Intergenerational Incarceration-Prisoners Without Walls

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In Oklahoma there are currently:
- 565 offenders with a father/son relationship
- 72 offenders with a father/daughter relationship
- 43 offenders with a mother/daughter relationship
- 175 offenders with a mother/son relationship

Offenders who share a mother/father/daughter/son relationship = 840 or 3.2% of the total incarcerated population
Are children of incarcerated parents doomed to live a criminal lifestyle?
This is a very complex question!
In 2005 the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported approximately 2.2 million offenders in state or federal prisons or county and municipal jails.
These people are the parents of an estimated 2.4 million children.
Other studies show much higher numbers. A different study estimates up to 10 million children, or 1 child in 10, has a parent in prison or jail or on community supervision.
Children of offenders are 6 times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers.

1 in 10 will be confined before ever becoming an adult.

U. S. Dept of Justice Statistics
Nearly half of the 2 million prisoners in state prisons reported having a relative who was or had been incarcerated.

U.S. Justice Dept. 2004 statistic
Within the juvenile justice system, more than half of the confined population has at least one parent who is or was in prison.
All of these numbers indicate that there is a strong correlation between family ties and crime.

You did good, son. Now let’s flee the law.
Why???
American are now incarcerated 4x more than in the 1970s

Second generation children of first generation incarcerated fathers of 1970s and 80s are now moving in and through adulthood.

Having been incarcerated has grave consequences for the former inmates and their families
• Consequences for ex-offender:
  ◦ Often have terminated parental rights
  ◦ Denied drivers’ license, student loans, public housing, licensed occupations
  ◦ Denied the right to vote
  ◦ Drug offenders lifetime ban on food stamps

• Consequences for their Families
European thought regarding “social exclusion” does not fit the American ideal of “personal responsibility”. Europeans refer to macro-level trends of dismissal, removal and disconnection.

- Foster and Hagan (2007) and others look at social exclusion as “the life course theory of cumulative disadvantage”. They hypothesize that education plays a pivotal role in the detainment process that connects the incarceration of fathers to the social exclusion of their emerging adult children.
Recent statistics indicate that two thirds of disconnected youth have not graduated from high school.
Cumulative Disadvantage begins at birth
Developmental Impact
Parental incarceration may prevent bonding with their infants.
Ages 2-6

For children ages 2-6, the ability to develop autonomy and initiative may be damaged by the trauma of the parents’ criminal activity and/or arrest and parent-child separation due to incarceration. The long term effects of parental incarceration may be most severe at this stage because children understand and remember traumatic events but lack the ability to process them without help.
Middle Childhood

In middle childhood (7-10) parental arrest and incarceration may severely impact social adjustment; many children in this age group develop aggressive behaviors and difficulty getting along with others, particularly in school.
Early Adolescence

By ages 11-14, children of prisoners have usually had multiple experiences with parental crime, arrest and incarceration. Many children of inmates display maladaptive behavior and reject limitations on their behavior.
Late Adolescence

May children by this age have experienced a lifetime of disruption and trauma related to parental incarceration. The cumulative effects of this manifest themselves in decreased likelihood of reunification, increased delinquency, and negative perceptions of the criminal justice system.
Family Disruption
Family disruption also plays a role that leads to nonnormative life outcomes. The direct effects of family breakdown and disruption are central to Robert Agnew’s general strain theory (1992). Braman and Wood (2003) suggest that parental imprisonment strains and breaks “fragile families”.
Many children, especially children of women prisoners, end up in foster care or being cared for by a grandparent.
More than half the children who live with their mother prior to incarceration went to live with a grandparent when their mother was sent to prison.