

***Children as residual damage:
Consequences of living with(out) an
incarcerated parent***

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***The test of the morality of
a society is what it does
for its children.***

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Incarceration in the US

- Increasing # of inmates in federal, state & local prison/jail facilities
- Increase in women being incarcerated
- Male vs female prison populations
 - Type of offense
 - Custody
- Little research

Children's experience of parental incarceration

- Circumstances of arrest/trial
 - (dis)empowerment issues
- Home & caregiver circumstances
 - Placement
 - Siblings
 - Schools
 - Structural & material changes

Children's experience of parental incarceration

- Affected by age & stage of development
 - Infancy
 - Toddlerhood
 - School age
 - Adolescence

Children's experience of parental incarceration

- **Cognitive**
 - consumed w/ parent's issues & court case
 - flashbacks
- **Emotional**
 - fear, sadness, anger, shame, embarrassment, anxiety, loneliness, guilt, low self esteem
- **Behavioral**
 - eating & sleeping disorders
 - aggression, acting out, disruptive, antisocial

Children's experience of parental incarceration

- **Social**
 - stigma of parent's incarceration
 - may withdraw from friends & family
- **Academic**
 - academic & classroom behavior difficulties
 - truancy
- **Socioeconomic**
 - often offender was family breadwinner
 - balance is upset

Children of incarcerated mothers

- All children are at risk if a parent has been incarcerated
- However, seems to be more disruptive to child if mother is incarcerated

Parenting behind bars

- Severed, strained, changed relationships
 - Change in roles, view, concerns
 - "long distance" parenting
 - "public" parenting

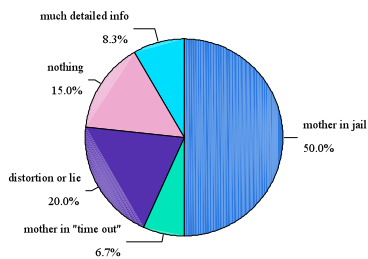
Effects on Family

- Emotional changes
 - loss of control
 - confusion, anxiety, embarrassment
 - lack of information
 - close & distant future is uncertain
- Dynamic changes
 - communication patterns change
 - power may shift
 - instability within family

Intervention Strategies

- Positive parent-child relationship should be maintained
 - Rejection issues
 - Aggravation of pre-existing issues
 - Truth (developmentally appropriate)
 - From parent and caregiver
 - From professionals

What Children were Told about Their Mother's Incarceration



Recidivism

- Children of incarcerated parents
 - 41% more likely to be suspended from school
 - 31% more likely to have run-ins with police
 - 6 x more likely to end up in prison

Tips

- Model the behavior you expect
- Confidentiality
- Be consistent
- Use active listening
- Have structure, but be willing to be flexible
- Label emotions
- Use
 - Role plays
 - Games
 - Stories/poems
 - Activities
 - Discussion
 - Group and individual projects
 - Journaling
 - Art
