

Critical Review of Literature:

Children of Incarcerated

Parents

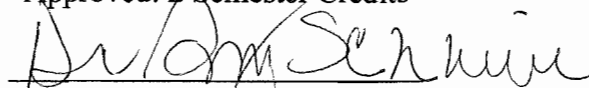
by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

School Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



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February, 2011

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Title: *Critical Review of Literature: Children of Incarcerated Parents*

Graduate Degree/Major: M.S. School Counseling

Research Advisor: Amy Schlieve, Ed. D.

Month/Year: February 2011

Number of Pages: 40

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 6th edition

Abstract

Incarceration impacts many more people than those behind bars. As the number of incarcerated individuals continues to rise, the effects of incarceration have become more pronounced in society. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1.5 million minors deal with parental incarceration every year (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Parental incarceration has been linked with various short-term and long-term risk factors for children, including an increased risk of incarceration (Johnston, 1995). In addition, children with incarcerated parents are more likely to suffer from mental health issues, have behavioral problems, drop out of high school or experience issues related to school performance (Farrington, 2002).

Research indicates that the overall effects of parental incarceration differ based on whether a child's mother or father is incarcerated (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003). The length of sentencing and placement of children during an incarceration differ for incarcerated fathers versus mothers (Mumola, 2000). Extensive separations from children have been shown to have an impact on incarcerated parents as well (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of parental incarceration on mothers, fathers and children in depth. This study also examined the availability and efficacy of programming and services available to incarcerated parents and their families which may mitigate many of the negative effects associated with parental incarceration. Recommendations were made regarding programming needs and ways schools could assist children and families affected by parental incarceration.

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Acknowledgements

Amy Schlieve, thank you for agreeing to take me on as a thesis student. I greatly appreciate all of the support and encouragement that you gave me. Your flexibility and assistance were paramount in completing this task.

My amazing sister, Jessica Gibson, I am so appreciative of your diligent proofreading, editing and critiquing of the various drafts of this paper. Your careful eye and patience really helped polish my final product. You have been an invaluable resource throughout my academic endeavors, and I sincerely appreciate all of the assistance you have provided me. I really respect your ideas and your suggestions for you have undoubtedly improved the quality of my work.

My loving husband, I cannot thank you enough for all of your love and support. I truly would not have been able to accomplish this without you by my side. Your continuous support, encouragement, patience, and comedic relief have helped me tremendously throughout my graduate career. You constantly provide me with a sense of renewed purpose and perspective, and I will be forever grateful to you for everything you did to help me achieve my goals.

Mom, thank you for being such an incredible source of inspiration to me. It is because of you that I have strived to excel at everything I have done. Your support throughout the years has truly been remarkable. I feel so incredibly fortunate to have a mother like you. Words can not express my gratitude.

I will be forever grateful to my best friend and “other sister”, Holly Gums. Thank you so much for always believing in me. Your encouragement and support mean so much to me.

Thank you for always listening and reminding me to believe in myself. I feel so blessed and honored to have a friend like you. You are one in a million.

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Chapter I: Introduction

According to the Department of Justice, in 2005 one out of every 136 residents of the United States was incarcerated in prison or jail (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Despite the fact that this already represents a large sector of the population, the number of inmates continues to grow. Between 1995 and 2005 the United States' prison population alone increased by an average of 44,527 inmates every year (Harrison & Beck, 2006). This number does not account for any increases within the jail population. Consequently, issues related to incarceration have become a topic of significant interest to researchers in a variety of fields. Researchers have become increasingly interested in the long term ramifications of isolating members of the incarcerated population from the rest of the world. More specifically, researchers have begun to question the ways in which the absence of these individuals from society affects both the individuals themselves and the members of their primary social network (Newby, 2006).

One of the primary groups of interest to researchers is incarcerated parents. Parental incarceration encompasses a plethora of topics of study because of the effects on both parents and children. Research indicates that the effects of parental incarceration differ based on whether the child's mother or father is incarcerated. Women are more likely than men to live with and have custody of their children prior to incarceration (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003). Fathers on the other hand, are less likely to live with their children prior to or following incarceration. Fathers are also more likely to be incarcerated more often and for longer periods of time than mothers (Mumola, 2000). Thus, the effects of parental incarceration differ based on whether a child's mother or father is incarcerated.

Concerns related to the effects of parental incarceration on children are an area of considerable interest to researchers because of the sheer number of children affected.

Consequently, researchers have begun to assess not only how incarceration impacts parents, but the overall effects and implications of parental incarceration on children. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1.5 million minors deal with parental incarceration every year (Harrison & Beck, 2006). In addition, as jail and prison populations continue to increase, the number of children affected by parental incarceration will also continue to increase. Therefore, researchers have taken a particular interest in studying the short and long term consequences of parental incarceration on children. Research indicates that children of incarcerated parents are up to ten times more likely to be incarcerated during their lifetime than children of non-incarcerated parents (Johnston, 1995). This statistic further underscores the importance of examining the potential risk factors which may contribute to such a significant difference between these populations.

The study of the effects of parental incarceration on children is complicated by confounding variables. Because children with incarcerated parents are exposed to various other risk factors it is not possible to draw casual relationships between parental incarceration and effects on children. Researchers have found that children of incarcerated parents are statistically more likely to be exposed to violence, alcohol, substance abuse and family structure instability (Phillips, Erkanli, Keeler, Costello & Angold, 2006). Furthermore, children whose parents are incarcerated are more likely to be raised in homes by parents with low levels of educational attainment, substance abuse and mental health issues; factors which contribute to negative outcomes for children (Katz, 1998).

In addition to assessing the effects of parental incarceration, various researchers have investigated the available programming and services available in order to help mitigate the risk factors experienced by incarcerated parents, their children and families. The type of

programming and resources available to incarcerated parents may vary greatly from one institution to the next based on a variety of factors including financial considerations, the philosophy of the correctional institution and whether or not evidence-based programming is utilized. The efficacy of programs greatly varies depending on their structure (Hughes & Harrison-Thompson, 2002). Research has shown that the programs aimed at reducing problem behaviors in children which address deficits in parenting styles and knowledge are more successful than programs which only address the behaviors of the child (Degraaf, Speetjens, Smit, Dewolff & Tavecchio, 2008).

Due to the apparent effects experienced by children, including changes in school performance and behavioral concerns, parental incarceration has become a topic of particular interest for professionals in the field of education. Research indicates that one of the most effective ways to ameliorate problem behaviors in at-risk youth is through one-on-one mentorship opportunities (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). One of the most well-known mentoring organizations, Big Brothers Big Sisters, found that children who participated in their mentoring program, including children with incarcerated parents, experienced significant improvements in behavior. Students who took part in the program were found to be less likely to use drugs and alcohol. In addition, participants were less likely to skip school (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995).

The effects of parental incarceration reach far beyond the cells of those behind bars. The children and families who are left behind are also affected. The effects of the incarceration can be seen in the various aspects of the lives of those impacted, including in the schools and communities where these individuals reside. This study examines the effects of parental incarceration on mothers, fathers and children. In addition, this study focuses on the

programming and community services available to support incarcerated parents, their children and families.

Statement of the Problem

The number of children with incarcerated parents continues to increase, thus the long-term ramifications of parental incarceration has become a topic of increased interest to various stakeholders in society. In addition to understanding the effects of parental incarceration on children, school officials must also be aware of programming and support services available to families of incarcerated individuals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to review the available research on the various effects of parental incarceration. Specifically, the study focused on the effects of maternal and paternal incarceration, the effects of incarceration on children, in addition to identifying ways to support the needs of this population. Furthermore, this paper addresses both the strengths and weaknesses of various programs as they relate to the needs of both the aforementioned groups. Finally, recommendations for future programming for children of incarcerated parents will be addressed.

Research Questions

1. Do differences exist between the effects of maternal versus paternal incarceration?
2. What are the effects of parental incarceration on children?
3. What parental programming is available to support the needs of incarcerated parents?
4. What can schools do to assist children of incarcerated parents?

Assumptions of the Study

The author of the study assumed that the incarceration of parents has an impact on children's behavior, academic achievement and long-term outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

The present paper is limited to a review of research spanning the period of time of 1997-2010; therefore, research conducted prior to this point was not taken into consideration. The research contained in this paper was limited to electronic sources including scholarly and peer-reviewed journals. Other publications, including magazines, newspapers and alternate resources were not examined. A causal relationship cannot be drawn between parental incarceration and outcomes for children.

Definition of Terms

Incarceration. Merriam-Webster (2011) defines incarceration as to subject to confinement. Confinement may be in either a prison or jail setting.

Maternal. Merriam-Webster (2011) defines maternal as "relating through a mother".

Paternal. "relating through one's father" (Merriam-Webster, 2011)

Parental Programming. Parental programming is a type of educational programming provided to incarcerated parents which may include instruction regarding various parenting topics, including parental attitudes and beliefs, discipline, anger management, communication and conflict resolution strategies.

School. Merriam-Webster (2011) defines school as "an organization that provides instruction." Members of this organization include school counselors, teachers, administrators and support staff.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to examine existing research regarding the effects of parental incarceration. Specifically, the goal of this paper is to examine the effects of incarceration on mothers, fathers and children. Furthermore, this paper will examine existing parental programming and services available to families of incarcerated parents, in addition to identifying ways that schools can assist the families of incarcerated individuals.

Parental Incarceration

Incarcerated parents experience unique challenges in comparison to other incarcerated individuals. This population has added responsibilities and considerations associated with being a parent, which often conflict with the experience of being isolated from society. Stemming from a long history of the study of gender differences within the field of psychology, researchers have conducted extensive research in terms of how the experience of being an incarcerated parent differs for mothers versus fathers.

Maternal Incarceration. Issues related to maternal incarceration have the potential to produce substantial repercussions within society due to the tremendous boom within the female inmate population in recent history. Recent figures estimate there to be eight times the number of incarcerated women in jails and prisons today than there were in the 1980s (Solinger, 2007). In addition, a significant proportion of incarcerated women have children. Some estimates indicate that almost 70% of incarcerated women have children who are under the age of 18 (Greenfield & Snell, 1999). Furthermore, numerous women experience pregnancy and even childbirth behind bars. In 2003 20% of the women in prison were either pregnant or had

children less than six weeks of age (Chicago, 2007). Incarceration is a particularly challenging issue for mothers, because women are more likely to be the primary caregivers for their children.

In fact, one of the most fundamental differences between incarcerated mothers and fathers appears to be their level of contact with their children prior to incarceration. Schafer and Dellinger (1999) conducted a survey of nearly 5,500 incarcerated men and women designed as a follow up study to research which had been conducted in the 1980s. One reason for the follow up was that in the initial study the researchers failed to focus specifically on individuals with children categorized as being minors. This error confounded the results of the initial study in relation to questions regarding custody and issues related to living arrangements, because many of the participants' children lived on their own. This problem was eliminated by utilizing the original database for information but limited the study exclusively to the relationship between parents and their minor children. The results of this study revealed that maternal incarceration created a larger disruption in children's living situation, which differed from that of fathers.

At the time of incarceration more than 65% of mothers stated that their children had been living with them, compared with only 47% of fathers (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999). These findings were consistent with a separate study in which Berry and Eigenberg (2003) found that women were significantly more likely than incarcerated men to have custody of their children prior to incarceration. Additionally, when asked where their children were living during incarceration, less than 25% of female respondents claimed that their children were living with the child's other parent during incarceration, compared to an astounding 90% of fathers (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999).

Maternal incarceration typically results in significant disruptions in a child's living situation. In one study 34% of children of incarcerated parents reported having to move as a

result of their mother's incarceration, and 36% reported having to change schools (Mackintosh, Myers, & Kennon, 2006). Not only are children forced to adjust to unfamiliar homes and schools, but many are faced with the challenge of adapting to new care-providers and parenting styles (Seymour, 1998). Additionally, children are often thrust into situations in which their caregivers are unprepared to assume the added responsibility and stress associated with caring for these children. In one study nearly 30% of caregivers who were administered the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI/SF) reported stress levels upwards of 90% compared to normative standards for parents (Mackintosh, Myers, & Kennon, 2006). These results are indicative of the tremendous impact that maternal incarceration may have on the lives of children.

In addition, these findings also contribute to a greater understanding of other research findings regarding women's experiences as incarcerated mothers. Because women are more likely to live with and have custody of their children prior to incarceration, their adjustment to parenting from behind bars may be more challenging than fathers' adjustment.

Once incarcerated, mothers must also adhere to numerous regulations imposed on inmates, which can inhibit their ability to effectively maintain contact with their children. Jensen and DuDeck-Biondo (2005) conducted an extensive qualitative study which examined several of the effects of incarceration on the perceived relationship between mothers and their children. It was discovered from their interviews that the physical constraints associated with being incarcerated greatly impacted various aspects of mothers' visitation and bonding with their children. Mothers in the study cited everything from the physical environment, lack of physical contact and high degree of control exerted over visitation all as factors which impeded their ability to effectively maintain contact with their children (Jensen & DuDeck, 2005; Kazura, 2001). Several of the mothers in the study suggested that the aforementioned were reasons why

they elected not to maintain contact with their children during incarceration. In a separate study, 42 percent of incarcerated parents stated that their children never came to visit them during their incarceration, demonstrative of the impact of environmental factors on maintaining contact and relationships with kin (Kazura, 2001).

As a result of their lack of contact, many of the mothers reported feeling a sense of disconnectedness from their children. These findings were consistent with research regarding the adjustment styles of incarcerated mothers versus non-mothers, which found that the relative adjustment of mothers in jail was complicated by separation from children and family members (Loper, 2006). This statistic is indicative of potential problems which may arise following mothers' release back into society, because nearly 95% of incarcerated mothers who were surveyed indicated that they intended on living with their children following incarceration (Kazura, 2001).

These findings may explain why incarcerated mothers report significant interest in receiving counseling for both themselves and their children following incarceration (Kazura, 2001). In addition, a 2001 needs assessment of inmates found that mothers were more likely to express interest in learning about the effects of incarceration on children and potential social supports available to them (Kazura, 2001). These findings also define one of the main differences between the concerns of incarcerated mothers versus fathers. Because women were more likely to live with their children prior to incarceration, and be reunited with them following incarceration, women were more concerned with the ramifications of incarceration and available resources for social support than were fathers.

Paternal Incarceration. While the effect of maternal incarceration has been a topic of research for years, more recent research has examined the effects of paternal incarceration.

Arditti, Smock & Parkman (2005) conducted an extensive qualitative study which examined how incarceration affected inmates' roles as fathers. Many of the inmates stated the importance of maintaining a relationship with the mother of their children in order to maintain contact with their children during incarceration. For instance, one of the more significant findings from the study was that many of the fathers cited tension with their children's mothers as being one of the greatest obstacles they faced while parenting from behind bars. In contrast, in a qualitative study, father's contentment in their relationships identified their children's mother as vital in maintaining their sense of connectedness with their children throughout their incarceration (Arditti, Smock & Parkman, 2005).

In a separate study, researchers also found a strong association between inmates' self assessments of their relationships with their significant others and their perceived quality of relationships with their children; findings which further indicate the level of influence of a significant other on the relationship between incarcerated fathers and their children (Alexander, 2005). These findings were mirrored in a separate qualitative study in which inmates reported using phone conversations with their significant other as a means of co-parenting (Meek, 2007).

Fathers who have better relationships with their significant others are able to use their relationship with their significant other as a means of maintaining contact with their children. In a Arditti, Smock, & Parkman's (2005) study on the effects of incarceration on fathers, several of the fathers discussed using phone conversations as a means of co-parenting by reiterating ideas that had been presented by the child's mother. Therefore, research indicates that maintaining contact with significant others may provide a means for fathers to maintain stronger parental ties during incarceration.

One of the reasons that the support of significant others may be more crucial to maintaining connectivity between incarcerated fathers and their children is because men and women are typically incarcerated for different offenses, and as a result, fathers who are incarcerated tend to be absent for a much lengthier period of time than do mothers. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, male prisoners average sentences which are five years longer than females' sentences (Mumola, 2000). Therefore, the length of incarceration illustrates another critical difference in the incarceration of fathers versus mothers. Because fathers are likely to be incarcerated for lengthier periods of time, their incarceration is likely to have a substantially different effect on children than the incarceration of a mother would. Men are more likely to be repeat offenders, serve longer sentences than women and see their children less often prior to incarceration, thus, it may be more challenging for the children of incarcerated fathers to maintain strong bonds with them. Children are also more likely to live with their mothers during the incarceration of their fathers. This fundamental difference may explain why the role of the child's mother appears to be more crucial in facilitating and maintaining a relationship between children and their incarcerated fathers.

Children of Incarcerated Parents

In order to discern the degree to which parental incarceration affects children, researchers have utilized comparative studies to examine the potential differences between children of non-incarcerated parents and children of incarcerated parents. Literature on the effects of incarceration has made numerous claims as to the negative outcomes of parental incarceration on children's psychological and developmental health and well-being. Many of these broad claims; however, have not been supported by specific evidence which properly distinguishes the children

of incarcerated parents from their backgrounds and other potential risk factors which could potentially account for some of these differences (Reed, 2008).

Effects on behavior. Much of the original research on this topic was pioneered in an ongoing Cambridge study of children and the development of delinquent behaviors. Researchers in the study compared children of non-incarcerated parents from a variety of backgrounds with those of incarcerated parents and studied their behavior over a 40 year time span. The research showed that there was a very strong correlation between parents' incarceration and the development of delinquent behaviors in children (Farrington, 2002).

While research regarding contact with parents during incarceration is mixed, studies have shown that children who have contact with parents during incarceration, without the addition of intervention techniques, also experience more behavioral problems than children who do not visit their incarcerated parents (Pohlmann, Dallaire, Loper & Shear, 2010).

Early delinquent behaviors may lead to the establishment of delinquent behavioral patterns in the children of incarcerated parents. Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to be incarcerated themselves. Mumola (2000) reported that almost half of all incarcerated juveniles had a parent in the correctional system. Furthermore, specific maternal crimes have been linked with increases in incarceration rates for children. Dallaire (2007) found that regular maternal drug use was linked to future incarceration rates for children.

High School Dropout. Children of incarcerated parents are also more likely to drop out of high school as compared to peers whose parents are not incarcerated. High school dropout often leads to long-term employment struggles for these individuals, as children with incarcerated parents are more likely to be unemployed as compared to peers (Farrington, 2002). Therefore, parental incarceration can have a lasting effect on long-term outcomes for children.

Substance Abuse. Children of incarcerated parents are significantly more susceptible to drug abuse than children whose parents were not incarcerated (Farrington, 2002). While increases in substance abuse among children of incarcerated parents may be linked with a multitude of factors, including deficiencies in effective coping strategies to deal with the added pressures and stresses related to incarceration, children with incarcerated parents may be more likely to experience problems with substance abuse due to parental use. Mumola (2000) found that the majority of incarcerated parents were sentenced due to either drug-related charges or violent crimes. Therefore, these children are likely to have a greater exposure to drugs and alcohol than other peers, which may de-stigmatize the criminality of drug use.

Mental Health. According to one study, children of incarcerated parents exhibited greater levels of depression and anxiety than their peers (Farrington, 2002). In a separate study, researchers concluded that there may be an association between maternal incarceration and young girls' perceptions of themselves (Grant, 2006). Although researchers were not able to decisively conclude how strong of an association there was between the variables, this research may help explain the prevalence of other mental health issues among children of incarcerated parents, which may be linked with the child's feelings of guilt or shame. Children whose parents commit crimes of theft, prostitution or selling drugs are more likely to perceive their parent's criminal actions as a means of trying to support the family (Miller, 2006). Therefore, these children are more likely to feel a sense of guilt and responsibility for their incarcerated parent's actions. Left untreated, these feelings may lead to long-term mental health issues for these children (Miller, 2006).

Compounding Factors. Research findings regarding the effects of parental incarceration on children indicate that children of incarcerated individuals experience a

substantially increased risk for negative outcomes and at-risk behaviors in comparison to children of non-incarcerated parents. Reed (2008) cautions that it is impossible to draw causal conclusions from these findings due to the researcher's inability to distinguish the effects of exposure to various other risk factors prevalent in incarcerated populations, which may also have had significant implications on the children of the offenders. For instance, incarcerated individuals often deal with substance abuse and mental health issues which could also result in negative outcomes for their children (Katz, 1998). In one study, Haapasalo (2001) found a strong correlation between paternal incarceration and alcohol abuse in both mothers and fathers. These findings often complicate the work of researchers who must distinguish the various risk factors which these children are exposed to from the effects of incarceration.

Consequently, more recent research has been conducted in an attempt to further examine this issue. Phillips, Erkanli, Keeler, Costello & Angold (2006) pointedly addressed several of the risk factors incarcerated parents have in common with various other at-risk groups in order to control for spurious relationships which may have been represented in the research. The factors studied included low levels of educational attainment, substance abuse and mental health issues, which are often found to be characteristics of incarcerated individuals. The researchers attempted to assess the actual differences between children of incarcerated parents and children of non-incarcerated parents by accounting for these differences. The study was conducted as a two-part longitudinal study that looked at 1,402 children between the ages 9-13. In order to account for differences explained by various risk factors other than parental incarceration, researchers in the study broke the participants into various groups based on the worst outcome which had resulted from a parental arrest. One of the major findings of this study was that the degree of severity of children's risk factors was directly proportionate to their parent's level of

contact with the criminal justice system. Thus, children whose parents had multiple encounters with the criminal justice system typically experienced worse outcomes than children whose parents had only a single encounter. In addition, children of incarcerated parents were at a substantially increased risk for instability in terms of family structure; even when various other risk factors were accounted for (Phillips et al., 2006).

One of the other emergent themes from research on risk factors experienced by children of incarcerated parents is patterns of violence and exposure to violent experiences. Dehart & Altshuler (2009) conducted open-ended interviews with incarcerated mothers which revealed that children of incarcerated parents experienced a variety of negative consequences as a result of exposure to violence prior to their parent's incarceration. Themes included abuse, neglect, witnessing violence and prenatal complications as the result of exposure to violence.

Parental Programming

Programming targeted at modifying various undesirable behaviors of inmates has become increasingly more prevalent within recent history. In addition to substance abuse and anger management programs, programming for incarcerated parents has become commonplace within jail and prison settings. Studies have indicated that not all programs are created equally; therefore, the efficacy of programs greatly varies depending on their structure (Hughes & Harrison-Thompson, 2002). Research has shown that the programs aimed at reducing problem behaviors in children which address deficits in parenting styles and knowledge are more successful than programs which only address the behaviors of the child (Degraaf, Speetjens, Smit, Dewolff & Tavecchio, 2008). As a result of such research, various programs for incarcerated parents have been implemented nationwide. Programs such as Family Matters in Arkansas, the Osborn Association in New York, Community Works in California, and Girl

Scouts Behind Bars in Oregon are examples of family programming for inmates which has been implemented across the country. Unfortunately, very few programs appear to be evidence based. Many of these programs appear to provide little follow-up and have not been heavily researched in terms of their levels of efficacy (Lee, 2005; Palusci, Crum, Bliss, & Bavolek, 2007). Only recently have researchers begun to assess the apparent gap in research regarding the nature of existing programming for incarcerated parents and their children.

In one of the most thoroughly conducted studies of its kind, Palusci et al. (2007) examined both attitude changes and improvements in parents' knowledge as a means of assessing the efficacy of a parenting program for incarcerated individuals. The study involved 781 participants, 484 of whom were incarcerated individuals. The researchers also included both individuals with and without children in the study. The Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory was used to assess participants' baseline knowledge regarding parenting prior to the program, and subsequently following a parenting program (Palusci et al., 2007). The jail parenting program called "Helping Your Child Succeed" involved lectures, activities and discussions. All participants took part in a version of the parenting program, although individuals included incarcerated parents, incarcerated non-parents, parents who were not incarcerated, and non-parents who were not incarcerated.

The results indicated that both male and female inmates made statistically significant gains in parenting knowledge and attitudes towards parenting following the parenting course. Specifically, both groups showed improvement in the areas of empathy, corporal punishment and their levels of expectation of their children. The researchers also noted that female inmates initially outperformed male inmates in terms of their parenting knowledge, but the males had more substantial improvements in their scores (Palusci et al., 2007). This study suggests that

while males and females may differ in their knowledge and attitudes towards parenting, both males and females show improvements as the result of a parental education program.

These findings supported previous research on the efficacy of jail parenting programs. Moore and Clement (1998) evaluated the effectiveness of a parenting program by using the same Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) in addition to a Nurturing Quiz with a sample of 40 incarcerated mothers. Both the Nurturing Quiz and the AAPI measured the effectiveness of a program for incarcerated parents called Mothers Inside Loving Kids. The researchers also found significant changes in terms of empathy and belief in corporal punishment; two of the same subscales which were significantly improved with the “Helping Your Child Succeed” program utilized in a later study (Moore & Clement, 1998; Palusci et al., 2007).

In addition, researchers in a separate study used the AAPI to measure changes in parenting attitudes following the implementation of yet another parenting program for incarcerated fathers. Researchers in this study found significant improvements in father’s AAPI; however, they did not obtain subscale scores (Harrison, 1997). Similarly, Thompson & Harm (2000) used the AAPI in order to determine the efficacy of a parent education class provided to mothers in an Arkansas jail. The researchers also found substantial improvements in participants’ AAPI scores following a fifteen-week course (Thompson & Harm, 2000). In addition, in all three of the studies where subscale scores of the AAPI were obtained participants showed improvements in terms of the same subscales, in regard to belief about the use of corporal punishment, empathy and expectations of children. These results provide significant support for the use of parental education classes to improve scores related to these particular issues.

As previously discussed, incarceration has differing effects for mothers versus fathers. In addition, the effect of parental incarceration also differs based on the gender of the incarcerated parent. Several programs have been tailored to support the specific needs of each gender. For instance, Long Distance Dads was a program created specifically to address the needs of incarcerated fathers (Turner & Peck, 2002). Instead of focusing solely on parenting lessons, the program's aim is to break the generational cycle of incarceration by encouraging incarcerated men to be positive and responsible figures in the lives of their children. One of the unique features of the program is that its curriculum specifically addresses ways in which fathers can parent from behind bars. In addition, the program also teaches inmates about the impact their incarceration has on their children. However, what is noteworthy is that while the program appeared to be merited in its integration of research regarding paternal incarceration and the effects of incarceration on fathers, very little research has been conducted regarding the efficacy of the program itself. Prior to being extensively studied by any outside source, the program had already been implemented in 26 states in more than 145 different facilities (Turner & Peck, 2002). Like many other programs, only after widespread implementation did Penn State University begin conducting a study to investigate the efficacy of the Long Distance Dads program.

School Support

Reduce Stigmatization. The social stigma of being associated with an incarcerated parent often makes it challenging for children and caregivers to seek out the support that children need. Dallaire, Ciccone & Wilson (2010) found that children whose mothers were incarcerated were particularly susceptible to stigmatization, and thus less likely to seek supportive services.

As a result, children with incarcerated parents may go unnoticed, or their behavioral symptoms may be mistakenly attributed to other extraneous causes.

One of the ways schools improve services and support for children of incarcerated parents is by reducing their barriers to success by promoting a supportive and tolerant climate, so that students and families feel comfortable accessing services. As previously discussed, one of the barriers to success is students' and families' perceptions of stigmatization. A study conducted by Dallaire, Ciccone & Wilson (2010) found that teachers were more likely to perceive and describe children of incarcerated parents as being less competent than peers whose parents were away for other reasons. Conversely, teachers who receive professional development regarding parental incarceration show improvements in personal perceptions of children of incarcerated parents (Vacca, 2008).

Coordinate Services. According to Vacca (2008), one of the ways that schools can improve outcomes for students is by building partnerships with community resources available for the children and families of incarcerated individuals. While some parenting classes for incarcerated parents have been shown to improve parental knowledge and attitudes of incarcerated parents, not all correctional institutions provide such services to their inmates. Programs which focus on communication, parenting skills, positive norm-setting, the struggles of distance parenting and transitioning home have been shown to be the most effective resources for incarcerated parents (Eddy, Martinez, Schiffmann, Newton, Olin, Leve, Foney, & Shortt, 2008). Coordination of services can lead to improved outcomes for children of incarcerated parents (American Bar Association, 2010). By coordinating services, schools address the specific needs of the children, which include mental health issues and substance abuse education and prevention. Programs and interventions targeted at addressing the specific risk factors for these individuals

include individual or group counseling and alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention curriculums.

School Performance. Parental engagement in children's academics has been shown to be a strong predictor of student achievement (Yun & Singh, 2008). Due to the absence of at least one parent as a result of incarceration, parental engagement in education is an area where children of incarcerated parents often struggle, and why high-school dropout can be such a prevalent problem for these students. Research indicates that bridging the communication gap between children and incarcerated parents can improve outcomes for these students. Maintaining indirect contact with incarcerated parents via letter-writing or phone calls has been shown to have a positive impact on children (Pohlmann, Dallaire, Loper & Shear, 2010).

Mentoring Opportunities. Various research has provided support for the efficacy of mentoring programs in promoting academic success and social behaviors among at-risk youths (Randolph & Johnson, 2008; Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). Mentoring programs targeted specifically at children with incarcerated parents have also shown to benefit these students. Schlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, & Hanneman (2009) found that children of incarcerated parents who participated in a mentoring program, and frequently saw their mentor, had reductions in both externalizing and internalizing behaviors, which are prevalent issues faced by children of incarcerated parents. Therefore, research indicates that mentorship opportunities serve a two-fold function of improving academic achievement, while also reducing many of the negative behaviors associated with parental incarceration.

Chapter III: Discussion

Summary

The present literature review examined the needs of incarcerated parents and children, and current programming available to families of incarcerated families. As the number of incarcerated individuals continues to rise in the United States, the number of children with incarcerated parents also continues to grow. Therefore, the needs of incarcerated parents and their children have become issues of increasing concern for social workers, social officials, and correctional officers who work with these families.

Research indicates that children of incarcerated parents are at an increased risk for incarceration, mental health issues, delinquent behaviors, substance abuse and high school drop-out (Farrington, 2002). However, there is evidence to suggest that providing programming to parents and encouraging student involvement in mentorship opportunities which meet the demands of these children may reduce some of these risks. Furthermore, schools can assist children of incarcerated parents by working to coordinate community services and supports for these families.

Conclusions

While parental incarceration may be associated with significant hardships for inmates and their families, studies indicate that parental programming may be one potential viable solution to reducing some of the negative effects of incarceration on both parents and children. Research indicates that the effects of parental incarceration differ based on whether the child's mother or father is incarcerated. Maternal incarceration is more likely to cause greater disruptions in a child's life than a father's; therefore, children whose mothers are incarcerated may be at a greater risk than children whose fathers are incarcerated.

Fathers, on the other hand, are less likely to live with their children prior to or following incarceration. Fathers are also more likely to be incarcerated more often and for longer periods of time than mothers (Mumola, 2000). Many fathers indicate that mothers serve as a medium for communication between themselves and their children. Conversely, having a tenuous relationship with the child's mother may be an additional barrier for incarcerated fathers.

While various parental programs have demonstrated statistically significant improvements in parental knowledge and attitudes, current research suggests that many prisons are not providing evidence-based programming to incarcerated parents (Lee, 2005; Palusci, Crum, Bliss, & Bavolek, 2007). In addition, while significant research has been conducted regarding the effects of incarceration on mothers, fathers and their children, very little carryover has occurred in terms of implementing evidence-based programming to meet these particular demands. Substantial research has been conducted regarding the effects of incarceration on children, these concerns appear to be absent in the programming provided to parents. Various researchers have demonstrated parents' and children's desires for improvements in the types of social support provided to the children of incarcerated parents, yet few programs appear to address these concerns.

One of the underlying themes uncovered by the research is that parental incarceration alone is not the problem, rather it is a culmination of risk factors experienced by children of parents who become incarcerated that ultimately leads to poorer outcomes for these children. Johnston (2006) found that overall parental behavior was a greater factor in outcomes for children of incarcerated parents, and that parental incarceration tended to be symptomatic of various dysfunctional behavioral patterns of the parents. By working collaboratively with

community resources schools can address many of the various risk factors these children are exposed to, while also providing support to the families of these individuals.

Recommendations

More extensive research needs to be conducted in order to more appropriately design and implement evidence-based programming. By utilizing needs assessments for children and parents, establishing clear goals and guidelines for programming, and conducting more extensive empirical research regarding the efficacy of family programming, programs could be customized to meet the demands of this growing population.

In addition, separate programming goals should be established for incarcerated mothers and fathers. Programs should address the specific needs of mothers versus fathers. As the research indicates, mothers and fathers have differing needs in terms of services related to parenting. Women are more likely to be involved in the daily caretaking of their children, and thus request more services in terms of reintegration back into the family following incarceration (Kazura, 2001).

Therefore, programming goals for fathers should incorporate strategies to encourage positive communication between incarcerated fathers and their significant others. This would include providing information to fathers on how to effectively co-parent and strategies for maintaining contact with children while incarcerated. Providing services specifically targeted at addressing the needs of incarcerated parents and their children, parenting programs would benefit both participants and society.

Therefore, in order to more effectively address the needs of inmates and their families, program goals should be more clearly defined. In order to properly assess the effects of parenting programs, both the effects of incarceration on parents and children need to be

considered. For instance, programming goals should be implemented which address the detrimental effects of incarceration on children if one of the goals of programming is to break the cycle of incarceration within families. If one of the primary goals of providing programming is to improve the coping mechanisms of inmates, and thus reduce recidivism rates, then these goals also need to be addressed (Clayton & Harry, 2002).

One of the apparent problems with current programming appears to be that it often fails to address the needs of inmates' children, despite the fact that extensive research has been conducted to determine these needs. Therefore, program reforms which include the addition of social support for children should be further researched. Furthermore, research has shown that programs emphasizing cognitive behavioral treatment methods have proven to be one of the most highly effective methods for modifying the behavior of incarcerated individuals (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). More specifically, research has shown that programs using behavioral techniques within prison settings have produced greater levels of success in altering the behavior of inmates following their release (Kim, 1978). Therefore, it would seem logical that parenting programs for inmates would incorporate the same cognitive behavioral treatments which have previously been proven successful with this population. Reviews of present literature on programs for incarcerated parents indicate that few, if any, parental programs have employed such techniques, which have been proven effective at modifying various behaviors of incarcerated individuals. Inclusion of behavioral techniques could include providing incentives for inmates' involvement in programming. Because the programs offered to inmates are provided on a voluntary basis, providing positive reinforcement to participants would serve a two-fold function.

Positive reinforcement would provide an incentive for participation in programming. Several researchers including Bourke & Van Hasselt (2001) found that using positive reinforcement with incarcerated individuals resulted in improvements in their social behaviors. These happened to include many of the targeted goal behaviors stressed in parenting programs including; improvements in empathy and anger management (Bourke & Van Hasselt, 2001). These results provide significant support for the efficacy of behavioral techniques in promoting changes in the behaviors of incarcerated individuals.

In addition to improving target behaviors, the implementation of behavioral techniques could serve an additional function. Visitation privileges and contact with children could serve as positive reinforcement, by making extended privileges contingent on participation in parenting programs. These programs would thus address many of the needs of families dealing with incarceration, by promoting communication and relationships between incarcerated parents and their children. A program of similar design was described in a study conducted by Jensen & DuDeck-Biondo (2005). Participants in the study were allowed contact visits with children contingent on their weekly attendance and participation in parenting and substance abuse classes (Jensen & DuDeck-Biondo, 2005). In addition to receiving extended visitation privileges, mothers at a correctional facility in Oregon were allowed to participate with their children in special activity days contingent on their participation in the facility's parenting program (Craig, 2006). In a separate study, participation with parental programming was linked to additional opportunities for visitation and contact between inmates and their children. Researchers found that providing additional visitation contingent on participation in parenting classes resulted in benefits for both parents and their children (Bruns, 2006).

Providing additional privileges and access to visitation with children could ultimately serve as a means for incarcerated parents and their children to stay connected during the incarceration process. Research has shown that regular contact during incarceration is a strong predictor of successful reunions following incarceration (Johnston, 1995). Researchers have also found that mothers involved in visitation programs within correctional facilities showed significant improvements in their self-perceived relationships with their children than did mothers in a control group (Snyder, Carlo, & Coats, 2001). Unfortunately, without extensive research in regards to providing contact visits as a means of reinforcement for participating in programming, it is difficult to definitively determine what the potential outcome of such programming might be. Therefore, further research regarding the implementation of behavior modification programming which utilizes contact as positive reinforcement is necessary.

One of the goals of schools providing support to children whose parents are incarcerated should be to holistically evaluate the individual risk factors and needs of the child, and to provide support during and after the incarcerated periods. By assessing the individual needs of each child, schools can collaborate with community agencies to provide resources for these families. Since stigmatization can be a barrier for children and families to seek supportive services, Schools need to address the issue of tolerance and acceptance for members of this population. It is important for schools to reach out to these families to foster and enhance the communication and relationship between caregivers and the schools. One way to do this would be to improve communication between the school, the child and the incarcerated parent. Another way schools can achieve the goal of increasing school performance and accountability for children is to find ways to encourage involvement by the child's temporary or alternate caregiver within the school.

Additionally, schools can also arrange to pair children of incarcerated parents with another adult in the school or community who may promote the student's academic success.

As the number of incarcerated parents continues to grow, it is critical that stakeholders in society identify ways to ameliorate the impact of incarceration on parents and families. One of the ways to assist families of incarcerated parents is by connecting them with other community resources, agencies and organizations which may be able to help the families of incarcerated parents enhance their parenting skills. In addition to providing referrals for outside programming and services, by uniting with other community agencies, schools could build a partnership between the various service providers and the family of the incarcerated individual. All stakeholders, including schools, foster families, child welfare, and corrections workers should aim to work together to coordinate efforts and share information with each other, in order to coordinate and provide the most effective services to families of incarcerated individuals.

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