

**Young children raised in prison:
negative and positive aspects**

**Mental health of the incarcerated population
of two Brazilian large cities**

**Risk factors for
child mental health problems**

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**Children living with incarcerated mothers
Brazilian laws**

Incarceration units for women must have:

- ✓ Nursery rooms, where they can breastfeed their babies up to six months of age (1984)
- ✓ Special sections for pregnant women (delivery) (2009)
- ✓ Daycare for children (6 months - 6 years) (2009)

Daycares are required to have qualified staff and adequate operating hours to guarantee high quality care to children and incarcerated mothers/caretakers

Marital stability and child care

- ✓ The majority of men in prison are supported by their partners, who visit them and take care of their children
- ✓ The majority of incarcerated women are abandoned by their partners and close relatives
- ✓ Children living with their mothers/caretakers in prison must leave when completing 7 years of age, and are frequently sent to shelters or relatives that live far away from the prison
- ✓ Older children of incarcerated mothers suffer prejudice in school and may dropout

Young children raised in prison

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

- ✓ Pregnancy develops in a context of vulnerability, and lack of social support
- ✓ Maternity in seclusion favors maternal depression, and drug use
- ✓ Prison as an adverse environment for raising children due to penitentiary rules (e.g. restricted hours of sun exposure), and frequent interpersonal conflicts involving the mother

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- ✓ Mother-child relationship is not broken, reducing the possibility of sending the baby to shelters and later abandonment
- ✓ Babies are not early deprived from their mother's affection
- ✓ Women benefit from the experience of caring for their babies (decreases distress related to incarceration, and have a positive effect on maternal mental health)

Brazilian women in prison

- ✓ The number of incarcerated women is increasing mainly due to involvement in drug trafficking
- ✓ Overcrowding in female units
- ✓ More difficulties to offer an appropriate environment for children living in prisons
 - Space
 - Staff
 - Costs

Study with incarcerated adults (n = 1840) Federal University of São Paulo

- ✓ Total sample of incarcerated adults

7%	93%
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- ✓ Had children or adolescents

80%	40%
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- ✓ Current mental health problems

45%	21%
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- ✓ Current severe mental health problems

26%	10%
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Risk factors for child mental health problems

Study objectives

- 1. To determine the prevalence of specific types of child mental health problems in an urban poor neighborhood**
 - Internalizing problems (anxiety/depression)
 - Externalizing problems (aggressive behavior, rule-breaking behavior)
- 2. To identify risk factors**
 - Maternal anxiety/depression
 - Absent father

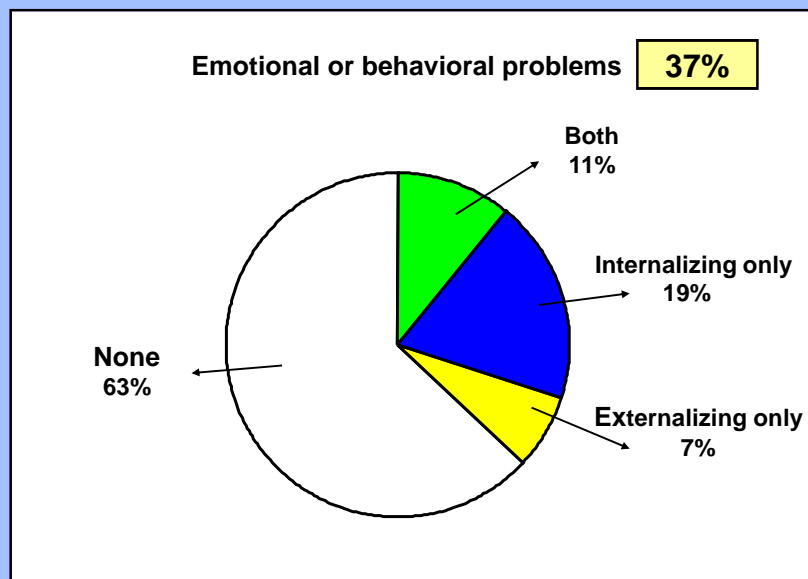
Urban poor neighborhood of a city with 230,000 inhabitants

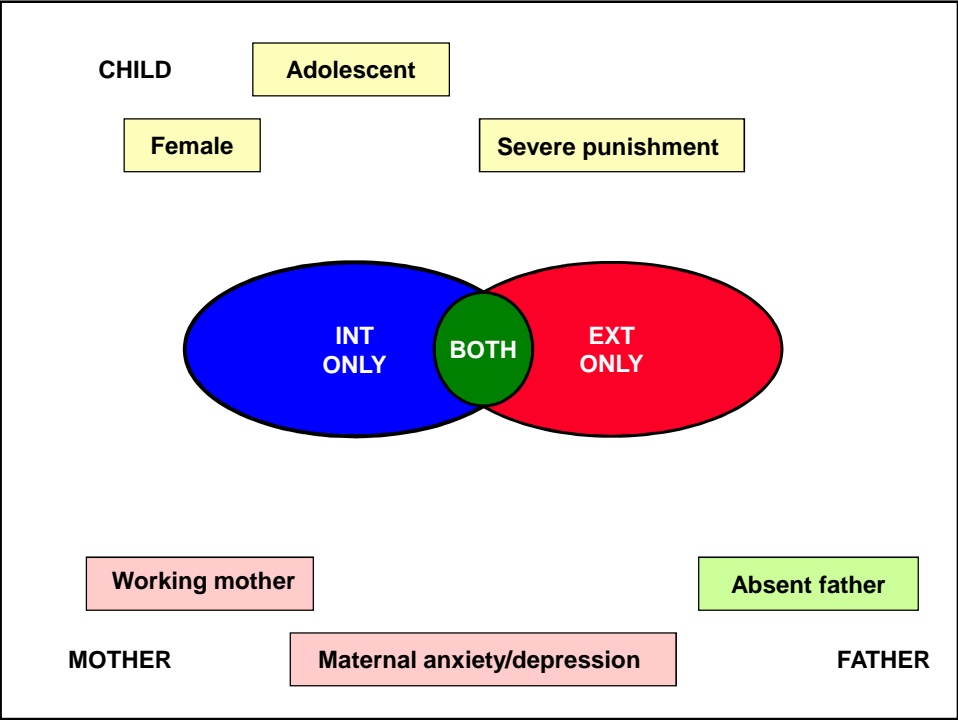
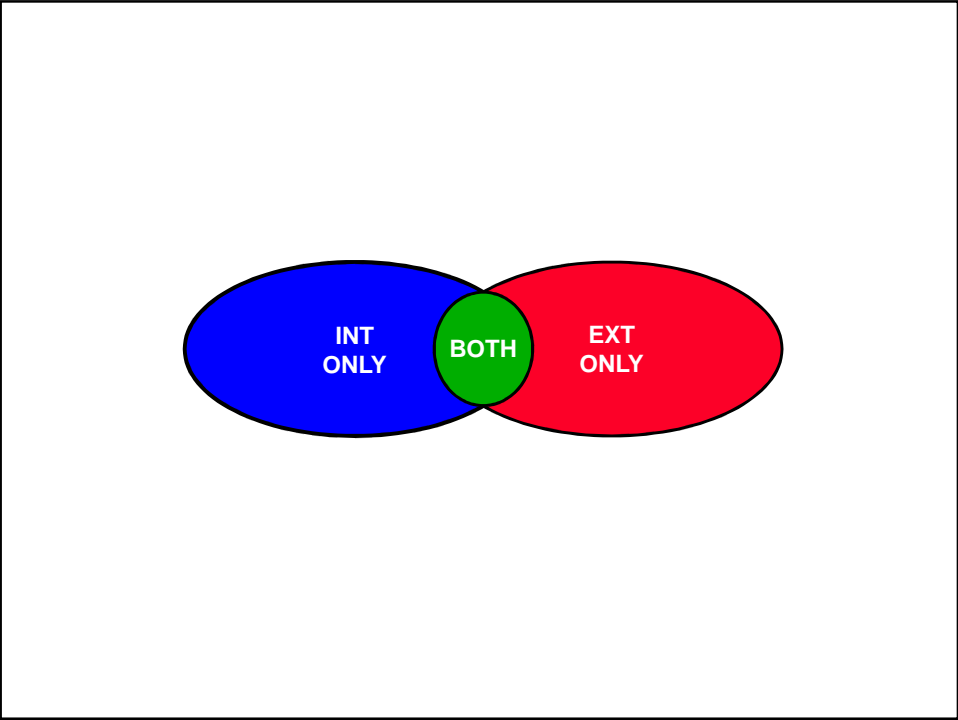


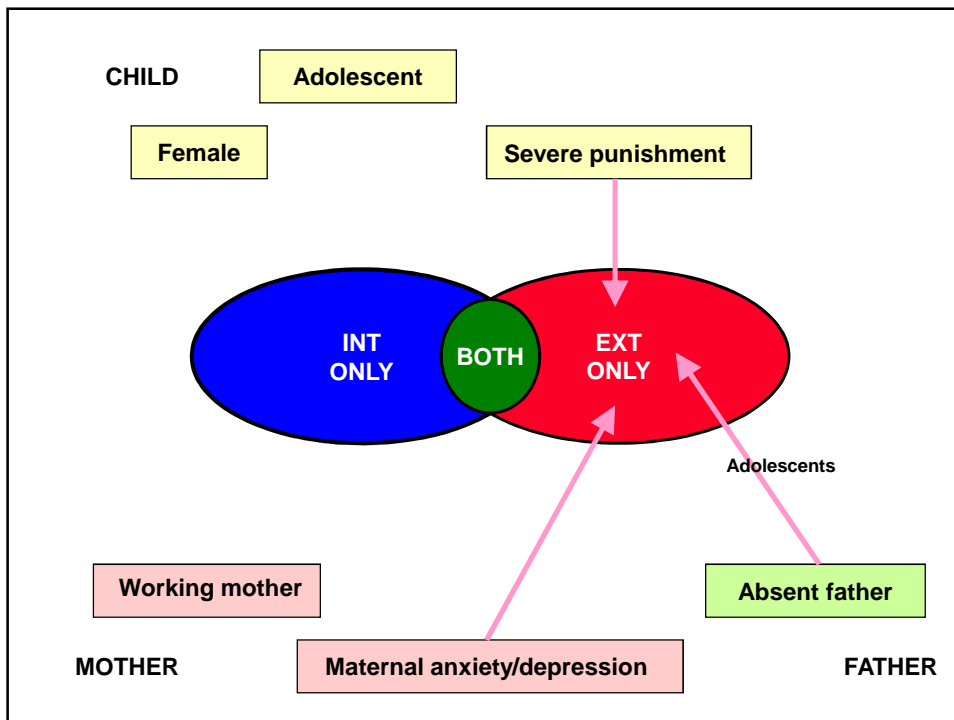
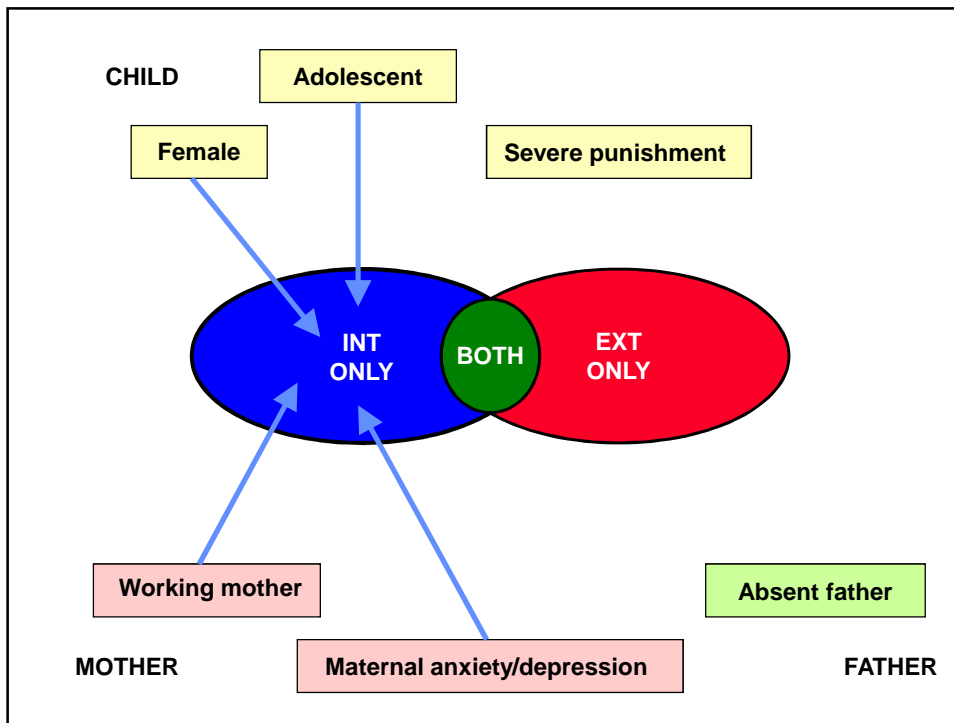
20 million live in the metropolitan area of São Paulo City

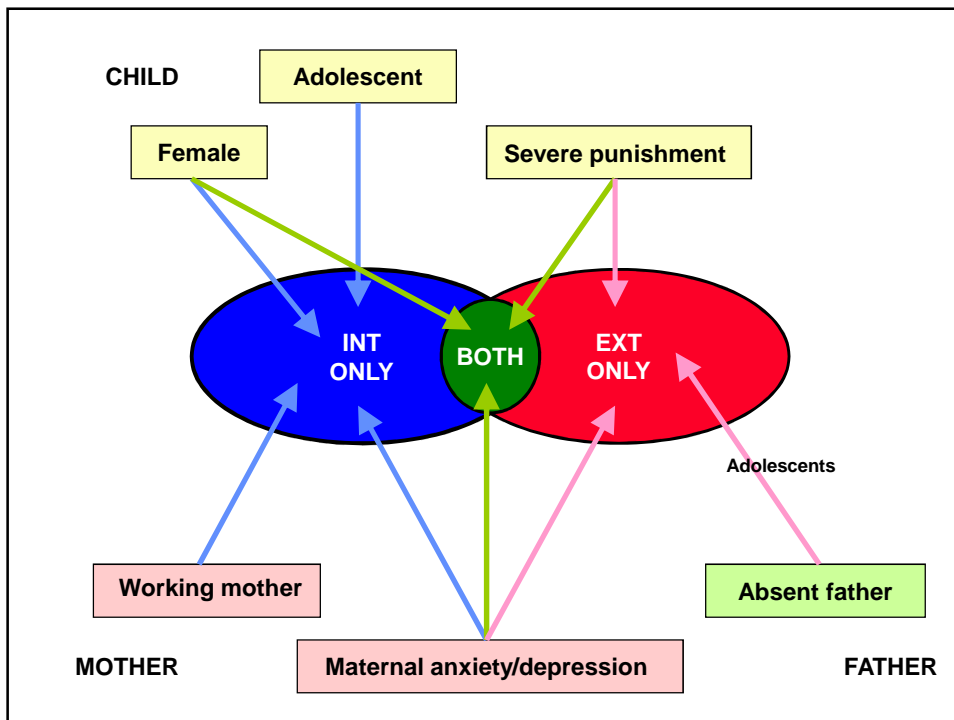
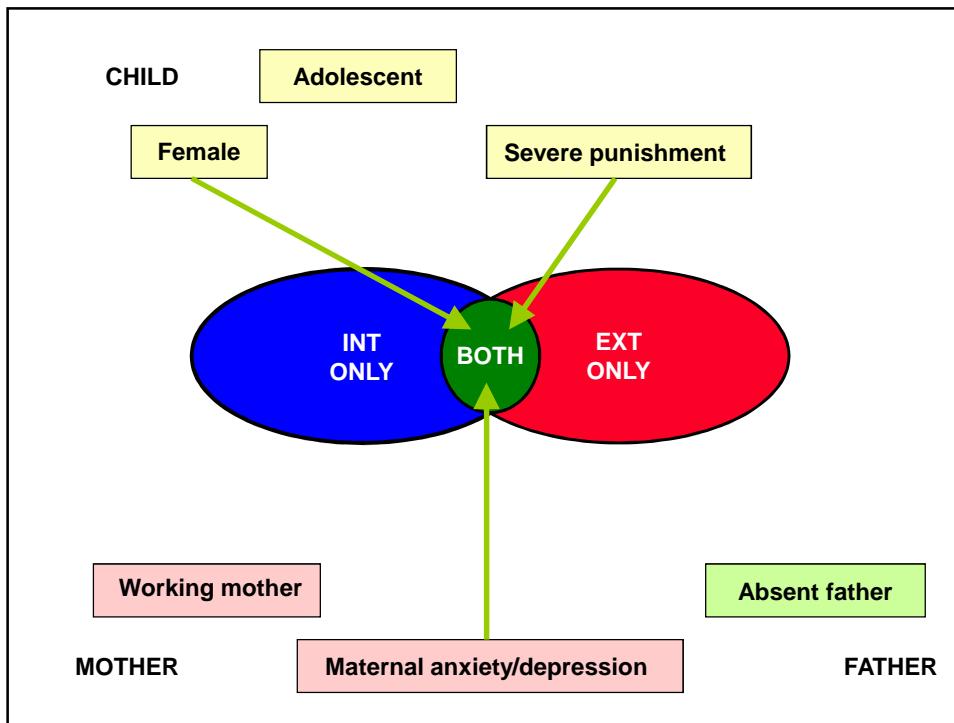


480 children aged 6-17 years









Conclusions

1. Living in prison with the mother may be beneficial to young children depending on maternal mental health and environmental conditions
2. Anxiety and depression are frequent among incarcerated women, many of them mothers
3. Maternal anxiety/depression is a very important risk factor for different types of child emotional/behavioral problems
4. The absence of a father favors aggressive behavior and rule-breaking behavior among adolescents that live in urban poor areas