

Presentation Title: Of Agency and Entrapment: Analyzing the Narratives of Women Formerly on Death Row in the Philippines

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1. Aim

This paper examines the pathways to prison among women formerly on death row in the Philippines. I compare and contrast the accounts of women who admitted their culpability and those who maintained their innocence. I analyze how the women negotiated their agency—or otherwise—in their narratives.

2. Data & Methods

I conducted in-depth interviews with 27 women formerly on death row, 9 of their family members, and 8 prison staff. I engaged in participant observation at two women's prisons in the Philippines. I undertook document analysis of prison and dormitory rules and reports on capital punishment and incarcerated women.

3. Results

The respondents' narratives illuminate four pathways to death row: 1) retaliation for abuse; 2) "hard living" and economic need; 3) substance abuse; and 4) deception and betrayal in relationships. Their experiences of victimization, socio-economic marginalization, and substance abuse issues are linked to their crimes. Deception and betrayal in relationships, compounded by corruption in the criminal justice system, constituted a pathway to death row for many.

4. Conclusion

The respondents were in marginalized positions in their families and relationships, workplaces, and society. Their crimes resulted from their efforts to cope with their circumstances. Their narratives reflect social realities—and facets of low-income and working class culture—and the dynamics of their conflict-ridden world.

References

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