

Innocent Until Proven Guilty: Not for the Families Vicarious Incarceration within a County Jail

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Study Overview

- This qualitative research study contributes to the incarceration literature by examining how county jails impact family members
- Research Question: To what extent does Comfort's (2009) notion of "Secondary Prisonization" apply to family members visiting loved ones in county jail?
- Participants (N=12) identified as a caregiver for the incarcerated loved one's child completed a semi-structured interview modeled after Comfort's examination of secondary prisonization
- Findings indicate that caregivers experienced two levels of secondary prisonization (in the jail and in home, Indicated *)
- Additional findings highlight the physical, emotional, and financial impact that jails have on the family
- Discussion applies ecological theory to the present study and suggests utilizing more comprehensive terminology to encompass the full impact that incarceration has on the family

Vicarious Incarceration

The parallel incarceration process that families with an incarcerated loved one experience.

This process is present when families visit the corrections facility.

It extends into the home as they maintain contact with their loved one.

It further expands to describe the physical, emotional, and financial impact that incarceration has on the family

10 men in jail

=

100 people Vicariously
Incarcerated

Vicarious Incarceration in the Jail*

Entering the jail, (100%)

Interacting with deputized staff (75%)

"Some of them are ok but..."

Rigid and Inconsistent Rules (67%)

Vicarious Incarceration in the Home*

Scheduling glass visits online (100%)

Receiving Phone Calls (100%)

Sending Packages, Letters, Money for Commissary (58%)

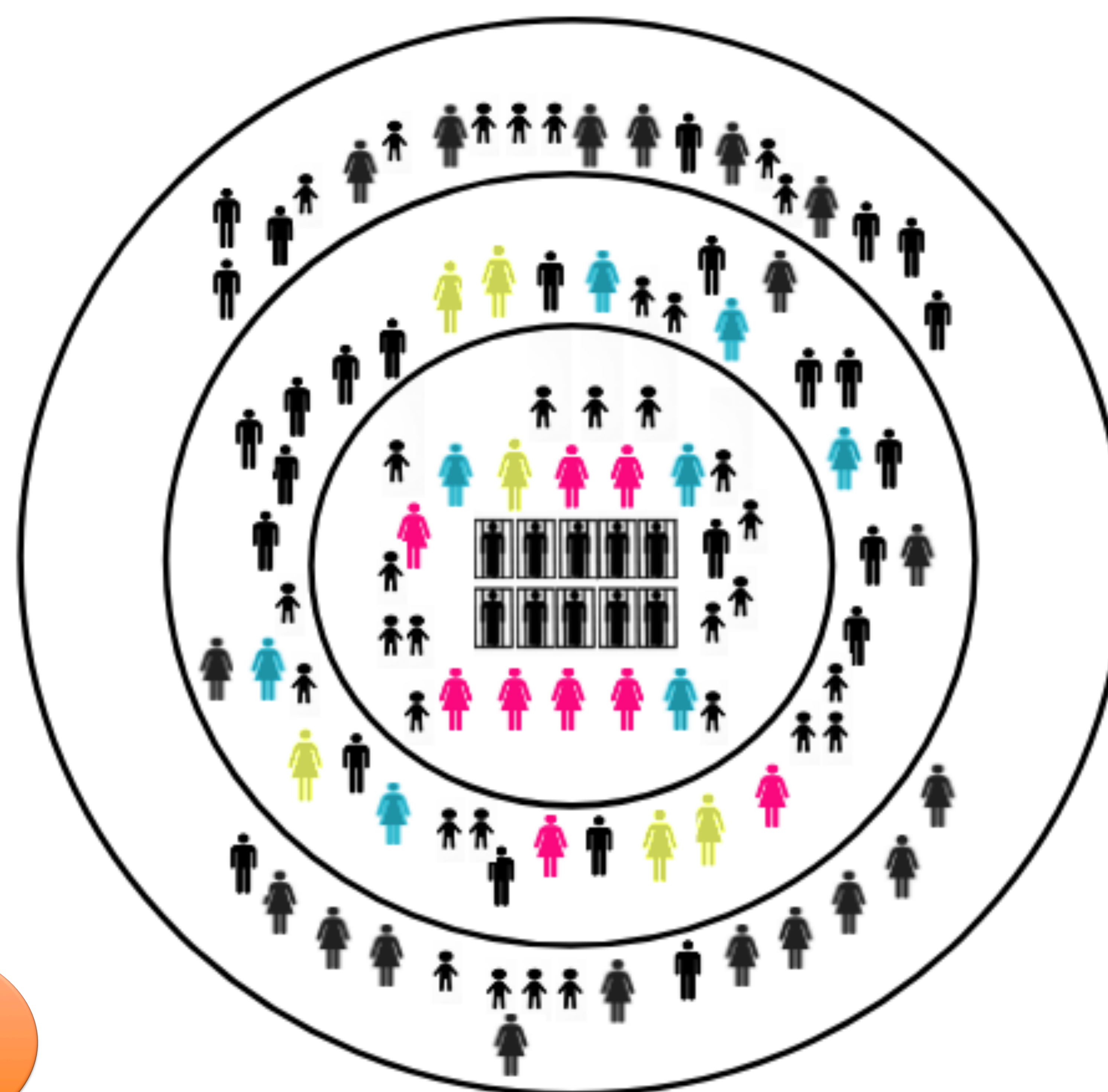
Impact on Children

Did Daddy
Hang up on
me?

"They're Broken Children"

Daddy's
House

"I wish that my two-year-old son could
have that father figure around"



Boxes: 10 incarcerated men associated with research study
Inner circle: Caregivers Interviewed, children they care for
Second Circle: Other people caregivers mentioned as directly impacted
Outer circle: Individuals mentioned as supportive of Caregivers

Child's Mother, Incarcerated Person's Mother, Incarcerated Person's Sister

Emotional Impact

"I just tell people that dealing with someone who is incarcerated, I believe, is more so like a mental thing. If you're not mentally prepared for it, its going to eat you alive."

Physical Impact

"Basically right now we're doing jail right along with him."

"We have two weekends: One we drive, one we don't drive- that's it. We don't have spring, we don't have winter, we don't have summer, we don't have snow we don't have beach. We have weekends we drive and weekends we don't drive."

Financial Impact

\$425 a month spent on direct costs supporting a loved one (phone calls, packages/ commissary, transportation)