

Title

In the Middle of It: Music in Prison for Mothers and Babies

Abstract

There is an established field on the impact of parental imprisonment between parents and children that are separated by imprisonment, and research on music in prisons has often focused on the benefits for adults who engage with music while incarcerated (Henley et al., 2012). However, there is a much smaller discourse on women who are incarcerated and raising their young children with them inside prison, and the musical interactions between mother and child.

In this presentation we discuss our research project designed to bring together practitioners and researchers that work across the many areas of this practice including music education, health and penology in online workshops and visits to establishments in Portugal and the U.K. We discuss music programmes designed for delivery to participants in formal educational settings, as well as the everyday musicking that can take place between mothers and their children, for example, in cells, and how this may mitigate the negative impact of imprisonment for women. The number of women in custody around the world has increased substantially, and on every continent, by over 100,000 in the last decade (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). This research will expand knowledge and understanding of a hidden area of practice, music as a form of communication between mothers and their young children who reside in custody with them, and discuss implications for music in the prison environment.

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