



Bar-Ilan University
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

An Offspring's Incarceration as a Family Crisis



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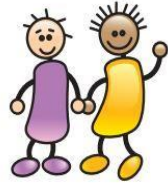
Bar Ilan University, Israel

How to talk about . . .

Jails and Prisons

. . . with Children

A Caregiver's Guide



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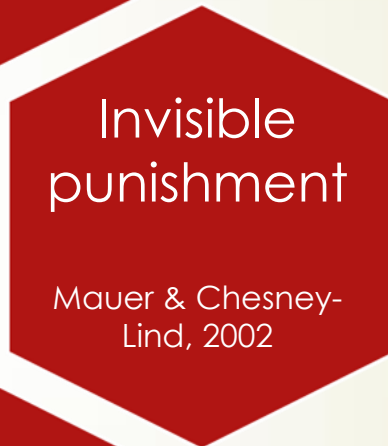
Unseen
victims of
the prison
boom

Petersilia, 2005



Forgotten
victims of
crime

Matthews, 1983



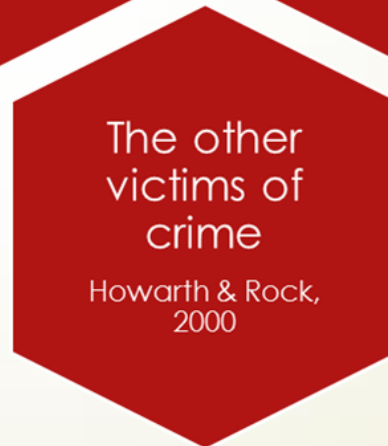
Invisible
punishment

Mauer & Chesney-
Lind, 2002



Orphans
of
justice

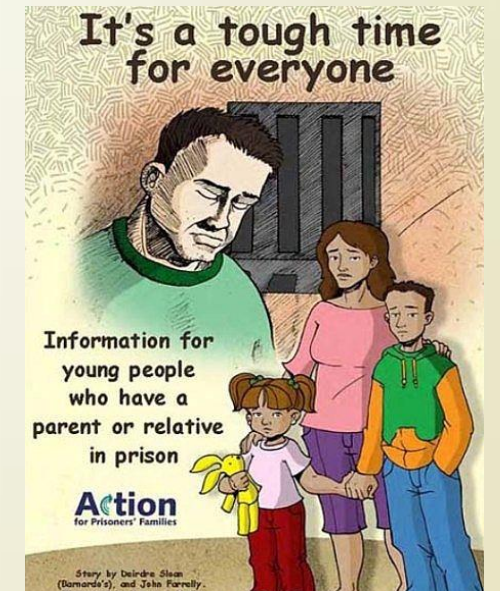
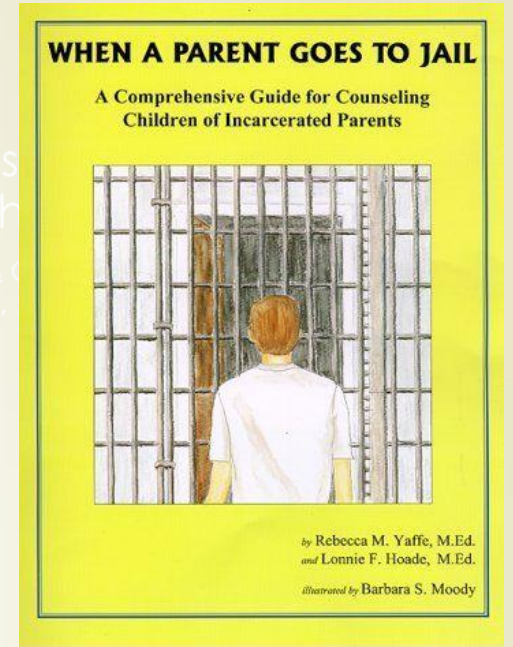
Shaw, 1992



The other
victims of
crime

Howarth & Rock,
2000

Invis
punish
Mauer &
Lind,





Family members go through incarceration “outside prison walls”

- Secondary prisonization (Comfort, 2007, 2008)
- Web of shame (Condry, 2007)
- Courtesy stigma (Braman, '04; Comfort, '03; Condry, '07 ; Goffman, '63; May, '00; Mills & Codd, '08; Sturges & Hanrahan, '11)
- In the shadow of prison (Codd, 2007, 2008)
- Domestic satellite (Comfort, 2002, 2003)
- Incarceration Ledger (Sampson, 2011)



Method

- ▶ Participants – 2 groups of 10 households (16 people each)
- ▶ Group 1: First experience encountering the legal system
- ▶ Group 2: Second experience or more
- ▶ 3 Families haven't experienced an incarceration of the family member (legal proceedings/ house arrests, etc.)
- ▶ 44.4% mothers
- ▶ 18.51% fathers
- ▶ 14.81% brothers
- ▶ 22.22% sisters
- ▶ Method: Semi-structured interviews with parents/siblings (voluntarily)

Findings

- ▶ **Direct and indirect costs (Braman, 2002)** – Financial (costs, loss of income), mental, psychological, social (shame, stigmatization by attribution), etc.
- ▶ **Familial Pains of Imprisonment (Listwan et al, 2013; Sykes, 1958)** – Losses of different kinds of liberty, a strong feeling of impotence.
- ▶ Mother: “I cry all the time, chain smoke, drink, don’t feel like doing anything at all”.
- ▶ Father: “It’s like going back to being 3 years old, emotionally. It’s waking up in the middle of the night crying, going to work crying... It turns you into another person. I suffered tremendously and my sugar levels and blood pressure went sky high”.



Findings

The feeling of being treated as prisoners “by proxy”



- ▶ Mother: “The visitations are awful. It’s steaming hot, no AC... Waiting is exhausting, you wait for two hours, and there’s nobody who can answer questions. There’s this barred window, that sometimes the guard just slams in your face in the middle of the sentence... Even if you have a time scheduled – it’s obligatory for us, not for them”.
- ▶ Sister: “They treat us like animals! I sent a fax – to say that it wasn’t me who committed the crime, nor the other relatives or the poor children... We are the guests – we came to visit our loved ones, no matter what they are. They are our loved ones”.

The Criminal Spin (Ronel, 2009)



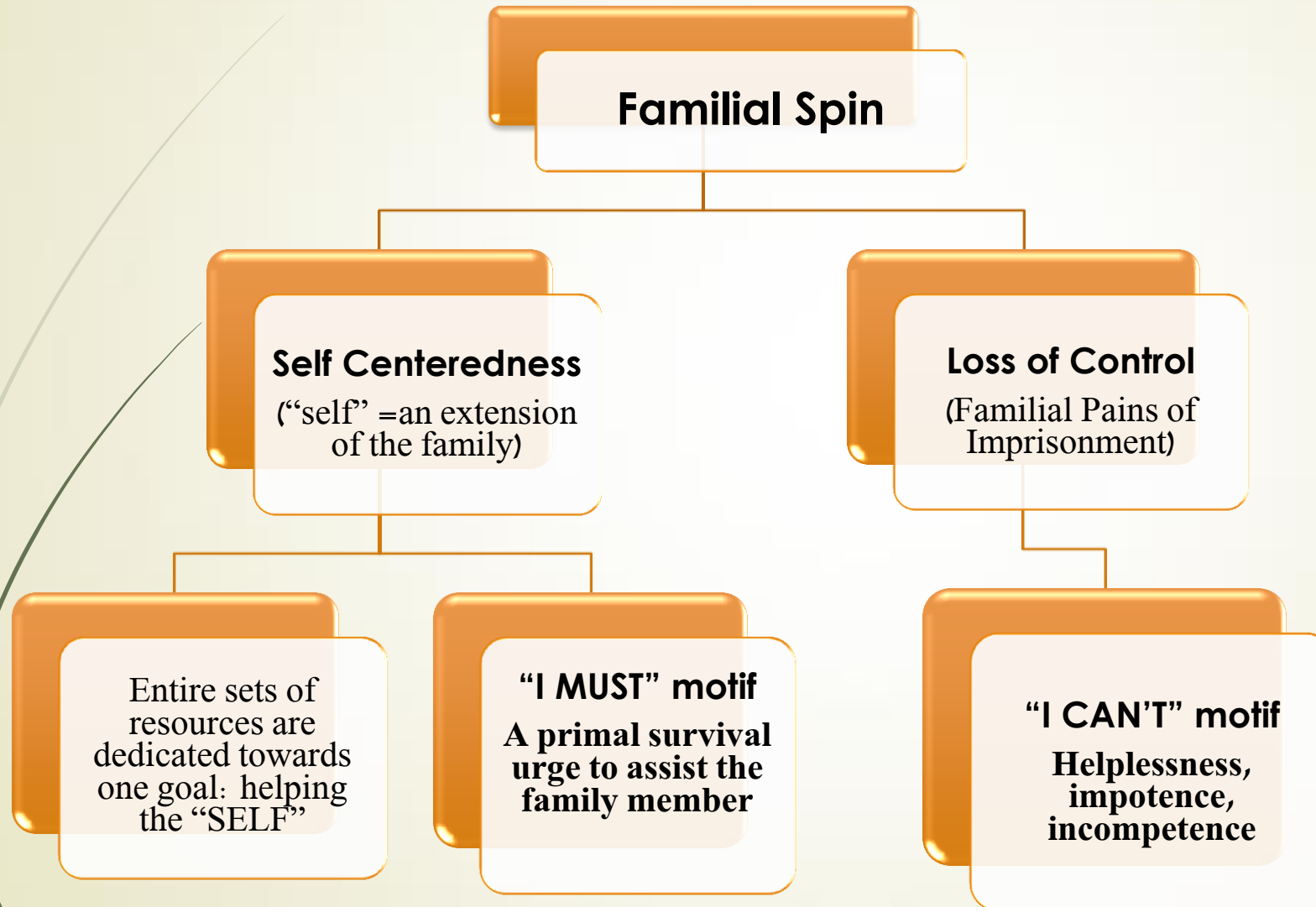
• "I CAN" motif

• "I MUST" motif



Mother: “It has physically affected us – dizziness, nausea, lack of sleep, headaches... It’s as if someone put us in a carousel and we don’t know when it will stop”.

The Familial Spin



Increased
with time

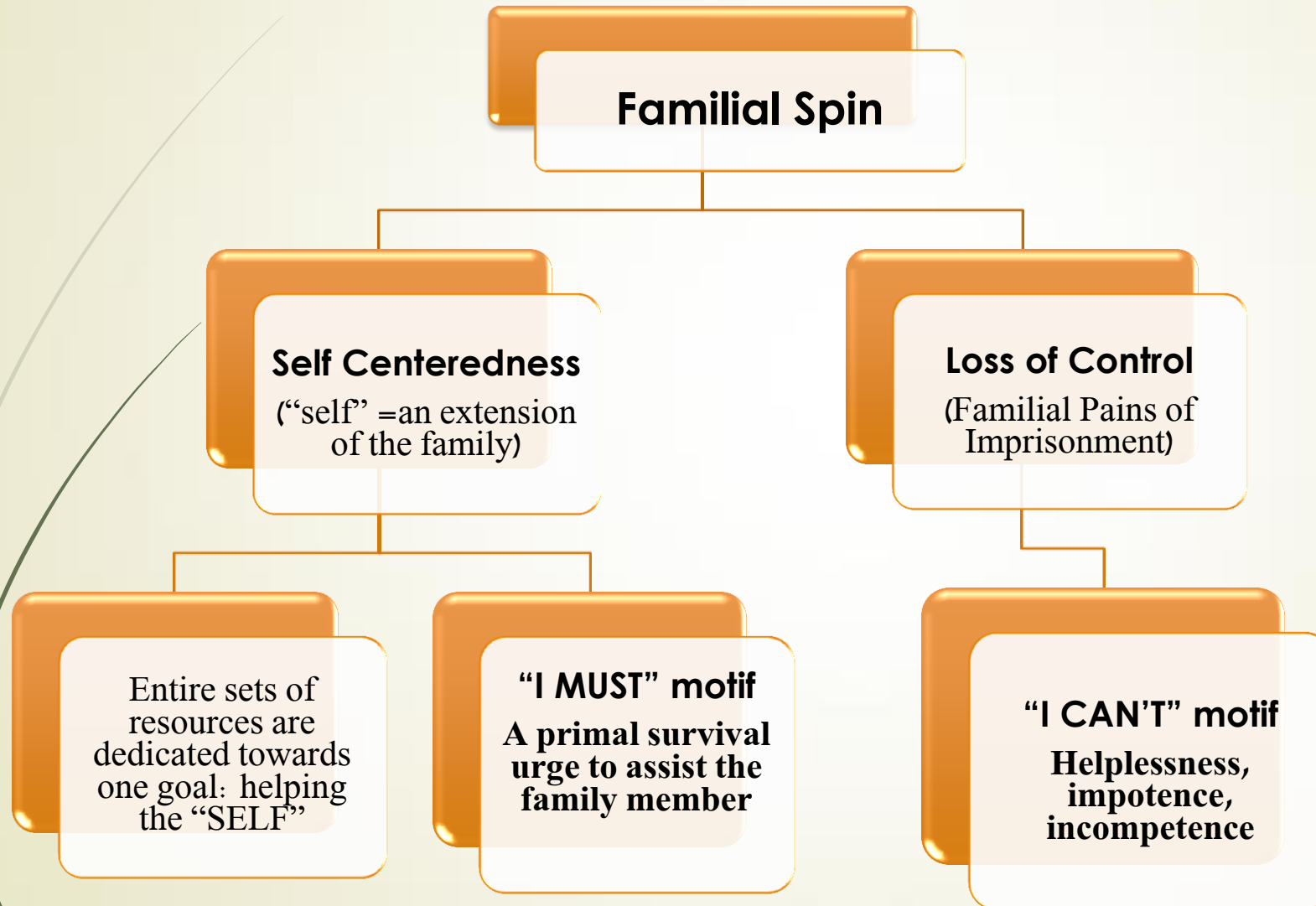


Self Centeredness – I MUST Motif


(“self” =an extension of the family)

- ▶ Mother: “When you put everyone together and each member has a role to play – something is happening. There’s a dominant character that has affected all of us and there’s nothing else to do but help – it’s a chain. So if one link got bent – all the links are bent”.
- ▶ Mother: “It was really important for me that he’d spend the least amount of time in this ‘school’! He doesn’t smoke, but I’d buy him cartons – ‘you are the one to give – don’t dare ask anything of others!’”.

The Familial Spin




**Increased
with time**



Loss of Control – I CAN'T Motif

(Familial Incarceration Pains)

- ▶ Sister: “We didn’t get any explanation as to how to deposit money for him. Other families who knew – explained it to us. There isn’t even a pamphlet!”.
- ▶ Mother: “The visitation was scheduled for 08:30? No one is there. And the family members are sitting... it’s heartbreaking – until 10, 11... such disrespect! ...We are allowed to bring him A, B, C – he has permission from the warden. But the person in the entrance says ‘not this shirt’. ‘why?’ – ‘because no’”.
- ▶ Mother: “Each time - he got out of prison with stronger anti-social emotions, and so did I... nobody gives you any information – there are no phone numbers of the social workers or the wardens... and even if you do get the number, they never give you any information”.



Loss of Control – I CAN'T Motif

Developing negative attitudes towards the establishments

- ▶ Father: “There’s a huge injustice in the criminal system... it’s all set and fixed, nothing is clean. The police is the same. I used to volunteer, today I don’t go there, it’s all lies and conspiracies... The prison system is really disappointing, it’s a harsh, unfair system. It hurts. Disappointment is an understatement”.
- ▶ Sister: “Today we don’t even put up a flag on Independence Day... we don’t feel like we are a part of the country... yes, we live here, pay the taxes, work hard, but we feel hatred towards the establishments... as a kid, a cop was someone good, who you could count on. Today we know it’s a person dying to finish his shift and go home, the justice or truth don’t really interest him... And the same goes to the legal system... What do we have left regarding the connection to this country?”.



Disrupting The Spin

- ▶ No existing support groups (neither formal/welfare, nor private)
- ▶ No rules or regulations regarding the family members
- ▶ No information given at almost any stage
- ▶ No EMPATHY

- ▶ Father: “If there was someone to talk to – the family’s coping could and would have been much better!”.
- ▶ Mother: “There should be programs to prepare all of us – both us and him – before he gets out”.

Practical Implications

- ▶ Information throughout the different stages – Police/ Court system/ Parole/ Welfare/ Jail/ Prison, etc.
- ▶ Building suitable support programs, based on:

Empathy

Information about different rights

Psychological tools

Social tools – inward/outward stigma and stigma by association

Mental/emotional tools

Finance management/assistance

Father: “On the first day when we arrived to the police station, an investigator could have sat with us, why did we have to wait outside like nobodies and cry on the curb?... The attitude towards family members has to change. In court – let there be an option for the judge to talk to the family and ask them about the matter”.

THANK YOU

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