lead to suicide, when they are released from jail the problems have not been eliminated because now finding adequate employment is a problem. If they were released on supervision that becomes another problem because they are required to find jobs but not all places will hire people with a criminal background. Majority of those incarcerated have no high school diploma so to have both and apply for job your chances are not very high. For families because it is highest in the low-income communities the financial strains it can cause on those that are already struggling financially, families are broken up when a loved one is incarcerated relationships between

husband/wife boyfriend/ girlfriend becomes too much and adds on extra stress so they part ways, when a loved one is incarcerated the family as well as the children experience the same pain as the individual. The children must learn to cope with the parent not being around especially if that parent was an active participant in raising the child. Studies have shown that some children can begin to exhibit problems with behavior at home and in school (Vera Institute of Justice 2016). c

Significance

This study will look at how the education system and social workers can come together and implement programs within the schools of the low-income communities to foster support, educate and empower the less fortunate as well as decrease the rate of incarceration. When you look at the fact that so many inmates don't have a high school education you wonder what part it plays in the rate of incarceration.

Literature Review

Incarceration not only affects the individual but it brings many challenges to a family whether it is a spouse, significant other, and or children. It can cause a strain in relationships between spouse or significant other as well as children. The toll incarceration takes on children was alarming, and each literary article addresses that. Research studies show that the incarceration rate is highest among low income communities, most of those incarcerated have no high school diploma and that the population is significantly minorities. According to one study it addressed intervening in a way to help juvenile delinquent youth, adults and families that are affected because of the issues in the Criminal Justice System (Sexton, Thomas 2016). It was an adventure education based study and the purpose of the study was done to take them away from what was familiar like community and family and have them learn to work together with others and through this they were able to think on their own and gain control of their emotions. This

lasted until they returned to that familiar place around family then they went back to their former way of thinking and doing things. The article identified behavior as relating to its relational context and that a person's ecosystem plays a part in an individual's behavior. Sexton took an approach to look at how the incarcerated individual's thought process was and the criminal justice system. This allowed him to see that not only is it the individual that is affected but also the families. The prison system was supposed to be a place of rehabilitation (Sexton 2016) but with the barriers placed on those that were released it made it harder for them.

The incarceration of a parent not only affects the behavior of a child according to Morsy, Leila (2017) but the current criminal justice policies contribute to the achievement of the children in education. Regardless of demographic characteristics black students continually have lower academic and behavioral performance compared to whites. In the article previous studies discounted the fact that socioeconomic or demographics contributed to children's decline in areas (Morsy, Leila 2017). The likelihood of health problems for the children with incarcerated parents is high, and it is even higher among the young boys. School dropout rate is high amongst these children as well and because the children exhibit cognitive and behavioral problems teachers are not able to handle them. When looking at the various effects of incarceration and children research shows that when it is the mother incarcerated the children are most likely to be in foster care because they are usually the primary care giver. Children whose father is incarcerated studies show they have increased aggression, depression, anxiety, attention problems, and delinquency and it is seen mostly in young boys and adolescent men. These negative behaviors have been seen in children from age 5 up to early adulthood (Haskins, Anna 2015–16) Previous studies have focused mainly on the negative behaviors of children and not at the positive behaviors according to Haskin. With negative behaviors being a constant outcome

for boys it contributed to the establishing of the presence of harmful intergenerational consequences of paternal incarceration. With this research study it was to look at whether antisocial behaviors were intergenerational for children with incarcerated fathers. Is it that criminality is transferred from one generation to the next in early childhood and adolescence. Haskin studied if paternal incarceration effected a child's cognitive and or noncognitive skills and could determine that they both had negative effects and that paternal incarceration contributes to education inequality

Research Problem

After review of the literature Incarceration has many effects but the effects on children is overwhelming because they are at the beginning stages of their life there needs to be ways to prevent the cycle of incarceration from continuing. A way to prevent incarceration in the first place not only once it happens to have the services available. I determined that my research problem is Mass incarceration and the effects on families. Most research has been done to prevent recidivism but what if there were programs in place to prevent incarceration in the first place.

Hypothesis

Students who participate in the HOME Program will have a greater chance of graduating and will also decrease the number of incarcerated individuals in low income communities. From the hypothesis stated above my IV will be the program with the incorporation of CBT and Mentorship. CBT Psychotherapy emphasizes the importance of the personal meaning we place on things and how thinking patterns begin in childhood (Beck Institute). Behavioral therapy pays close attention to the relationship between our problems, our behavior and our thoughts.

Assessment uses the cognitive model: the way that individuals perceive a situation is more closely connected to their reaction than the situation itself. (Beck Institute). The mentorship is someone that will support and to guide you through. The CBT treatment would also be given to the parent that is the reason for the name HOME it is the foundation for an individual and the ecosystem plays a part in behavior. The dependent variable is graduation increase and decrease incarceration. Lack of high school education was high among those incarcerated. Education is significant when it comes to socioeconomics. With higher education comes job opportunities then that contributes to the building up of the community. Statistics will show if the program was effective in increasing graduation and decreasing incarceration

Method (Research Design)

The research design for this study will be to work with the schools to implement a program called HOME acronym for Having Opportunities through Mentorship and Empowerment. Since incarceration is high in low income communities those areas will be focus areas. The study will be a two-group design consisting of eight students and their parent. Four students from middle school four from high school. It will also include the input of teacher and school social worker. The teacher will share information with me about the behaviors and the parent will inform me as well. The family and students will be given an Attitude and Behavior assessment survey that will be used throughout the length of involvement in the program, to determine the best CBT treatment. There will be a control group of two middle school and two high school students that will not be part of the program but they will be monitored over the course of years until completion of school. The participants that are going to be a part of the Home program will be paired up with a mentor, the mentor will be someone that comes from their area and graduated went on to college. They will also go through a 5-10-month treatment of CBT for both parent

and student. The internal validity that contribute to the effects of the study are Maturity as one gets older their thought process can change.

Method (Sampling)

The population for this study will be chosen by non-probability convenience sampling. Eight student participants four middle school four high school and their families using the matched pair method. The study will take place in the school and outside in the HOME offices. There will be an assessment of behaviors and thought processes before the program starts and then there will be assessments throughout. Since the participants will be observed over a period assessment will be done yearly.

Method of Measurement

The effectiveness of the program will be measured by observation and the incorporation of a variety of self-report instruments like the Attitude and behavior survey will be given pretest and posttest it measures, 40 Developmental Assets, which look at external supports and internal strengths, 24 youth risk behavior elements (e.g., substance use, sexual activity, antisocial behavior), 10 high-risk behavior patterns, Key social and emotional skills 8 thriving indicators (succeeds in school, helps others, values diversity, maintains good health, exhibits leadership, resists danger, delays gratification, overcomes adversity), 5 developmental deficits (alone at home, TV overexposure, physical abuse, victim of violence, drinking parties) (Search Institute 2017)

Then there is the effectiveness of mentorship that will be measured by using the Mentorship effectiveness scale. The Mentorship Effectiveness scale was developed to provide

standardized tool for rating the mentorship experience and effectiveness of the mentor focusing specifically on 12 behavioral aspects of the mentor. The format for the mentorship Effectiveness Scale consists of a 12-item questionnaire and a six-point Likert style response for each.

Data Collection

The Home Program will be a collaboration between the Board of Education and the program. The purpose of the program is to see if the implementation of programs in low income communities will have an effect in decreasing incarceration and increasing the number of students with a high school diploma. The program will follow the student and their family during their middle school and high school years. Upon entering the program, the student is paired with a mentor that will be alongside them for the next few years. The mentor is from within the community looking for ways to give back. The parent and student will receive CBT treatment therapy. Since the students have behaviors that is where CBT comes in to help treat and find reasons behind the behavior. Some contributing factors of behavior can be environment whether community, home, school and parent incarceration. Treating the behavior will assist in the student being able to get an education. Studies on mentorship have shown that it is effect in improving behaviors and social emotional and academics. The effectiveness of the program will be observed in the behaviors of the students and the completion of high school.

INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: The Effectiveness of HOME Project Implemented in Schools

You are asked to participate in a research study designed to further our understanding of Mass Incarceration and Education. This study is conducted under the supervision of Miko Douglas Social Worker, and will take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this research study involves having one 30 – 50-minute therapy session a week for 6 months and 6-10 questionnaires over time pertaining to behavior and mentorship. Your participation also involves the researcher reviewing your chart to access information about you. All data provided by you during this study will be linked to your counselor's data by a unique ID number.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Your responses are completely confidential and you do not have to answer any question(s) that you do not want to.

For your participation in this study you will receive a \$25 gift card yearly as you complete the questionnaires as you for personal use.

Risks

You may feel somewhat embarrassed or distressed when answering questions about your counselor or even yourself. There is a risk of possible disclosure of the information you provide on the survey regarding illegal behaviors.

Benefits

The expected scientific benefit of your participation includes increased knowledge about the effectiveness of "HOME" project implemented in schools to increase graduation rate and decrease incarceration

Confidentiality

We will obtain your name and any information that might be necessary to complete study. All data collected during this study will be treated confidentially; only the researchers (Social Workers) and the supervising faculty member (Miko Douglas) will have access to the information. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the advisors locked office on the Nyack College Campus. Data will also be stored on a computer which will be password-protected. Only the researchers and faculty advisor will have access to the filing cabinet, office, and password. There is no identifying information associated with the data and therefore will be kept indefinitely.

Contacts

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by Faculty Advisor or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the Nyack College, Nyack NY Office of Social Work at 518-555-5555 (toll free 800-555-5555) or douglasm@nyack.edu.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the Supervising Social worker Miko Douglas at 518555-5555 or douglasm@nyack.edu.

Limitations

The research design for this study is a pilot study to see if the program with the components of mentorship and CBT will be effective in helping children that exhibit behaviors receive some form of treatment within the schools so they don't fall into the statistic of pipeline to prison with suspension and possible expulsion. The treatment will not only benefit the child but the parent as well because they are all part of one ecosystem. Some of the limitations could be that since this study is progressive over time participants could drop out or move away.

Determining whether it was the program or maturity of participants that caused a positive change in their life.

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