

Summer 2009

Annotated Bibliography: Parental Incarceration

Kolina J. Delgado

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/psych_student



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Delgado, K. J. (2009). Annotated Bibliography: Parental Incarceration. .
https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/psych_student/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Psychology at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Psychology Student Publications by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact corescholar@www.libraries.wright.edu, library-corescholar@wright.edu.

Annotated Bibliography: Parental Incarceration

Kolina Delgado, B.A.

Wright State University

School of Professional Psychology

Service Delivery Systems

Summer 2009

Annotated Bibliography: Parental Incarceration

Arditti, J. A., Lambert-Shute, J., & Joest, K. (2003). Saturday morning at the jail: Implications of incarceration for families and children. *Family Relations*, 52 (3), 195-204.

The authors, researchers at the Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech, specialize in criminal justice, at risk youth and families. The study examined the social, health, and economic characteristics of parents and children visiting an incarcerated family member and investigated how these factors may be associated with incarceration. Semistructured interviews were administered to family members bringing children to visit an incarcerated parent. The authors found that survivor family members experience risk via emotional stress, parenting strain, work-family conflict, financial strain, and social stigma. The authors suggest that given the risks involved to survivor families, alternative approaches to dealing with crime should be adopted, especially those for nonviolent offenses. Whereas other articles reviewed below consider the social, financial, and psychological implications of parental incarceration, the current article places greater significance on an overhaul of the criminal justice system in response to an overrepresentation of nonviolent offenders within the system.

Chaney, R., Linkenhoker, D., & Horne, A. (1977). The counselor and children of incarcerated parents. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, 11(3), 177-184.

Reece Chaney is Professor of Education, Dan Linkenhoker was a doctoral student at the time of publication, and Arthur Horne is Associate Professor of Education, all in the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Indiana State University, Terra Haute. The article discusses the problems faced by children of incarcerated parents, the importance of family integration, and the various roles of the counselor in situations involving these children and their families. One of the problems as discussed in the article that increase the risk of these children is the fact that most children are very young at the time of parental incarceration. The majority of persons in prison are young adults therefore their children are

usually very young. In addition, they are deprived both economically and socially. Moreover, these children are products of their environments, innocent victims of events they have no control over.

Evidence suggests that girls are more likely to suffer emotional problems whereas boys are more likely to act out. The author suggests that therapists can act as a consultant to schools and parents, or can do counseling in an individual, family, or group modality but stresses the importance of understanding the issues faced by these children and their families prior to acting in these roles. In contrast to Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest (2003) discussed above, Chaney, Linkenhoker, & Horne focus more on the counselor's potential roles in assisting these children and their families whereas the former places more emphasis on changes needing to be made to the criminal justice system itself.

Clopton, K. L., & East, K. K. (2008). "Are there other kids like me?" Children with a parent in prison.

Early Childhood Education, 36, 195-198. Doi: 10.1007/s10643-008-0266-z.

The authors, researchers at the University of Northern Iowa, specialize in educational psychology. They provide an overview of issues faced by children who have an incarcerated parent. The article is directed toward those working in educational settings. The authors propose that regardless of whether children feel open to discussing parental incarceration or not, teachers can provide support through materials made available in the classroom that serve to normalize the experience of these children. They provide information about books that can be used in the classroom as a means of outreach and support. This is the only article included in this bibliography that addresses the role of educators in normalizing these children's experience and reducing the stigma associated with having an incarcerated parent.

Fishman, S. H. (1983). The impact of incarceration on children of offenders. In M. Frank (Ed.). *Children of Exceptional Parents* (p. 89-99). London: Haworth Press.

The author at the time this article was published was the director of Women in Crisis, a private agency that provides assistance to families of offenders. Currently, the author is an education consultant. The

article discusses the impact of parental incarceration during specific crisis points that have been identified as especially distressing times for the family left at home. These crisis points include arrest and pre-trial, sentencing day, initial incarceration, and pre/post release. The author discusses the similarities and differences experienced during these crisis points when the incarcerated parent is a mother or father. Additionally, the author provides information about innovative programs for children of offenders such as the “Sesame Street Program” and programs that provide support for families. Unlike other articles reviewed in this bibliography, Fishman’s is the only one that provides insight into the specific problems encountered during the stages of arrest and incarceration.

Gabel, S. (1992). Children of incarcerated parents and criminal parents: Adjustment, behavior, and prognosis. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 20(1), 33-45.

The author, a researcher at Cornell University Medical College who specializes in child and adolescent psychiatry reviewed the available literature on the adjustment and behavior of children of incarcerated and criminal parents. The article is directed toward mental health professionals because it is the author’s belief that due to the rapid increase in the numbers of incarcerated individuals, the children of these individuals are great in number and may represent a growing population that will seek mental health services. The review suggests that these children experience a wide array of behavioral and emotional problems during the time of a parent’s incarceration linked to a number of factors including separation, identification with the incarcerated parent, social stigma, and deception of the child about the incarcerated parent’s whereabouts. Whereas, Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest (2003) discuss the implications of incarceration experienced by the family as a whole, Gabel (1992) focuses on the impact experienced by the children of incarcerated parents.

Gabel, S., & Schindlecker, R. (1993). Characteristics of children whose parents have been incarcerated. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 44 (7), 656-660.

The lead author is chairman of the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Children's Hospital in Denver, Colorado and associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Schindlecker is affiliated with the department of psychiatry at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Medical Center in New York City. The article is intended for those interested in the prevalence and characteristics of children with a history of parental incarceration. The authors examined the prevalence of history of parental incarceration among youths admitted to the children's day hospital at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. In addition, the researchers investigated relationships between parental incarceration and behavioral and family characteristics. More than 40 percent of the youth admitted to the day program reported a history of parental incarceration. Therefore, it appears that parental incarceration not only has social consequences to children and families but also mental health consequences. The results indicated that parental incarceration may be an indicator of parental substance abuse and increased rates of child abuse or maltreatment. Parental incarceration is also correlated to behavioral disorders in children such as hyperactivity, attention deficits, or delinquent or aggressive conduct. Due to the characteristics of the sample, the authors warn that these findings may be most applicable to severely disadvantaged children from minority groups or families with a history of abuse. In contrast to Gabel (1992) above, this article is focused more on prevalence of mental health issues among these children whereas Gabel (1992) focused on the underlying stressors experienced by these children that may contribute to their mental health needs.

Hanlon, T. E., Carswell, S. B., & Rose, M. (2007). Research on the caretaking of children of incarcerated parents: Findings and their service delivery implications. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*, 348-362.

The authors, researchers at the Friends Research Institute in Baltimore, Maryland reviewed research available on caretaking of children of incarcerated parents. All three authors have extensive research

backgrounds related to at risk youth. The article is intended for use among mental health professionals working with children at increased risk due to parental incarceration. The paper focuses on African American children of incarcerated parents. In addition, it provides an emphasis on the impact of incarceration of mothers and explores the phenomenon of surrogate caregiving by grandparents and the considerations of service delivery implications that address intergenerational parenting related problems. The review revealed that the grandmother often acted as the female serving in the mother's role for the longest period of time during parental incarceration. The findings also suggest that the problems associated with parental incarceration appear to be intergenerational and vary considerably in complexity and level of risk. The authors recommend that mental health professionals working with these children conduct a thorough assessment to distinguish the level of risk and the impact of parental incarceration. From this information, professionals should implement prevention strategies specifically designed to meet their needs and prepare them for the future. Therapy should focus on strengthening the integration of the family, promoting the use of community services, and protecting the welfare of the child. By focusing on African American children, this article offers something unique to the research literature as African Americans tend to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

Nesmith, A., & Ruhland, E. (2008). Children of incarcerated parents: Challenges and resiliency, in their own words. *Children and Youth Services Review, 30*, 1119-1130.

Ande Nesmith is a senior researcher at Chapin Hall, University of Chicago whose research interests include runaways from home and from foster care, children and youth with an incarcerated parent, and improving services and identifying best practices for foster care. Ebony Ruhland is a research associate for the Council on Crime and Justice. The researchers collected qualitative data through direct interviews with thirty-four children of incarcerated parents between the ages of 8 and 17. All of the participant children had a father in prison while 2 of them also had a mother in prison. To the authors

knowledge this is the only study that reflects the implications of parental incarceration from the child's perspective. The interviews explored not only the hardships faced by these children but also how they survive and even thrive at times. The interviews yielded 5 common themes: social challenges, awareness and attention to adult needs, the caregiver acting as a gatekeeper of the child-parent relationship, conceptions of prison and feelings of fairness, and resiliency. The data suggests that although for some children, parental separation may be beneficial (e.g. cases of child abuse or neglect), for most, it is vital to maintain a connection even throughout the incarceration period. The authors suggest that the key to supporting these children is to support their caregivers because all of the children in the study were acutely aware of their caregiver's stresses and many went to great lengths to alleviate them. Therefore, if more resources are aimed at the caregivers, the benefits will inevitably positively impact the children. This article offers valuable insight into the experiences of children of incarcerated parents through the author's direct interviews with the children.