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# Following in their Footsteps: The Risks of the Intergenerational Cycle of Incarceration among Inmates and their Children

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FOLLOWING IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS: THE RISKS OF THE  
INTERGENERATIONAL CYCLE OF INCARCERATION AMONG  
INMATES AND THEIR CHILDREN

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
Applied Sociology

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by  
Megan Elizabeth Harris  
December 2006

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Catherine Mobley, Committee Chair  
Dr. James Witte  
Dr. William Haller

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to test the proposition that parents who are currently incarcerated are at high risk for having children who are also incarcerated. Furthermore, several risk factors, commonly found in homes with previously or currently incarcerated members, were identified and analyzed to predict the odds of an incarcerated parent also having an incarcerated child.

The current study found that the majority of the demographic variables (gender, race, and marital status) were significant predictors of child incarceration. Furthermore, only a few risk factors were found to be significant predictors of an inmate's child being incarcerated: an inmate having two or more prior incarcerations; an inmate's illegal drug abuse; and an inmate having a parent who was incarcerated. This latter finding was particularly encouraging because this final variable represented a primary objective of this thesis: to determine whether there was any support for the existence of an intergenerational cycle of incarceration.

Given the results in the final model of the logistic regression, future research should delve more deeply not only into the relationship between the incarcerated parent and their children, but also the relationship between the children of the inmate and the crimes that resulted in their incarceration.

Detailed information on this could produce a clearer picture of additional reasons or causes for the incarceration of inmates' children.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, friends, and co-workers. Their support, love, and tolerance of my late night phone calls and crazy schedule is what enabled me to complete this task.

This thesis is also dedicated to all children with incarcerated family members, especially parents. Hopefully, research highlighting their unfortunate circumstances will spark further study and subsequent action into ending the intergenerational cycle of incarceration.

Furthermore, this thesis is dedicated to the few programs that cater to children with incarcerated parents. We Stand For KIDS, in Anderson, South Carolina, was the inspiration for the interest and research that developed into this thesis. May their efforts give birth to additional programs dedicated to this cause, and work to end the intergenerational cycle of incarceration among inmates and their children.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would be remiss without whole-heartedly thanking my fellow graduate students for their support. Their never-ending humor, stress-relieving talents, and friendship, I believe, is part of the reason this thesis exists.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

According to the United States Department of Justice, in 1999 there were approximately 721,500 inmates, in both state and federal prisons, who were parents to almost 1.5 million children under 18, with 22 percent of those minor children being under five years old (Mumola 2000, Doerr 2001). An estimated 10 million more children have had parents who were imprisoned sometime in their lives (Simmons 2000; Doerr 2001). The most recent statistics presented by Denise Johnston and Michael Carlin (2004) estimate that there are 1,719,820 children of male inmates in prisons and 173,570 children of female inmates in prisons. Thus, in 2004, there were 2,893,390 children<sup>1</sup> of incarcerated inmates in state and federal prisons, almost twice the number of estimated children of incarcerated parents in 1999.

Children who have incarcerated parents are among the most high-risk populations in the nation (Breen 1995; Myers et al. 1999). However, there is no individual agency that takes responsibility for caring for the estimated 11.5 million children affected by parental incarceration or for seeing that these children receive the services they need (Virginia Consortium on Youth 1993; Johnston 1995a; Myers et al. 1999).

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<sup>1</sup> This total is calculated by using the estimated mean of children per each male and female inmate (2.05 and 2.4 respectively), multiplying the means by the respective inmate population (male or female), and adding the two products together.

Inmates, as well as their children, have experienced traumatic events in their lives. Common risks for incarceration have been extracted from analyses conducted by Johnson and Waldfogel (2002a). These risks include drug abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental illness of a parent, incarceration of another family member, prior incarcerations of the incarcerated parent, and low educational attainment. Other factors, while not included in the Johnson and Waldfogel study, are equally important to include in studying children of incarcerated parents. Those are employment history and loss of contact with the incarcerated parent. In order to test for a causal relationship between currently incarcerated parents and their having an incarcerated child, the parents' lives before incarceration must be examined.

Incarcerated inmates report having experienced these factors identified by Johnson and Waldfogel (2002a). Many parents who are incarcerated are not the first in their family to become entangled in the justice system. This supports the argument for an intergenerational cycle of incarceration among inmates and their children.

The main objective of this thesis is to provide additional information about the risk of incarceration pertaining to families, especially children, of incarcerated inmates. This research investigates risk factors predicting the odds of an inmate reporting that they have a child incarcerated. The assumption is that children of incarcerated inmates face many risks, the

most detrimental being that the child is incarcerated as well. Therefore, this research seeks to identify the strongest predictors of an inmate reporting that they have a child incarcerated. The following sections will address the severity of the issues at hand, as well as, provide a brief overview of each of the risk factors that are used in the final analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

No specific government agency or institution takes responsibility for serving the needs of the considerable number of children of incarcerated parents (Virginia Consortium on Youth 1993; Johnston 1995a; Seymour 1998; Myers et al. 1999). However, the United States Census Bureau monitors the numbers of incarcerated adults in each state as well as the nation as a whole. The agency also investigates and publishes reports on the inmate population, the number of violent versus nonviolent crimes, the recidivism rates, and the number of children of inmates.

Given the potential for intergenerational incarceration, these data paint a grim picture of the future of incarcerated inmates with children. From 1980 to 1996, the prison population rose by a staggering 260 percent (Blumstein & Beck 1999; Stanko, Gillespie, & Crews 2004). The United States Bureau of Justice also reports that, at mid-year 2002, there were 2,019,234 inmates in state and federal prisons (Harrison & Karberg 2003). By mid 2004, this number rose by five percent (111,946) with a total prison population of close to 2.2 million (Harrison & Beck 2005). As expected, a large percentage of those inmates have children. In 1999, over 55 percent of all

State and 63 percent of Federal inmates reported that they had at least one minor child under the age of 18 years (Mumola 2000). There were also reports from 32 percent of all inmates, both State and Federal, stating that they had multiple minor children (Mumola 2000). As of 1999, there were approximately 1.5 million children under the age of 18 whose parents were incarcerated (Mumola 2000) and most of these children were younger than ten years old (Mumola 2000; Poehlmann 2005). As described in the following sections, many of these children face serious risks that could lead to deviant social behavior and future criminal acts (Harris & Miller 2003; Martone 2005).

#### RISKS FACED BY CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

It is important to gain clarity about the relationship between incarcerated inmates and their children. Not only do children with incarcerated parents face a number of physical risks, but they also have a vast array of emotional and behavioral difficulties that follow them throughout life (Stanton 1980; Baunach 1985; Bloom & Steinhart 1993; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002b). The problems they face include aggression towards others and social withdrawal (Baunach 1985; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a), depression (Kampfner 1993), trouble with schoolwork and testing (Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a) and difficulty accomplishing developmental tasks (Johnston 1995b; Phillips & Harm 1997; Myers et al. 1999).

The welfare of these families is becoming an important topic of research because of the fragile relationship between incarcerated parents and their minor children. Evidence of such importance is apparent in the numerous articles and books written on children with incarcerated parents that examine the effects from the loss of one or both parents to incarceration, including the welfare and development of the child after the parent's incarceration (Fenton 1959; McGowan & Blumenthal 1978; Stanton 1980; Gabel & Johnston 1995; Harris & Miller 2003; Bernstein 2005; Martone 2005).

Loss of contact with the parent is detrimental to the development of the child both emotionally and behaviorally. Martone (2005) writes that staff at the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents receives about 400 letters per year from inmates who cannot "find" their children (Johnston & Carlin 2004). Reasons for this include the living arrangements before the parent's incarceration and the relationship between the child's caregiver after incarceration and the incarcerated inmate. When a child's father is incarcerated, the child is almost always placed with the mother. When a mother is incarcerated, most likely the child is placed with another relative, such as the grandparents. Rarely is the child ever placed with the father (Myers et al. 1999; Johnson & Carlin 2004; Martone 2005). Some children are put into foster homes, or are raised by a close friend of the family. No matter the placement, the less friendly the relationship is between the

incarcerated parent and the new caregiver, the more likely the child will lose contact with the incarcerated parent (Johnston & Carlin 2004).

From a broad psychological perspective, both individual and environmental influences construct the development of a child (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Myers et al. 1999; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002b).

Children need their parents during their younger years to help build a strong foundation to sustain their adolescent and adult years. John Bowlby published extensively on attachment theory (1951; 1969; 1973; 1979). His research on children housed in orphanages led to the formulation of his concept of attachment (Bowlby 1951; MacLean 2003). While Bowlby did not specifically focus on children of incarcerated parents for his attachment studies, his theory can be appropriately applied to the population of children of incarcerated parents.

Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) is an important part of the conceptualization of the parent-child relationship (Lieberman, Doyle, and Markiewicz 1999). The premise of Bowlby's theory is that the quality of parent-child relationships stems from the level of interaction between parents and infants. The more sensitive to the child's needs that the parent (or caregiver) is, the more secure the attachment between them. As a result, secure children are more apt to view themselves as worthy and loveable. Bowlby (1979) suggested that attachment is, therefore, also a "lifespan construct" and that children would take the earliest experiences with



attachment to their parents or caregivers into adulthood (Lieberman, Doyle, and Markiewicz 1999). Aside from having a parent who serves as a secure foundation for emotional exploration, a solid familial attachment helps a child to form and maintain relationships with others, provides the skills to evaluate social relationships, and helps fine-tune self-esteem and self-control techniques for developmental tasks (Easterbrooks, Davidson, & Chazen 1993; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a).

Numerous studies on children suggest that inadequate attention from and unhealthy attachment to a parent lays the foundation for a troublesome future in psychosocial functioning (Bowlby 1969, 1973; Gabel & Johnston 1995; Myers et al. 1999; Belsky & Pasco-Fearon 2002; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002b). The absence of one or both parents often leaves the otherwise sturdy developmental foundation unstable. Parental attachment levels are key in investigating the impact that a parental absence will possibly have on the child in the home. Children with a strong attachment to a parent will encounter more negative emotions when that parent is taken away than will a child who has relatively little or no connection to that parent. This is largely seen when the child is living with the parent before that parent's incarceration. However, children who are not living with the parent prior to that parent's incarceration are not likely to have such a strong attachment to the parent and, therefore, have fewer negative side effects following that parent's incarceration (Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a).

Circumstances present in a child's home during his or her early years are often going to remain with that child for life – especially when those circumstances happen to cause the incarceration of one or both of the child's parents. Thus, children with incarcerated parents are not born with a predisposition to one day become incarcerated. It seems more likely that specific risk factors present in these families may lead to the future incarceration of the children themselves.

Some risk factors associated with parental incarceration and that may increase the odds of child incarceration include: having a previously or currently incarcerated family member (such as a grandparent or a sibling); having a parent with a previous incarceration on record; mental illness in a parent; parental drug abuse; parental emotional and/or physical abuse; inmate drug abuse; and losing contact with the incarcerated parent. Any one of these factors present in a home environment or following the incarceration of a parent would put a serious strain on the family unit, but a combination of any of these could contribute to the probability of criminal behavior and subsequent incarceration of the family members.

The following section reviews each of the risk factors in detail, as well as provides statistical evidence for the inclusion of the risk factors in the analysis for this thesis.

## RISK FACTORS FOR BECOMING INCARCERATED

The primary objective of this thesis is to determine what risk factors are present in families of incarcerated parents, and to identify which of the risk factors are the strongest predictors of intergenerational incarceration.

The dependent variable is whether currently incarcerated inmates have a child who is or ever has been incarcerated. The independent variables for this analysis are the various risk factors identified in the previous section and reviewed below. A premise of this research is that the children of incarcerated parents do not face just one risk factor but rather face a combination of risks present in the home (Rutter 1979; Sameroff et al. 1998; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002b).

The following sections will present an in-depth overview of each of the selected risk factors. In particular, four groupings are discussed: inmate history of abuse and mental illness, incarceration history, child's contact with the incarcerated parent, and demographic characteristics.

### History of Abuse and Mental Illness

#### Drug Abuse

Drug abuse in general constitutes a major social problem, not only in the United States, but worldwide (Hogan 1998; Pilowsky, Zybert, & Vlahov 2004). In 1998, of inmates who had been sentenced, more than half (58 percent) of Federal inmates were sentenced for drug offenses (Beck 2000a). In

2002, nearly 70 percent of all inmates reported being regular drug users and 77 percent of all convicted inmates cited having been under the influence at the time of their current incarceration (James 2004). Furthermore, in 2002, more than three-quarters of inmates reported using marijuana and almost half (48 percent) admitted frequently using cocaine or crack prior to their incarceration (James 2004).

Thirty-one percent of jail inmates grew up in a home with a parent who abused drugs or alcohol (James 2004), and 82 percent of family members that use drugs also influence, either directly and indirectly, their children to use (Johnson & Leff 1999). The reviewed literature and research findings show that a significant risk to the well being of both parents and children is present in a home where family members abuse drugs.

Parents who abuse drugs in the home are often too preoccupied with “scoring” their needed drug, and as a result cannot effectively care for their children (Hogan 1998; Myers et al. 1999). The lack of parental monitoring that comes along with drug abuse puts children at higher risk for also developing drug and alcohol abuse problems (Chassin et al. 1993, 1996; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a). Research conducted by Wallace (1990) shows that 66 percent of the examined sample population of non-imprisoned crack addicts were children of alcoholics (El-Bassel, et al. 1996). Other researchers reported the same conclusion.

Reports show that two-thirds of fathers and three-quarters of mothers in federal institutions were convicted of drug offenses (Mumola 2000). Particularly, incarcerated mothers have an extraordinarily high rate of drug abuse (Greenfeld & Snell 1999; Poehlmann 2005) and many of their children suffer the effects of exposure prenatally (Poehlmann 2005). In the Children of Offenders study (Johnston 1992), 77 percent of children of previously or currently incarcerated women had been exposed to drugs prenatally (Myers et al. 1999). Children who are born pre-exposed to the drug through the womb or exposed to the drug during crucial developmental years are more likely to develop a drug habit or addiction. This thesis will investigate the odds that drug abuse is related to incarcerated parents having a child incarcerated.

### Physical and Sexual Abuse

Violence in the home is, unfortunately, a common occurrence. It is estimated that every year, two to three million families experience the tragedy of parental physical violence (Van Hasselt, et al. 1988; Maker, Kemmelmier, & Peterson 1998). Carlson (1984) estimated that 3.3 million children witness violent acts between adults in the home (Maker, Kemmelmier, & Peterson 1998; Myers et al. 1999). Children who witness violence between parental figures in the home are at a greater risk of developing a tendency to become violent as well (Johnson & Waldfogel

2002a). Because of this, the cycle of violence is likely to continue in the children's homes when they become adults.

Evidence of this comes from the United States Department of Justice's 1993 Survey of State and Federal inmates. While 31 percent of jailed mothers report experiencing physical abuse as children, 39 percent of those individuals also reported their own parents had experienced physical violence as children (Myers et al. 1999) thus igniting an intergenerational cycle of abuse.

Research over the past several years has indicated that sexually abused children are likely to have more psychological and interpersonal problems than children who have not been abused (Briere & Elliott 1994). Some victims of sexual abuse report mental disturbances such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. Uncontrollable anger is another common feeling victims report (Briere & Elliott 1994). These feelings can be internalized or externalized, and the result of the externalization is commonly the perpetuation of abuse or attacks against others (Carmen, Reiker, & Mills 1984; Briere & Elliott 1994).

Sexually abused children often mature into adolescents and adults who have a drug abuse problem (Hibbard 1989; Briere & Elliott 1994). All of these factors put sexual abuse survivors at risk. The victims who report uncontrollable anger coupled with the likelihood of substance abuse possess the key characteristics for deviant behavior. Sexual abuse is a risk factor

worth significant investigation and inclusion in this research because of its relation to the other risk factors being investigated. Sexual abuse occurs in conjunction with physical abuse, neglect, and parental drug abuse, which increases the likelihood of involvement in deviant behaviors (Holmes & Slap 1998; Saewyc, Magee, & Pettingell 2004). This supports one of the arguments proposed in this thesis: that a multitude of risk factors present in the home prior to the inmate's incarceration increases risk of incarceration of the children of those inmates.

### Mental Illness in a Parent

At midyear 2005, more than half of all prison inmates had a mental health problem, including 56 percent (705,600) of State inmates and 45 percent (70,200) of Federal inmates (James & Glaze 2006).

Depression is the most common of all psychiatric disorders suffered by men and women (Nicholson & Clayfield 2004). Depression can affect an individual's entire being – thoughts, mood, and physical body (United States Department of Health and Human Services 1999; Nicholson & Clayfield 2004). Symptoms of depression include: diminished pleasure in daily activities, trouble sleeping, agitation, feeling suicidal, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, and feeling empty (Nicholson & Clayfield 2004; American Psychiatric Association 2005). Approximately two-thirds of women and half of

men who meet the criteria for depression are parents (Nicholson & Clayfield 2004).

Mental illness in a parent, especially depression, has a direct effect on the children in the household. Children whose parents have a mental illness, like depression, are at an increased risk for developing emotional and behavioral problems (Canino, et al. 1990; Beardslee, Keller, et al. 1996; Oyserman, et al., 2000; Nicholson & Clayfield 2004). They also have a higher risk of comorbid disorders such as anxiety and conduct disorder (Beardslee et al. 1987; Hammen, et al. 1987; Weissman et al. 1987; Poitano, Stapleton, & Correll 1992; Essau 2004). Children of depressed parents develop depression at a rate six times higher than children of unaffected parents and are also more likely to develop other disorders such as conduct disorder (Essau 2004).

Warner et al. (1995) conducted a study that showed that the risk of disruptive behavior by children of depressed parents tripled compared to children of non-depressed parents (Essau 2004). Also, family members of depressed children had a higher risk of drug abuse than family members of non-depressed children (Kovacs et al. 1997; Essau 2004). Depression in parents alienates them from their children because the symptoms of depression can include withdrawing from once pleasurable activities (Nicholson & Clayfield 2004). Parental attention, or the lack thereof, has been shown to significantly effect the development of younger children (Kwon et al. 2006). The withdrawal of the parental influence in the children's lives



causes children to lose that strong foundation discussed in the section on attachment theory. The developmental stage of childhood and the attachment theory suggested by Bowlby (1969) offer evidence that depression negatively affects the parent-child home relationship. Since depression in families leads to some substance abuse problems (Kovacs et al. 1997; Essau 2004), this is again support for the claim that the risk of deviant behavior and subsequent incarceration is higher when multiple risk factors are present.

### Incarceration History

The main objective behind this thesis is to ascertain whether incarcerated parents are at high risk for having a child that is incarcerated also. However, to establish support for an argument for the concept of intergenerational cycle of incarceration, a history of incarceration must be identified. To do this, two variables will be discussed. The first variable is important in establishing the cycle. Incarceration of an inmate's own parent as well as the incarceration of the inmate's child is strong evidence that supports the argument for the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. The second variable discussed will be the prior incarceration history of the parent. Recidivism rates of the inmate can also impact the likelihood of child incarceration, given the child's exposure to the repeated criminal behavior of the parent.

## Incarceration of Inmate's Own Parent

One of the strongest ways to recognize a pattern in family incarceration is to examine the prior arrests and convictions of current inmate's parent(s). If the current inmate had a parent imprisoned while he or she was a young child, then they would likely have gone through the same attachment stress explained by the attachment theory and experienced the same risk factors in their home growing up. Research suggests that a current inmate is likely to have had one of his or her own parents in prison (Gabel & Johnson 1995; Myers et al. 1999). About 46 percent of both mothers and fathers imprisoned in 2002 had a family member that had been incarcerated (James 2004). Furthermore, Myers et al. (1999) reported that almost half (47 percent) of mothers in prison had a family member incarcerated, with 34 percent of those sampled mothers reporting their parent was incarcerated (Johnston 1991).

Children with family members incarcerated are at extremely high risk for incarceration themselves. These children's exposure to crime is greater than other children; therefore, more opportunities to engage in future criminal acts exist. Multigenerational involvement in the criminal justice system can affect mothers' parenting at home (Myers et al. 1999). With the incarceration of the parent, the child is often moved from home to home. With the incarceration of multiple family members present in a large number of

these families, children are likely to be moved around several times, thus disrupting the home just as a child became settled.

### Prior Incarcerations of the Inmate

Another stress on the family unit is repeated incarceration of a child's parent. Constant shifting of caregivers leads to unstable living environments for children and decreased emotional and physical security. As of 1994, almost 68 percent of inmates were rearrested within three years of their release (Langan & Levin 2002). Over 75 percent of parents in State prisons reported prior convictions and 56 percent had actually served time for those convictions (Mumola 2000). Parental incarcerations and the arrests that precede the current incarceration wreak havoc on the lives of the inmates' children (Seymour 1998; Doerr 2001). The emotions that surface from a traumatic experience such as this can initiate a pattern of unfavorable choices in life on the part of the child (Doerr 2001). Investigations have uncovered that parental recidivism – the repeated movement in and out from the prison to home and back to prison again – is by far the most damaging facet of parental incarceration's affect on children (McGowan & Blumenthal 1978; Johnston 1995b; Myers et al. 1999).

## Demographic Characteristics

The following sections will describe the demographic characteristics of the inmates and their families. Deficits in these areas are suspected to have an impact on the cycle of incarceration.

### Low Educational Attainment

One problem plaguing both inmates and their families is low educational attainment. The prevalence of low educational attainment has been found to be exceptionally high among inmates (Paasche-Orlow et al. 2005). In 1991, only about 34 percent of inmates had completed high school (Gabel & Johnston 1995). Because of its direct link to poverty, low educational attainment can, in some cases, be linked to the actual cause of arrest and incarceration of inmates. For example, in 2002, 16 percent of inmates said that they committed their offense to obtain money (Wilson 2000; Karberg & James 2005).

Men who have education no higher than that of high school are six times more likely to be incarcerated than those who have some college education (Western & Pettit 2002). This also affects children of the inmates. In 1997, 90 percent of offenders under the age of 18 had not graduated high school, with 66 percent of those having finished only the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grades (Strom 2000). Most incarcerated mothers are also poor, single, and have limited education (Beck 2000a; Poehlmann 2005). These are all factors

associated with increased risk for young children (Klebanov et al. 1998; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn 2000; Poehlmann 2005).

### Employment

According to William Julius Wilson (1996), crime is a fundamental result of the lack of employment of the residents in susceptible neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, mostly inner-city ghettos, are crowded with inhabitants who are poor and jobless. Unemployment opens the door to all sorts of criminal behaviors including violence and drug trafficking (Wilson 1996). In his book, Wilson also reveals that inner-city black youths are more prone to begin drug trafficking and to engage in the violent behavior that accompanies it due to limited prospects for secure employment. The research of Western and Pettit (2000) support this premise. They found that, from 1982 to 1996, employment among young, African-American males who were also high school dropouts steadily declined. Earlier research done by Delbert Elliott (1992), using data collected from 1976-1989, shows that deviance rates normally drop during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Some reasons for this are the new roles and responsibilities that are required by a newly attained job.

By examining the employment rates of the inmates reflected in the data, a link between unemployment and susceptibility to participation in criminal activities that leads to arrest and incarceration can be made. This

link would further strengthen the research of Elliott (1992) and Wilson (1996). Also, the link between unemployment and having an incarcerated child can be made. Participating in criminal activities has already been shown by the literature to be detrimental to both parents and children. Unemployment is another reason that may prompt family members to participate in criminal activities.

### Loss of Contact with Incarcerated Parent

According to Peter Breen (1995), providing children with opportunities to visit their incarcerated parent is essential for maintaining strong familial bonds. Children, especially those who witness their parent's actual arrest, often do not know what is happening during the arrest, if their parent will be hurt in prison, or they may not know when their parent might return to them (LaPoint 1977; McGowan & Blumenthal 1978; Breen 1995). By allowing a child to visit an incarcerated parent, the child's common fears and emotions can be alleviated and the possible journey to the child's criminal behavior halted (Breen 1995). Due to the fact that every child has a different reaction to a parent's incarceration, the outcome could manifest itself in "acting-in" behavior or "acting-out" behavior (Breen 1995). Acting-in behavior emerges in subtle ways, such as poor school performance and lack of interest in enjoyable activities. Acting-out behavior emerges as truancy, aggressiveness, and drug abuse. In research conducted by Sack and Seidler (1978), the onset of

aggressive and anti-social behavior in young males who had experienced incarceration of their father was almost immediate.

Prison visitation programs ultimately deter acting-in and acting-out behavior of children of incarcerated parents. In a study conducted by Sack and Seidler (1978), visitation between children and their incarcerated parents was an extremely important link in preserving the continuity of the relationship between the child and incarcerated parent. More recently, research conducted by Kazura (2001) and Fischer (2002) shows that inmates advocate for better family visitation programs. Therefore, the overall consensus is in favor of prison visits to parents. "Maintaining these family ties is ... the best hope that the cycle of intergenerational incarceration will be broken," (Breen 1995).

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

As described in the literature review, there are several important factors that impact the likelihood of an incarcerated parent having an incarcerated child. This thesis seeks to establish a causal relationship between certain identified risk factors and the likelihood of a prisoner having an incarcerated child. The following sections are comprised of an extensive overview of the complete data set, weights and limitations, dependent and independent variables, methods of analysis of the selected variables, and the hypotheses to be investigated.

#### The Data – First Stage Sampling

The following sections describing the sampling techniques to obtain the data used in the analysis are supplemented with information from the codebook for the data set (U.S. Bureau of Census 2000).

The database used for this analysis is the 1997 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, originally conducted by the United States Department of Justice-Bureau of Justice Statistics, the United States Department of Justice-Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Bureau of the Census.



The State prison universe consisted of 1,131 all-male prisons, 131 all-female prisons, and 147 with both male and female inmates. Of these, 280 facilities were selected for the sample including 220 male facilities and 60 female facilities. Twenty reserve facilities, ten of each gender, were selected in case any in the original sample failed to participate. In the sample of the State facilities, the 13 largest male prisons and the 17 largest female prisons were selected and designated “self representing” and the remaining were split into seven census regions. These regions consisted of the following: Northeast except New York, New York, Midwest, South except Texas, Texas, West except California, and California. Within the seven regions, facilities were further divided by facility type, security level, and size of population. All were sorted from low to high within each category. From this selection, 223 male institutions and 47 female institutions were selected.

The Federal prison universe included a total of 105 male institutions, 14 female institutions, and 8 with both male and female inmates. Of those for the Federal sample, 32 male facilities and 8 female facilities were selected. Of those facilities, one male facility and two female facilities were selected for the final data set. The remaining facilities housing male inmates were divided into five divisions based on the level and the remaining female facilities were split into two security levels. Within those levels, the facilities were ordered by size from low to high.

## The Data – Second Stage Sampling

Inmates were randomly selected by computer with a pre-determined skip interval. The total number selected from each facility was based on the size of the facility and the gender of the housed inmates. In the State survey, 12,269 males and 3,116 females were selected for interviewing. This resulted in a non-response rate of ten percent.

The Federal inmates were then selected in a two-step process oversampling non-drug offenders so that they would be included in an adequate sample size for analysis. Using a random starting point and skip interval, 5,854 males and 1,875 females were selected. In the second step of the process, one in every three drug offenders was selected, together with all of the non-drug offenders. For this group, 3,525 males and 954 females were sampled.

As a result of these sampling methods, 1 in every 75 males and 1 in every 17 females were selected for the State survey. For the Federal survey, 1 in every 13 males and 1 in every 3 females was selected. Although the original sample size of the inmates was 15,385 for State prisons and 4,479 for Federal prisons, the actual number of inmates interviewed for the 1997 State survey was 14,285. The Federal survey for the same year was administered to 4,041 inmates. The data analyzed comes from a valid sample totaling 18,326 inmates.

## Weighting

The “basic weight” for each inmate sampled was the inverse of the probability of selection. For the State survey, the probability of selection was 74.67 for males and 17.43 for females. For the Federal survey, the probability of selection amounted to 13.18 for the males and 3.07 for females.

Since only one-third of the original sample of drug offenders was included, the drug offenders were multiplied by three to equally account for the discrepancy between drug offenders and non-drug offenders. Other precautions were taken such as accounting for the weights of the non-interviewed inmates in the sample, and a duplication control factor was included so that data recorded was not a replication of data that inmate had previously recorded. In other words, recording one inmate’s data as data from two separate inmates was avoided.

When properly weighted (ranging from 2.8986 to 164.2619), the number of eligible responses for the survey equaled 1,136,472. For the purpose of this analysis, a new variable for the weights (NewWght) was computed by running descriptive statistics on the original variable for weight and dividing it by the resulting average. Because the weights equalize the chance of being selected, the analysis on the dataset was conducted using the new variable representing the weighted data.

### Administration of the Survey

The survey administered to the State and Federal inmates lasted about an hour and was administered using CAPI technology (computer-assisted personal interviewing). The survey examined a variety of aspects of the prisoner's life, including the existence of any prior incarcerations, history of drug abuse of both the inmate and their parent, sexual and/or physical abuse experienced by the inmate, any existing mental illness, previously or currently incarcerated family members, and inmates' employment history. These were singled out for the purpose of this thesis as "risk factors." The survey also inquired about the prisoners' children including details on how many they had, where they currently lived, and if any were currently incarcerated.

### Research Hypotheses

The main focus in this thesis is to identify significant risks faced by incarcerated inmates and their children, and to identify the strongest predictors of child incarceration. In order to fully examine the risks posed to children of incarcerated inmates, the following hypotheses are investigated, using logistic regression:

Hypothesis 1:

Female inmates are more likely to have an incarcerated child than male inmates.

Hypothesis 2:

African-American inmates are more likely to have an incarcerated child than whites, or members of other ethnic groups.

Hypothesis 3:

Inmates who have been divorced are more likely to have an incarcerated child than inmates who are married, never married, or separated/widowed.

Hypothesis 4:

Inmates who have a high school diploma or above are less likely to report that they had a child incarcerated than inmates who only attended elementary school or middle school.

Hypothesis 5:

Inmates who were gainfully employed in the month prior to their arrest are less likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates who were not employed in the month prior to their arrest.

Hypothesis 6:

Inmates whose children were living in the household at the time of the arrest are more likely to indicate that they have at least one child incarcerated than inmates whose children were not living with them in the household at the time of their arrest.

Hypothesis 7: The odds of an inmate reporting that they have at least one child incarcerated increases as the number of children of the inmate increased.

Hypothesis 8:

Inmates who reported abusing drugs regularly at the time of arrest are more likely to indicate that they have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not report regularly using drugs at the time of arrest.

Hypothesis 9:

Inmates who experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, or both are more likely to report that they have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not experience abuse.

Hypothesis 10:

Inmates who reported taking a prescribed medication for a documented mental illness are more likely to have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not report ever taking a prescribed medication for an emotional or mental problem.

Hypothesis 11:

Inmates who reported that their own parent(s) had ever been incarcerated are more likely to have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not report having a parent ever incarcerated.

Hypothesis 12:

Inmates with multiple prior incarcerations are more likely to have a child incarcerated than inmates with no prior incarcerations.

Hypothesis 13:

Inmates who are visited by their child(ren) at least once a month are less likely to report that they have a child incarcerated than inmates who are never visited by their child(ren).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYTICAL METHODS

The following sections present a synopsis of the method of analysis of the data, as well as a detailed description of the coding of the variables used in the analysis.

The software used for this analysis was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14.0. Frequencies were run to get a clear picture of the sample that was being analyzed. Logistic regression was used to test the research hypotheses identified in the previous section. Specifically, four logistic regression models were constructed to test the extent to which the four groups of independent variables predicted the dependent variable.

The original sample surveyed consisted of 18,326 inmates. For the purpose of this analysis, the weighted data were used, and a filter was run on the data set in order to eliminate the inmates who did not have any children at all from the final data set. This decreased the sample of inmates to 12,182. This step was necessary to filter through the inmates who did not have children, so that the results were not skewed by those inmates' responses. Furthermore, a second criterion was developed for the filter, which disregarded all inmates below the age of 32. The reason for this is that



inmates that had a child when they were 16 would have a 16-year-old child at the time of the survey, eligible for adult incarceration. This further reduces the chance that the final results are skewed by those individuals who would likely be too young to have a child incarcerated at the time of the survey.

In the logistic regression analysis, each grouping of the variables in each model was entered separately, in blocks for control purposes. The first model consisted of the demographic variables alone. The second model included the demographic variables as well as the selected risk factors for “Incarceration History.” The variables for “Incarceration History” included the following: Inmate’s parent’s incarceration and prior incarcerations of the current inmate. The third model consisted of all of the demographic variables, the risk factors for “Incarceration History,” and the added risk factors from the group that made up the category of “Abuse History.” These variables included drug abuse of both the inmate and the inmate’s parent, physical and/or sexual abuse that occurred in the inmate’s home, and the mental health status of the inmate. The fourth and final model consisted of all of the aforementioned variables, plus the variable that measured how often an inmate had been visited by their children.

#### Coding of the Dependent Variable

The variables were recoded for use in the logistic regression, as seen in table 1. The dependent variable for this analysis consisted of whether a

currently incarcerated inmate reported their child was previously or currently incarcerated. This was recoded into a dummy variable and represented as 0=No and 1=Yes.

### Coding of the Independent Variables: Demographics

For the purpose of logistic regression analysis, all of the demographic variables were recoded into dummy variables. Gender was recoded as 0=Female inmates and 1=Male inmates. Female inmates were used as the reference category. The variable for race was collapsed and then recoded. Because Caucasian and African-American were the two largest racial populations (50.0% and 45.3% respectively), Caucasian inmates, the reference category for this variable, were recoded as 0 and African-Americans as 1. The other ethnicities (Asian or Pacific Islander, Aleut, Alaskan Native, Native American, and others not specified), populating less than five percent of the total population combined, were grouped together and defined as “Other” and coded as 1. The inmate’s age was also included. As described above, inmates 31 years of age and younger were filtered out, because of the decreased likelihood of their having a child incarcerated due to the projected age of the child’s eligibility for incarceration. The ages of the remaining inmates were added as a continuous variable. The variable for age was also squared to detect whether there was a curvilinear relationship between an inmate’s age and the likelihood of having a child incarcerated.

Marital Status was collapsed and recoded into several dummy variables as follows: 0=Married, 1=Never Married, 1=Divorced and 1=Other. "Widowed" and "Separated" were the classifications transformed into "Other" because the percentages were smaller than the main divisions. To measure educational attainment, two variables were combined. Inmates divulged the highest grade that they attended in school, and that information was recoded into several dummy variables for the purpose of comparison in the analysis. Attending kindergarten through eighth grades was considered the reference group for this variable, and was coded as 0. Attending high school (grades 9 through 12) was combined and coded as 1. A second variable, whether inmates had received a high school diploma or GED, was combined with this high school dummy variable to distinguish between high school completers and non-completers. High school drop-outs were coded as 1 and high school graduates were also coded as 1. Attending college and beyond was also combined and coded as 1. The reason for this specific recoding is to show that as educational attainment increases, the likelihood of criminal activity decreases, due to greater employment opportunities and thus the lower inclination to engage in certain criminal activities.

In the survey, inmates were asked the number of children that they had. These numbers were coded into dummy variables as follows: Having one child was coded as 0, two children as 1, three to five children as 1, six to eight children as 1, and nine or more children as 1.

In order to analyze the relationship between child incarceration and employment, the variable for employment status was used. Inmates were asked whether they had a job in the month prior to their incarceration, and that variable was recoded as 0=No and 1=Yes. The next variable used was the presence of children in the inmate's household in the month prior to incarceration. Inmates were asked in the survey whether their children lived with them prior to their incarceration. This variable was of particular interest because of the theory of "attachment" to that parent. The variable was split, and recoded as 0=No children lived in the household and 1= Yes, children lived in the household.

#### Coding of Independent Variables: Risk Factors

Two variables were used to gauge the amount of drug abuse in the inmate's home. The first variable asked whether or not the current inmate abused drugs regularly in the month prior to their arrest. The responses were coded as 0=No and 1=Yes. The second variable represented the inmate's parents' drug abuse by asking whether the inmates' parents regularly abused drugs in the home. These responses were also recoded as 0=No and 1=Yes. Abuse, whether physical or sexual, is important in the final analysis as well. In the survey, inmates responded to the question of whether or not they had been physically and/or sexually abused. This variable was recoded into several dummy variables and represented by the following: 0=Never abused,

1=Physical abuse only, 1=Sexual abuse only, and 1=Both physical and sexual abuse.

The inmate's mental health is also an issue investigated in this thesis. The mental stability of parents is important in analyzing the relationship between incarcerated parents and their children. For this reason, the inmate's mental health was added into the regression models. The inmates responding to the survey were asked if they suffered from a mental or emotional condition for which they had been referred to a professional and, in turn, prescribed medication. This variable was also recoded into a dummy variable, with 0=No and 1=Yes. The incarceration of a current inmate's own parent is an extremely important factor in this thesis, by directly supporting or negating the concept of the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. For this reason, a variable representing the past or present incarceration of the current inmate's parent was included into the analysis. The variable was recoded into a dummy variable and represented by 0=No and 1=Yes.

Prior prison sentences are also thought to account for the link between incarcerated inmates, their family members, and their children. For this reason, the inmate's number of prior prison sentences was recoded into several dummy variables as follows: 0=No prior incarcerations, 1=One prior incarceration, and 1=Two or more prior incarcerations.

Parent/child contact is essential for maintaining a positive attachment relationship once the parent or child is taken out of the home and

incarcerated. The survey included a question regarding the level of visitation between incarcerated inmates and their children. This variable was recoded into dummy variables and represented as follows: 0=Never, 1=Daily or almost daily; 1=Once weekly, 1=Once monthly, and 1=Less than once monthly.

Table 1: Variables Used in Analysis (Numbers in parentheses refer to the variable name in the original survey data collected)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	
Child Incarceration (R38)	“Have you ever had a child incarcerated?” 0=No; 1=Yes
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES: DEMOGRAPHICS	
Gender (V6)	A variable representing the inmate’s gender; 0=Female; 1=Male
Race (V18)	“Which of these best describes your race?” 0=White; 1= African-American; 1=Other (includes Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian, Aleut, Alaska Native, and others not specified)
Age (Continuous) (V9)	Represents the inmate’s age at the time of the survey, as indicated by the year of birth subtracted from the date of the survey (1997); Respondents aged 32 and above were included in the final analysis
Age (Squared) (V9*V9)	The variable for “age continuous” is squared
Marital Status (V27)	“Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?” 0=Married; 1=Never Married; 1=Divorced; 1=Other (includes Widowed and Separated)
Highest Educational Level Attained (V1311)	Indicated the highest level of school attended by the inmate; 0=Kindergarten through Eighth; 1=High School Drop-Outs; 1=High School Graduates Only; 1=Some College and Beyond

Employment Status (V1327)	“In the month before incarceration, did you have a job?” 0=No;1=Yes
Number of Children (V1386)	Represents the number of children that the inmate reported; 0=One child; 1=Two children; 1=Three to Five children; 1=Six to Eight children; 1=Nine or more children
Children in Household (V1395)	“Did any children under 18 live with you before your incarceration?” 0=No;1=Yes
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES: RISK FACTORS	
Inmate Drug Abuse (R50)	“Have you ever used any illegal substance regularly?” 0=No;1=Yes
Parental Drug Abuse (V1427)	“When you were growing up, did any of your parents or guardians abuse drugs?” 0=No;1=Yes
Physical/Sexual Abuse (R3)	“Have you ever been physically or sexually abused?” 0=Never; 1=Physical abuse only; 1=Sexual abuse only; 1=Both physical and sexual abuse
Mental Health Status (V1794)	“Because of an emotional or mental problem, have you ever taken a medication prescribed by a psychiatrist or other doctor?” 0=No;1=Yes
Inmate’s Parent’s Incarceration (R30)	“Has your parent ever served time?” 0=No; 1=Yes
Prior Incarcerations of the Inmate (R19)	“How many prior times have you been incarcerated?” 0=No priors; 1=One prior incarceration; 1=Two or more prior incarcerations
Visited by Children (V1407)	“How often were you visited by your children?” 0=Never; 1=Daily or almost daily; 1=Once weekly; 1=Once monthly; 1=Less than once monthly

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS

This thesis tests the proposition that incarcerated inmates have at least one child who is also incarcerated. The basis for this argument stems from the type of life that the current inmate experienced while growing up and the type of experience that inmate's child(ren) have had before and since their parent's incarceration.

The sample size for the analysis of data for this thesis consisted of 18,326 inmates: 14,530 men and 3,796 women. A filter was then added to the analysis, disregarding all inmates with no children as well as inmates aged 31 years and younger. The number of inmates for the final analysis totaled 7,669.

Logistic regression was used to test the different models as well as the hypotheses. Logistic regression is extremely useful when predicting the outcome of a dichotomous variable: in this case, predicting the likelihood that an incarcerated inmate will also report having an incarcerated child. For the final results, the odds ratio is reported, which represents the change in the odds of being in the outcome category (having a child that is incarcerated). In other words, the odds of a parent reporting that they had a child incarcerated either increased or decreased due to the different demographic characteristics and risk factors presented in the models.



To better understand the nature of the research population, the demographic variables of inmates with children and the risk factors present were extracted and recorded. (see Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Demographic and Risk Factor Categories  
(Boldface lines indicate separation between various models)

	Number in Total Sample	Valid Percent in Total Sample
<b>Gender (n=7,668)</b>		
Male	7,049	91.9%
Female	619	8.1%
<b>Race (n=7,640)</b>		
White	3,820	50.0%
African-American	3,463	45.3%
Other	357	4.7%
<b>Age (n=7,668)</b>		
32-44	5,494	75.1%
45-54	1,647	18.0%
55-64	402	5.3%
65-74	100	1.2%
75 and older	25	.3%
<b>Educational Attainment (n=7,655)</b>		
Elementary/Middle School (K-8 <sup>th</sup> )	1,124	14.7%
High School Drop-Outs	3,439	44.9%
High School Graduates	1,641	21.4%
Some College and Beyond	1,451	19.0%
<b>Current Marital Status (n=7,652)</b>		
Married	2,084	27.2%
Divorced	2,498	32.6%
Never Married	2,099	27.4%
Other	971	12.7%
<b>Employment Status at Time of Arrest (n=7,548)</b>		
Employed	5,630	74.6%
Not Employed	1,918	25.4%
<b>Number of Children of the Inmate (n=7,660)</b>		
One Child	2,062	26.9%

Two Children	2,090	27.3%
Three to Five Children	2,869	37.5%
Six to Eight Children	503	6.6%
Nine or more Children	136	1.8%
Children Living in Household at Time of Arrest (n=6,474)		
Yes	3,385	52.3%
No	3,089	47.7%
Inmate's Parent's Incarceration (n=7,590)		
Yes	934	12.3%
No	6,656	87.7%
Inmate's Prior Incarcerations (n=7,623)		
No Prior Incarcerations	1,870	24.5%
One Prior Incarcerations	1,267	16.6%
Two or More Prior Incarcerations	4,486	58.8%
Inmate Drug Abuse (n=7,633)		
Yes	6,107	80.1%
No	1,526	19.9%
Parental Drug Abuse (n=7,613)		
Yes	2,260	29.7%
No	5,353	70.3%
Physical/Sexual Abuse (n=7,645)		
Physical Abuse Only	760	9.9%
Sexual Abuse Only	280	3.7%
Both	346	4.5%
Never Abused	6,259	81.9%
Inmate Prescribed Medication for a Documented Mental Illness (n=7,613)		
Yes	1,438	18.9%
No	6,175	81.1%
Visitation by Children (n=7,217)		
Daily or Almost Daily	45	.6%
Weekly	384	5.3%
Once Monthly	854	11.8%
Less than Once Monthly	1,559	21.6%
Never	4,375	60.6%
Child is Currently or Has Been Incarcerated (n=7,578)		
Yes	407	5.4%
No	7,171	94.6%

## Demographic Characteristics

The vast majority of the population of the interviewed inmates was male, totaling 91.9 percent of the inmate population. Female inmates comprised only 8.1 percent of the total sample. The ethnic categories were divided into three main categories. White, or Caucasian, inmates totaled 50 percent and African-American inmates totaled 45.3 percent. The remaining ethnicities were combined into one category, since they only comprised 4.7 percent of the 7,669 total inmates. Those ethnicities included the following: Asian or Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, Aleut, American Indian, and others not specified in the data set. The ages of the inmates were calculated by birth year subtracted from the survey year of 1997. The categories were divided and the largest group of inmates was those aged 32-44, and totaled 5,494. The second group was 45-54 and equaled 1,647. The third group was 55-64 and equaled 402 inmates. The fourth and fifth groups were 65-74 and 75 and older, and totaled 100 and 25 inmates respectively.

The variable for the inmate's educational attainment covered all grades from kindergarten through post-baccalaureate study. For the purpose of analysis, grades were condensed into major academic groupings. Inmates who attended kindergarten through the eighth grades totaled 14.7 percent. Inmates who attended high school (grades nine through twelve) but did not graduate comprised the largest group, consisting of 44.9 percent of inmates. Inmates who graduated from high school only comprised 21.4 percent of the

sample, and those who had some college and post-baccalaureate work that was either attempted or completed totaled 19 percent of inmates.

Inmates who were married at the time of the survey comprised 27.2 percent of the total of 7,669 inmates. Divorced inmates totaled 32.6 percent, and those inmates who had never married prior to incarceration totaled 27.4 percent. The number of inmates who reported that they were separated or widowed was quite small, so those two classifications were combined into one category (Other). These inmates totaled 12.7 percent.

Employment status of the inmates in the month before their incarceration included two groups, employed and not employed. A total of 74.6 percent of inmates were employed at the time of their incarceration and 25.4 percent were not employed.

Inmates who had one child comprised 26.9 percent of the sample. Inmates with two children totaled 27.3 percent. Inmates with three to five children comprised the largest group, with 37.5 percent. Those with six to eight children totaled 6.6 percent, and inmates with nine or more children totaled only 1.8 percent.

Inmates reporting that their child or children lived in the household with them at the time of incarceration also consisted of two groups, yes children were living in the household and no, children were not living in the household. Inmates who reported “yes” comprised 52.3 percent of the total sample. Those who reported “no” comprised 47.7 percent of the total sample.

## Risk Factor Characteristics

Inmates who reported that their own parent had been incarcerated either previously or currently totaled only 12.3 percent of the population. The inmates who did not report their own parent had been incarcerated represented the majority of the sample, totaling 87.7 percent. Inmates who had no prior incarcerations represented 24.5 percent of the sample. Inmates with one prior incarceration totaled 16.6 percent and inmates with two or more prior incarcerations comprised the majority of the sample, with 58.8 percent.

Inmates who reported that they had abused drugs prior to their incarceration represented the majority of the sample, with 80.1 percent of inmates. Inmates who did not abuse drugs before their incarceration totaled only 19.9 percent. Furthermore, the proportion of inmates who reported that their own parents abused drugs in the home was 29.7 percent. Inmates who reported that their parents did not abuse drugs represented the majority of the sample with a total of 70.3 percent of inmates.

Inmates also reported whether they had experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, both types, or neither type of abuse in their home while growing up. The percentages for each category were relatively low, with the largest percentage of inmates (81.9) reporting never experiencing either type of abuse. Inmates who reported experiencing physical abuse, sexual abuse, and both types of abuse totaled 9.9, 3.7, and 4.5 percents, respectively.

Inmates who reported ever having taken a prescribed medication for a documented mental illness comprised only 18.9 percent of the total 7,669 of sampled inmates. Those who did not report taking a prescribed medication equaled 81.1 percent. The variable representing visitation by children to their incarcerated parent was split into several categories. Inmates reporting that their children visited them daily or almost daily totaled only 45, which is less than one percent of the total sample. Visitation occurring once weekly amounted to 5.3 percent inmates. Inmates reporting visits once monthly and less than once monthly totaled 11.8 percent and 21.6 percent, respectively. Inmates reporting no visitation at all from their children comprised the largest group, which totaled 60.6 percent of inmates.

The dependent variable for the analysis, child incarceration, was also examined. Inmates reporting they had a child who was currently incarcerated or had been previously incarcerated comprised only 5.4 percent of the total sample of inmates. Inmates reporting that they have never had a child incarcerated totaled 94.6 percent.

### Logistic Regression Results, Model 1

The results of the demographic variables from the first model of the logistic regression are displayed in Table 3. (The full regression table is seen on page 62.)

Table 3: Demographics, Model 1

	Model 1 Demographics  (standard error)
Gender (Females)	.405*** (.206)
Race (White)	
Black	1.564*** (.147)
Other	1.175 (.326)
Age (Continuous)	1.507*** (.081)
Age <sup>2</sup>	.996** (.001)
Marital Status (Married)	
Never Married	.812 (.209)
Divorced	1.200 (.165)
Other	.830 (.225)
Education Level (Kindergarten through Eighth)	
High School Drop Out	1.100 (.196)
High School Graduate	.720 (.239)
College and Beyond	.802 (.228)
Employment Status	.767 (.149)
Number of Children Inmate Has (One)	
Two	2.308** (.294)
Three to Five	4.533*** (.270)
Six to Eight	4.487*** (.325)
Nine or More	9.606*** (.394)
Child in Household	.942 (.140)
R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	.137
X <sup>2</sup> (Chi-Square)	246.472*** df=17
N (final weight: with children, aged 32 and older)	7,669
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001	

For the variable representing the inmates' gender, the results showed that the odds of male inmates reporting that they had a child incarcerated were 59.5 percent less than female inmates (CI=.270-.607;  $p < .001$ )<sup>2</sup>. For race, the odds of African-American inmates reporting they had a child incarcerated were 56.4 percent higher than for white inmates (CI=1.174-2.085;  $p < .01$ ). The results for the other ethnic categories were not significant.

Age, entered as a continuous variable as well as age squared, was statistically significant and this showed that as the age of the inmate increased, the likelihood of a child increases, but at a decreasing rate. Therefore, this represents the overall effect of age on the likelihood of having a child incarcerated.

Never-married inmates were 19.8 less likely than married inmates to have an incarcerated child. This result was not statistically significant. The odds of divorced inmates to report having an incarcerated child were 20 percent higher than married inmates, but that result was also not statistically significant. Inmates who were separated or widowed were 17 percent less likely to report having an incarcerated child than married inmates, however, that was also not statistically significant.

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<sup>2</sup> "CI" represents the 95 percent Confidence Interval statistic, which shows that one can be 95 percent sure that the resulting beta ( $\beta$ ) falls between the reported lower and upper bounds of the odds reported.



For the variable representing education, the results were not completely expected. There were no statistically significant results for any of the categories that comprised the educational attainment variable. The odds of inmates that were high school drop-outs reporting they had a child incarcerated were 10 percent higher than inmates who only completed through the eighth grade. Furthermore, inmates with a high school diploma were 28 percent less likely to report having an incarcerated child than those who only attended through the eighth grades, and inmates with some college and beyond were 19.8 percent less likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates only attending through the eighth grade.

As indicated in Table 3, an inmate's employment status in the month prior to their incarceration was also not statistically significant predictor of having a child incarcerated. However, the result went in the expected direction. Inmates who were employed in the month prior to their incarceration were 23.3 percent less likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates who were not employed in the month prior to their incarceration.

The odds of inmates who lived with their child in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration reporting they had an incarcerated child were 5.8 percent lower than inmates whose child was not living with them in the household. This result, however, was also not statistically significant and was not in the expected direction.

The number of children that the inmate reported having was a statistically significant predictor of having an incarcerated child. When compared to inmates with only one child, the odds of inmates with two children reporting that at least one of them was incarcerated were 2.31 times higher (CI=1.297-4.108;  $p < .01$ ). Inmates with three to five children were 4.53 times more likely to report that at least one of the children was incarcerated than inmates with only one child (CI=2.670-7.695;  $p < .001$ ). The odds of inmates reporting they had six to eight children were 4.49 times higher than inmates with one child to report that at least one of the children was incarcerated (CI=2.372-8.485;  $p < .001$ ). Finally, inmates that had nine or more children were 9.61 times more likely to report that at least one of the children was incarcerated than inmates with only one child (CI=4.437-20.798;  $p < .001$ ).

Model 1 was statistically significant as a whole, as tested by the Omnibus Tests for Model Coefficients ( $p < .001$ ). The percentage correctly explained by this model was 95.6. The model, which contained the demographic variables only, was able to explain 13.7 percent of the variance. This statistic also shows that a large amount of the variance is unexplained by the variables presented.

Logistic Regression Results, Model 2

Model 2 consisted of the demographic variables from the first model and the incarceration history of the inmate and the inmate's own parent. The results of the analysis with the added variables are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Demographics and Incarceration History, Model 2

	Model 1 Demographics (standard error)	Model 2 Incarceration History (standard error)
Gender (Females)	.405*** (.206)	.353*** (.209)
Race (White)		
Black	1.564*** (.147)	1.445*** (.148)
Other	1.175 (.326)	1.161 (.329)
Age (Continuous)	1.507*** (.081)	1.497*** (.080)
Age <sup>2</sup>	.996** (.001)	.997*** (.001)
Marital Status (Married)		
Never Married	.812 (.209)	.778 (.210)
Divorced	1.200 (.165)	1.147 (.167)
Other	.830 (.225)	.814 (.227)
Education Level (Kindergarten through Eighth)		
High School Drop Out	1.100 (.196)	1.096 (.198)
High School Graduate	.720 (.239)	.784 (.241)
College and Beyond	.802 (.228)	.900 (.231)
Employment Status	.767 (.149)	.832 (.150)
Number of Children Inmate Has (One)		
Two	2.308** (.294)	2.358** (.295)
Three to Five	4.533*** (.270)	4.708*** (.271)
Six to Eight	4.487*** (.325)	4.559*** (.326)
Nine or More	9.606***	10.162***

Child in Household	(.394) .942 (.140)	(.395) .979 (.141)
Inmate's Parent Incarcerated		1.721** (.177)
Prior Incarcerations (No priors)		
One		1.714* (.240)
Two or More		2.343*** (.189)
R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	.137	.156
X <sup>2</sup> (Chi-Square)	246.472*** df=17	280.387*** df=20
N (final weight: with children, aged 32 and older)	7,669	7,669
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001		

Looking first at the added variables from Model 2, whether an inmate's parent had been previously or was currently incarcerated at the time of the survey was a statistically significant predictor of child incarceration. The odds of inmates reporting they had an incarcerated child, who also reported that their own parent was incarcerated, were 72.1 percent higher than inmates whose parent was not incarcerated (CI=1.216-2.435; p<.01).

Prior incarcerations of the inmate were also statistically significant. Inmates with one prior incarceration were 71.4 percent more likely to report they had a child incarcerated than inmates with no prior incarcerations (CI=1.070-2.745; p<.05). Inmates with two or more prior incarcerations were 2.34 times more likely to report they had an incarcerated child than inmates with no prior incarcerations (CI=1.619-3.392; p<.001).

When reviewing how the sociodemographic variables changed with the addition of incarceration variables, the odds of males reporting that they had an incarcerated child, when compared to female inmates, were 64.7 percent

lower (CI=.235-.533;  $p<.001$ ). These odds increased throughout the two models, from 59.5 percent in Model 1 to 64.7 percent in Model 2. The odds of African-Americans inmates to report having an incarcerated child were 44.5 percent higher than white inmates (CI=1.081-1.932;  $p<.05$ ). This result decreased from 56.4 percent in Model 1 to 44.5 percent in Model 2. Inmates of other ethnic backgrounds were 16.1 percent more likely to report having an incarcerated child than white inmates, but the result was not statistically significant. This result also decreased through the two models, from 17.5 percent less likely in Model 1 to 16.1 percent less likely in Model 2. The odds for the variables representing race decreased with the addition of the incarceration variables, which shows that the incarceration variables have more of an impact on child incarceration than just race alone.

Age was significant, and as inmates were older, the odds of them reporting they had an incarcerated child were 49.7 percent higher. This result decreased slightly over the two models, from 50.7 percent to 49.7 percent, showing that the incarceration variables had a greater impact on child incarceration than just age alone.

Inmates who had never married were 22.2 percent less likely to report they had a child incarcerated and divorced inmates were 14.7 percent more likely to have an incarcerated child when compared to married inmates, but the results were not statistically significant. The percentage of never married inmates decreased from 18.8 percent less likely in Model 1 to 22.2 percent

less likely in Model 2. Furthermore, the percentage for divorced inmates declined from 20 percent more likely in Model 1 to 14.7 percent more likely in Model 2. The odds of inmates who were either separated or widowed reporting they had an incarcerated child were 19.5 percent lower than married inmates, but that result was also not statistically significant. These odds for separated/widowed inmates decreased from 17 percent in Model 1 to 18.6 percent in Model 2. Since the odds for the variable representing all of the categories for marital status decreased, the results showed marital status does not have as great of an impact on child incarceration when the new incarceration variables were added to the model.

The odds of inmates who dropped out of high school reporting they had an incarcerated child were 9.6 percent higher than inmates who only completed through the eighth grade. That result, however, was not statistically significant and decreased from 10 percent in Model 1. Furthermore, inmates who graduated from high school were 21.6 percent less likely to report they had an incarcerated child than inmates who only completed through the eighth grade. That result was also not statistically significant, and increased from 28 percent in the first model. The odds of inmates who attended some college and beyond reporting having an incarcerated child were 10 percent lower than inmates who only completed through the eighth grade. This result was also not statistically significant, and increased from 19.8 percent in the first model. These results show that

having a high school diploma or beyond had more of an impact on the results when the incarceration history variables were added than alone.

Inmates who were employed in the month prior to their incarceration were 16.8 percent less likely to report having a child in jail than those inmates who were not employed prior to incarceration. These odds decreased from 23.3 percent in Model 1. This result was not statistically significant. The odds of inmates whose child lived in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration were 2.1 percent lower than inmates whose child did not live in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration. These odds also increased throughout the two models, from 5.8 percent in Model 1.

The number of children an inmate reported having was a consistently significant predictor of child incarceration. The odds of inmates who reported having two children were 2.36 times higher to report at least one of those children was incarcerated, when compared to inmates with one child (CI=1.323-4.205;  $p < .01$ ). This result increased from the previous model's result of 2.31. Inmates with three to five children were 4.71 times more likely to report that at least one of those children was incarcerated than inmates with only one child, and also increased from the previous model which was 4.53. (CI=2.769-8.003;  $p < .001$ ). The odds of inmates with six to eight children reporting that at least one of those children was incarcerated were 4.56 times higher than inmates with only one child, inmates with nine or more children were 10.16 times more likely to report having an incarcerated child than

inmates with one child (CI=2.403-8.643;  $p<.001$  and CI=4.690-22.020;  $p<.001$  respectively). These odds also increased over the two models, from 4.49 and 9.61 times respectively.

The Omnibus tests indicated that Model 2 as a whole was also statistically significant ( $p<.001$ ). The percent correctly explained by the models remained the same, with 95.6 percent. The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was .156; meaning that the results for model 2 explained approximately 15.6 percent of the variance, which is an increase from 13.7 percent in Model 1.. However, with an  $R^2$  of only 15.6 percent, a significant amount of the variance in the dependent variable remains unexplained by the variables in Model 2.

### Results of Model 3

Model 3 added “Abuse History” to the previous models. Risk factors contained in this category include the following: Inmate’s drug abuse, inmate’s parent’s drug abuse, physical and/or sexual abuse of the inmate, and mental health status of the inmate. The results of Model 3 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Demographics, Incarceration History, and Abuse History, Model 3

	Model 1 Demographics (standard error)	Model 2 Incarceration History (standard error)	Model 3 Abuse History (standard error)
Gender (Females)	.405*** (.206)	.353*** (.209)	.366*** (.227)
Race (White) Black	1.564***	1.445***	1.476**



Other	(.147) 1.175	(.148) 1.161	(.151) 1.184
Age (Continuous)	(.326) 1.507***	(.329) 1.497***	(.329) 1.484***
Age <sup>2</sup>	(.081) .996***	(.080) .997***	(.075) .997***
Marital Status (Married)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Never Married	.812 (.209)	.778 (.210)	.773 (.210)
Divorced	1.200 (.165)	1.147 (.167)	1.128 (.168)
Other	.830 (.225)	.814 (.227)	.771 (.229)
Education Level (Kindergarten-Eighth)			
High School Drop Outs	1.100 (.196)	1.096 (.198)	1.058 (.199)
High School Graduates	.720 (.239)	.784 (.241)	.758 (.243)
College and Beyond	.802 (.228)	.900 (.231)	.857 (.233)
Employment Status	.767 (.149)	.832 (.150)	.876 (.151)
Child in Household	.942 (.140)	.979 (.141)	.998 (.141)
Number of Children Inmate Has			
Two	2.308** (.294)	2.358** (.295)	2.359** (.295)
Three to Five	4.533*** (.270)	4.708*** (.271)	4.723*** (.271)
Six to Eight	4.487*** (.325)	4.559*** (.326)	4.623*** (.327)
Nine or More	9.606*** (.394)	10.162*** (.395)	9.808*** (.396)
Inmate's Parent Incarcerated		1.721** (.177)	1.602* (.187)
Prior Incarcerations (No priors)			
One		1.714* (.240)	1.574 (.242)
Two or More		2.343*** (.189)	2.069*** (.191)
Inmate's Drug Abuse			1.900** (.212)
Inmate's Parent's Drug Abuse			1.138 (.150)
Physically/Sexually Abused (Never)			
Physically			.901 (.235)
Sexually			1.117 (.325)
Both Physical and Sexual			1.061

Mental Health Status			(.295) 1.221 (.165)
R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	.137	.156	.163
X <sup>2</sup> (Chi-Square)	246.472*** df=17	280.387*** df=20	294.314*** df=26
N (adjusted weight used in models: with children, aged 32 and older)	7,669	7,669	7,669
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001			

The variable representing the inmate's drug abuse was statistically significant, with inmates who reported using drugs regularly in the month prior to their incarceration being 90 percent more likely to have an incarcerated child when compared to inmates who did not abuse drugs regularly (CI=1.255-2.877; p<.01). The odds of inmates who reported that their own parents regularly abused drugs having an incarcerated child were 13.8 percent higher than inmates whose parents did not abuse drugs regularly. This variable was not statistically significant, but went in the expected direction.

The odds of inmates who reported experiencing physical abuse having an incarcerated child were 9.9 percent lower than inmates who did not experience abuse. Inmates who experienced sexual abuse were 11.7 percent more likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates who did not experience sexual abuse. The odds of inmates reporting that they experienced both physical and sexual abuse were 6.1 percent lower compared to inmates who experienced no abuse to have an incarcerated child. The variable representing physical and sexual abuse was also not significant.

The odds of inmates having taken a prescribed medication for a mental illness reporting that they had an incarcerated child were 22.1 percent higher than inmates who did not suffer from a diagnosed mental illness; however, this variable was not significant. None of the variables associated with abuse history were statistically significant predictors of having a child incarcerated.

All of the same demographic and incarceration variables shown in Models 1 and 2 were consistently significant in Model 3. When compared to females, the odds of males reporting they had an incarcerated child were 63.4 percent lower (CI=.235-.571;  $p<.01$ ). The odds for gender decreased from the second model, from 64.7 percent.

African-American inmates were 47.6 percent more likely than white inmates to report having an incarcerated child (CI=1.098-1.984;  $p=.01$ ). The odds of inmates from other ethnic backgrounds reporting having an incarcerated child were 18.4 percent higher than white inmates, but the result was not statistically significant. The odds for these variables increased from the previous Model 2's results of 16.1 percent..

Age was still significant, with odds of older inmates having an incarcerated child being 48.4 percent higher than younger inmates. This result decreased from 49.7 percent in Model 2.

The odds of inmates who never married reporting having an incarcerated child were 22.7 percent lower and increased from 22.2 percent in Model 2. The odds for divorced inmates having an incarcerated child were

found to be 12.8 percent higher than for married inmates. This result was not statistically significant, and decreased from 14.7 percent in Model 2.

The odds of inmates who dropped out of high school reporting they had an incarcerated child were 5.8 percent higher than inmates who only completed school through the eighth grade. That result, however, was not statistically significant, and decreased from 9.6 percent in Model 2. Additionally, inmates who graduated from high school were 24.2 percent less likely to report they had an incarcerated child than inmates who only completed school through the eighth grade. This result increased from 21.6 percent from the previous model. That result was also not statistically significant. The odds of inmates who attended some college and beyond reporting having an incarcerated child were 14.3 percent lower than inmates who only completed through the eighth grade. This result was also not statistically significant and also increased from the previous model's result of 10 percent less likely.

The odds for inmates who were employed in the month prior to their incarceration to report having an incarcerated child were 12.4 lower than inmates who were not employed. This result was not statistically significant and decreased from 16.8 in the previous model. Inmates whose children lived in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration were .2 percent less likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates whose children did not live in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration. This result

decreased from 2.1 percent in Model 2. These results were also not statistically significant.

The number of children an inmate reported having was consistently significant in model 3. Inmates who had two children were 2.36 times more likely to report at least one of those children was incarcerated, when compared to inmates with one child (CI=1.322-4.209;  $p<.01$ ). The result increased only slightly, from 2.36 times more likely in Model 2. The odds of inmates with three to five children reporting that at least one of those children was incarcerated were 4.72 times higher than inmates with only one child (CI=2.776-8.036;  $p<.001$ ). These odds also increased from the previous model, from 4.71 times more likely. The odds of inmates with six to eight children reporting that at least one of those children was incarcerated were 4.62 times higher than inmates with only one child (CI=2.433-8.783;  $p<.001$ ). This result increased from 4.56 times more likely in Model 2. Inmates with nine or more children reporting having an incarcerated child were 9.8 times higher than inmates with one child (CI=4.511-21.323;  $p<.001$ ). This result decreased from 10.16 times more likely in Model 2.

Inmates who indicated that their own parent was incarcerated were 60.2 percent more likely to have a child in jail than inmates who reported their parent was not incarcerated (CI=1.111-2.311;  $p<.05$ ). The odds for this variable decreased from the previous model's result of 72.1 percent.

Inmates with one prior incarceration were 57.4 percent more likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates with no prior incarcerations. This result was not statistically significant, and decreased from the previous model's result of 71.4 percent. The odds of inmates with two or more prior incarcerations to have an incarcerated child were 2.07 times higher than inmates with no prior incarcerations, and it was statistically significant (CI=1.423-3.007;  $p < .01$ ). The result also decreased from 2.34 times in Model 2, noting that prior incarcerations have less of an impact on child incarceration when analyzed in conjunction with the abuse history variables.

This model was also statistically significant as a whole ( $p < .001$ ). The percentage correctly explained by the model remained at 95.6. The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was .163, meaning that the results of the model explained about 16.3 percent of the variance, and also increased from 15.6 percent in the previous model. There is still a large amount of the variance that is unexplained by the addition of these variables.

#### Results of Model 4

Regression Model 4 included all of the variables from Models 1-3, as well as the added variable for the risk factor that represents the loss of contact between incarcerated parent and child. That variable is the visitation

between incarcerated parents and their child. The results of including this final variable are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Risks of Incarceration, Models 1-4

	Model 1 Demographics  (standard error)	Model 2 Incarceration History  (standard error)	Model 3 Abuse History  (standard error)	Model 4 Complete Model  (standard error)
Gender (Females)	.405*** (.206)	.353*** (.209)	.366*** (.227)	.369*** (.228)
Race (White)				
Black	1.564*** (.147)	1.445*** (.148)	1.476** (.151)	1.484** (.151)
Other	1.175 (.326)	1.161 (.329)	1.184 (.329)	1.168 (.331)
Age (Continuous)	1.507*** (.081)	1.497*** (.080)	1.484*** (.075)	1.482*** (.077)
Age <sup>2</sup>	.996*** (.001)	.997*** (.001)	.997*** (.001)	.997*** (.001)
Marital Status (Married)				
Never Married	.812 (.209)	.778 (.210)	.773 (.210)	.797 (.212)
Divorced	1.200 (.165)	1.147 (.167)	1.128 (.168)	1.151 (.170)
Other	.830 (.225)	.814 (.227)	.771 (.229)	.814 (.232)
Education Level (Kindergarten-Eighth)				
High School Drop Outs	1.100 (.196)	1.096 (.198)	1.058 (.199)	1.069 (.199)
High School Graduates	.720 (.239)	.784 (.241)	.758 (.243)	.771 (.243)
College and Beyond	.802 (.228)	.900 (.231)	.857 (.233)	.859 (.234)
Employment Status	.767 (.149)	.832 (.150)	.876 (.151)	.864 (.152)
Child in Household	.942 (.140)	.979 (.141)	.998 (.141)	.927 (.144)
Number of Children Inmate Has				
Two	2.308** (.294)	2.358** (.295)	2.359** (.295)	2.309** (.296)
Three to Five	4.533*** (.270)	4.708*** (.271)	4.723*** (.271)	4.662*** (.272)
Six to Eight	4.487*** (.325)	4.559*** (.326)	4.623*** (.327)	4.664*** (.328)
Nine or More	9.606*** (.394)	10.162*** (.395)	9.808*** (.396)	9.493*** (.397)
Inmate's Parent Incarcerated		1.721** (.177)	1.602* (.187)	1.623* (.188)

Prior Incarcerations (No priors)				
One		1.714* (.240)	1.574 (.242)	1.578 (.242)
Two or More		2.343*** (.189)	2.069*** (.191)	2.094*** (.191)
Inmate's Drug Abuse			1.900** (.212)	1.906** (.212)
Inmate's Parent's Drug Abuse			1.138 (.150)	1.155 (.150)
Physically/Sexually Abused (Never)				
Physically			.901 (.235)	.911 (.236)
Sexually			1.117 (.325)	1.105 (.326)
Both Physical and Sexual			1.061 (.295)	1.063 (.297)
Mental Health Status			1.221 (.165)	1.235 (.166)
Visitation by Children (Daily or Almost Daily)				
Once Weekly				.799 (.888)
Once Monthly				1.387 (.845)
Less than Once Monthly				1.377 (.836)
Never				.875 (.835)
R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	.137	.156	.163	.169
X <sup>2</sup> (Chi-Square)	246.472*** df=17	280.387*** df=20	294.314*** df=26	305.571*** df=30
N (adjusted weight used in models: with children, aged 32 and older)	7,669	7,669	7,669	7,669
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001				

When the last risk factor was added to comprise the full model, there were no statistically significant predictors of child incarceration for this variable. The odds of inmates reporting that they were visited by their children once weekly, who also reported that they had at least one child incarcerated, were 19.1 percent lower than inmates who were visited daily or almost daily by their children. Inmates who were visited once monthly were



38.7 percent more likely than inmates who were visited daily or almost daily to have an incarcerated child. The odds of inmates, who were visited less than once monthly, to report having at least one incarcerated child, were 37.7 percent higher than inmates who reported being visited daily or almost daily. Finally, the odds of inmates reporting they had at least one incarcerated child, who were never visited by their children, were 12.5 percent lower than inmates who reported being visited daily or almost daily by their children. None of these results were statistically significant.

Again, all of the same variables from the previous models were significant in Model 4. The odds of male inmates reporting having an incarcerated child were 63.1 percent lower than female inmates (CI=.236-.577;  $p < .001$ ). The odds for this variable decreased from Model 3, from 63.4 percent.

African-American inmates were still more likely to have an incarcerated child when compared to white inmates, with 48.4 percent (CI=1.103-1.997;  $p < .01$ ). This also increased from Model 3, which was 47.6 percent. Inmates from other ethnic backgrounds were 16.8 percent more likely to report having an incarcerated child than white inmates, and this result decreased from the previous model's result of 18.4 percent. That result was not statistically significant.

Age was again significant, showing that the odds of having a child incarcerated increase as the inmate's age increases, with odds of 48.2 percent

higher for older inmates when compared to younger inmates. This result decreased slightly from 48.4 percent in Model 3, showing that age does not have as great of an effect on child incarceration as the other risk factors that was added to the model.

The odds of inmates that had never been married having an incarcerated child were 20.3 percent lower than for married inmates. This result decreased from 22.7 percent in Model 3. Divorced inmates were 15.1 percent more likely than married inmates to report having an incarcerated child than married inmates, and increased from 12.8 percent in Model 3. Separated and widowed inmates were 19.6 percent less likely than married inmates to report having an incarcerated child, and decreased from 22.9 percent less likely in Model 3. None of the results from the variables representing marital status were statistically significant.

Inmates who were high school drop-outs were 6.9 percent more likely to report having an incarcerated child when compared to those who attended only kindergarten through eighth grades. This result increased from 5.8 percent in the previous model. The odds of inmates who graduated from high school only were 22.9 percent lower than for inmates who only attended through the eighth grade to report having an incarcerated child, and decreased from 24.2 percent in Model 3. Inmates who attended college and beyond were 14.1 percent less likely than inmates who only attended kindergarten through eighth grade to report having an incarcerated child.

This result decreased only slightly, from 14.3 percent less likely in Model 3. None of the results for the variables representing educational attainment were statistically significant.

The odds of inmates who were employed in the month prior to their incarceration reporting they had an incarcerated child were 13.6 percent lower than inmates who were not employed in the month prior to their incarceration. This result was not statistically significant. These odds increased from the previous model's result of 12.4 percent.

Inmates whose children lived in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration were 7.3 percent less likely than inmates whose children did not live in the household to report having an incarcerated child, however, this variable was not statistically significant. The odds for this variable increased from .2 percent less likely in the previous model.

The odds of inmates who had two children were 2.31 times higher than inmates with only one child to report that they had at least one incarcerated child (CI=1.292-4.126;  $p < .01$ ). These odds decreased from 2.36 times in the previous model. The odds of inmates with three to five children to report that they had at least one incarcerated child were 4.66 times higher than inmates with only one child (CI=2.738-7.938;  $p < .001$ ). This result also decreased from the previous model's result of 4.72. Odds of inmates with six to eight children reporting that they had at least once child incarcerated were also 4.66 times higher than inmates with only one child (CI=2.451-8.874;  $p < .001$ ). This result

increased from 4.62 in the previous model. Finally, the odds of inmates with nine or more children reporting that they had at least one child incarcerated were 9.49 times higher than inmates with only one child (CI=4.357-20.683;  $p<.001$ ). This result decreased from the previous model, which was 9.80 times higher. All of these results were statistically significant.

Inmates who indicated that their own parent was incarcerated were 72.1 percent more likely to have a child in jail than inmates who reported their parent was not incarcerated were 62.3 percent more likely than inmates whose parent was not incarcerated (CI=1.123-2.345;  $p=.01$ ). These odds increased from the previous model's result of 60.2 percent.

The odds of inmates with one prior incarceration reporting having an incarcerated child were 57.8 percent higher than for inmates with no prior incarcerations, but that result was not statistically significant. The result also increased slightly from 57.4 percent in Model 3. The odds of those with two or more prior incarcerations to report having an incarcerated child were 2.09 times higher than for inmates with no prior incarcerations, and was statistically significant (CI=1.439-3.046;  $p<.001$ ). These odds increased from 2.07 times in Model 3.

For Model 4, the variable representing the inmate's drug abuse was statistically significant, with the odds of inmates who reported using drugs regularly in the month prior to their incarceration being 90.6 percent higher than for inmates who did not abuse drugs regularly to have an incarcerated

child (CI=1.258-2.889;  $p < .01$ ). The odds of inmates to have an incarcerated child who reported that their own parents regularly abused drugs were 15.5 percent higher than inmates whose parents did not regularly abuse drugs. This variable increased from the previous model's result of 13.8 percent, but it was not statistically significant.

Inmates who reported experiencing physical abuse were 8.9 percent less likely to have an incarcerated child than inmates who did not experience abuse. This result decreased from 9.9 percent in Model 3. The odds of inmates who experienced sexual abuse were 10.5 percent higher to report having a child incarcerated than for inmates who did not experience abuse, and decreased from 11.7 percent in Model 3. The odds of inmates reporting that they experienced both physical and sexual abuse were 6.3 percent higher to have an incarcerated child when compared to inmates who experienced no abuse. This result increased slightly from 6.1 percent in Model 3. The variable representing physical and sexual abuse was also not significant.

Inmates who reported taking a prescribed medication for a diagnosed mental illness were 23.5 percent more likely to report that they had an incarcerated child than inmates who did not suffer take medication for a diagnosed mental illness; however, this variable was not significant. The result did increase from the previous model's result of 22.1 percent. None of the variables associated with abuse history were statistically significant predictors of having a child incarcerated.

The Omnibus test indicated that Model 4 was also consistently significant as a whole ( $p < .001$ ). The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was .169, which means that the variables included in Model 4 explained 16.9 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, an increase from 16.3 percent in Model 3. There is still a large amount of the variance in the model that is not accounted for by the existing variables.

### Results of Hypotheses

The following section will present the results of the hypotheses tested using the logistic regression models presented earlier in this thesis.

Hypothesis 1: Female inmates are more likely to have an incarcerated child than male inmates.

I failed to reject this hypothesis, therefore it was accepted. The literature has shown that mothers are the primary caregivers of the children rather than the children's' fathers, therefore mothers are more likely to have at least one child exposed to risk factors for incarceration than fathers (Johnston 1995a).

Hypothesis 2: African-American inmates are more likely to have an incarcerated child than whites or members of any other ethnic group.

I failed to reject this hypothesis, thus it was accepted. This result strengthens the research of Grogger (1992), Western & Pettit (2000), and Drain and colleagues (2002). These researchers found that African Americans and their children are generally at a higher risk to become incarcerated.

Hypothesis 3: Inmates who have been divorced are more likely to have an incarcerated child than inmates who are married, never married, separated, or widowed.

I rejected this hypothesis. The results of the logistic regression originally found that divorced inmates were more likely to have an incarcerated child; by reiterating the damaging effects divorce has on children while corroborating the research of Wood, Repetti, & Roesch (2004). However, the result was not statistically significant, so marital status can not be considered a risk factor for incarceration for this group of respondents.

Hypothesis 4: Inmates who graduated from high school were less likely to report that they had a child incarcerated than inmates who did not.

I rejected this hypothesis. Inmates who graduated from high school were less likely to have an incarcerated child, but the result was not statistically significant, therefore education level cannot be considered a risk factor for incarceration of children of inmates.

Hypothesis 5: Inmates who were gainfully employed in the month before arrest are less likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates who were not employed in the month before their arrest.

I rejected this hypothesis. Although the results show that previously employed inmates were less likely than previously unemployed inmates to have an incarcerated child, the results were not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 6: Inmates whose children were living in the household at the time of incarceration are more likely to indicate that they have at least one child incarcerated than inmates whose children were not living with them in the household.

This hypothesis was rejected. Results showed that inmates with a child living in the household at the time of the inmate's incarceration were less likely to have a child incarcerated. Furthermore, the result was not statistically significant in the final model.

Hypothesis 7: The odds of an inmate reporting that they have at least one child incarcerated increases as the number of children of the inmate increased.

I failed to reject this hypothesis. The results show that the odds of an inmate having an incarcerated child significantly increase As the number of children that the inmate has increases.



Hypothesis 8: Inmates who reported abusing drugs regularly are more likely to indicate that they have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not report regularly using drugs in the month before their arrest.

I failed to reject this hypothesis, thus it was accepted. An inmate's regular drug abuse was a statistically significant predictor of having an incarcerated child.

Hypothesis 9: Inmates who experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, or both are more likely to report that they have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not experience abuse.

I rejected this hypothesis. The variables related to abuse were not statistically significant predictors of child incarceration, and do not support this hypothesis in either model in which the variables were presented.

Hypothesis 10: Inmates who suffered from a mental illness that was treated by medication are more likely to have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not report ever taking a prescribed medication for an emotional or mental problem.

I rejected this hypothesis. Although the results show that inmates with a diagnosed mental illness are more likely to have an incarcerated child, the results were not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 11: Inmates who reported that their own parent(s) had ever been incarcerated are more likely to have a child incarcerated than inmates who did not report having a parent ever incarcerated.

I failed to reject this hypothesis. The final logistic regression model showed that inmates whose parents had been incarcerated were more likely to report having an incarcerated child than inmates whose parent(s) had not been incarcerated.

Hypothesis 12: Inmates with multiple prior incarcerations are more likely to have a child incarcerated than inmates with no prior incarcerations.

I failed to reject this hypothesis. Inmates with two or more incarcerations were found to be two times more likely than inmates with no prior incarcerations to report having a child incarcerated. The results were also statistically significant.

Hypothesis 13: Inmates who are visited by their child(ren) at least once a month are less likely to report that they have a child incarcerated than inmates who are never visited by their child(ren).

I rejected this hypothesis. Inmates who were visited at least once a month were more likely to report having a child incarcerated. However, the result was not statistically significant.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION

The premise for this thesis is that inmates who experienced certain risk factors in their homes are more likely to have a child incarcerated. This was found to some extent to be true; however, not all of the identified risk factors were statistically significant predictors. As a result, there was not a great deal of statistical significance throughout the models for the selected variables, although the results were somewhat substantively significant.

#### Demographics – Significant Predictors

Being an African-American female inmate was shown to be a strong predictor of child incarceration consistently throughout all of the models. The odds for race increased when the risk factors for both incarceration history and abuse were added to the models. This suggests that African-American inmates are more prone to have had these risk factors in their homes prior to their incarceration. Research has indicated that African-Americans are more susceptible to participation in criminal activities due to unfortunate circumstances such as limited educational attainment, fewer job opportunities, increased drug abuse, and limited familial income (Grogger 1992; Gabel & Johnston 1995; Wilson 1996; Mumola 2000; Martone 2005). Limited familial income, for example, presents risk to all of the family

members, including the children, because the parent can not provide for the child adequately. Also, children, especially adolescents, will often participate in criminal activities to obtain material possessions because of limited finances (Martone 2005; Bruns 2006).

Between 1990 and 1998, the number of convicted women grew at twice the rate of men (Loper 2006). Pettiway (1987) recognized this phenomenon at an even earlier date, and argued that increased female criminality in gender roles can be attributed to social changes. Women are also more likely to be the primary parent for their children. Only about one out of four children reside with their fathers following their mother's incarceration (Mackintosh et al. 2006). Women who retain custody of their children are more likely to participate in criminal activities due to the fact that they have limited income due to low education (Pettiway 1987). When the two characteristics are combined (being African-American and female), the strength of the argument for a higher probability of child incarceration among African-American females is bolstered.

For all four models, male inmates were significantly less likely than female inmates to report having an incarcerated child. Evidence that supports this result is found in the research on the relationship between the "age-race-gender" combination and sentence severity conducted by Steffensmeier and colleagues (1998). They found that the harshest sentences were handed down to young, black males. When men are incarcerated at

young ages for longer periods of time, it becomes less likely that they will report having a child incarcerated because they are less likely to have a child at a young age to begin with. This same argument can also be used to further explain the result obtained in the regression models: that females are more likely to report having a child incarcerated. Females often receive a more lenient sentence than men (Rodriguez et al. 2006). The shortened sentence allows for release at a younger age, therefore increasing their opportunity to have children. These findings pose an interesting question: Do race and gender biases in the criminal justice system inadvertently facilitate the incarceration of inmates' children? The current results, coupled with the research findings reported in the literature review, (Steffensmeier et al. 1998; Spohn & Holleran 2000; Rodriguez et al. 2006) support the assertion that biases in the criminal justice system may result in the increased likelihood of inmates' children becoming incarcerated.

Age is also a strong predictor of child incarceration. As stated in the methods section, inmates that were 31-years-old and younger were not included in the analysis for this thesis. Reason being, younger inmates are less likely to have a child old enough to be eligible for adult incarceration (i.e., at 16 years or older). Two variables were included in the models to account for the age of inmates, and the effects that age had on child incarceration rates: Age Continuous and Age Squared. Even though the odds ratio for the continuous age variable decreased over the models, the variable

representing age squared shows that for each year older an inmate is, the likelihood of the inmate having an incarcerated child increases, however, it does so at a decreasing rate.

The number of inmates' children was also a significant predictor of child incarceration. In each of the four models presented, inmates who reported having multiple children had higher odds of also reporting they had at least once of those children incarcerated. Inmates who fit the criteria for high risk of incarceration themselves (race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, etc.) and who also have multiple children have a higher likelihood of reporting that one of their children is or was incarcerated because of the increased number of children possibly exposed to the same criteria (or risk factors).

### Risk Factors – Significant Predictors

Only three risk factors were found to be statistically significant predictors of child incarceration. The first was two or more prior incarcerations of the inmate. This supports the research previously published on the damaging effects of recidivism of parents (Seymour 1998; Mumola 2000; Sherman 2000; Banks 2003). The level of risk of being incarcerated to the child increases as the number of prior incarcerations increase. Parental recidivism is arguably the most destructive facet of a child's life, and can eventually lead to future criminal acts by that child (McGowan & Blumenthal

1978; Johnston 1995b; Seymour 1998; Myers et al. 1999; Doerr 2001). This can also be linked with the previous assertion that biases in the criminal justice system support the increasing risk of child incarceration. Shorter, more lenient sentences for females allow for the potential release and return of the parent to the child, with little separation. However, more than half of released inmates, both males and females, are rearrested and incarcerated within three years of their initial release, exposing the inmate's child to yet another cycle of incarceration and separation (Mumola 2000).

Additional factors that could further strengthen the relationship between parental recidivism and child incarceration are the placement of the child following the primary parent's incarceration and the quality of the rehabilitation program offered to released inmates. About 90 percent of incarcerated fathers reported that their child was placed with the mother after incarceration, whereas only 28 percent of incarcerated mothers reported the child was living with their father (Mumola 2000). Furthermore, ten percent of incarcerated mothers and two percent of incarcerated fathers reported that their child was placed in a foster home or agency following incarceration (Mumola 2000). Lack of contact with incarcerated parents, which is prevalent in foster homes or agencies, can increase the likelihood of child incarceration (Breen 1995).

Incarcerated parents are also at risk for losing parental rights. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, hereafter referred to as ASFA,

requires that states must file a petition to terminate parental rights when a child of an incarcerated parent has been in state care for 15 of the previous 22 months (Genty 1998; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a). Since the average sentence that parents can expect to serve in a state facility is 80 months (6.6 years), and 103 months (8.6 years) for a federal facility (Mumola 2000), few options are left to the incarcerated parents. Fortunately, ASFA permits states to opt out of this requirement if the child of the incarcerated parent is living with a relative (Johnson & Waldfogel 2002a). This alone is enough to support the argument for stable placement of children following a parent's incarceration.

Furthermore, the relationship of the incarcerated parent and the new caregiver could help determine the rate of possible reentry. The healthier the relationship, the more likely the incarcerated parent will maintain frequent contact with their child, and the risk for parental recidivism and possible subsequent child incarceration is notably diminished. This provides support for future policy changes, such as amending the requirements of ASFA to better accommodate incarcerated parents and their children.

More than 61 percent of inmates are released into some type of post-incarceration supervision (Sabol & McGready 1999). Released inmates who participate in programs addressing various topics, including anger management and parenting, can help to reduce the likelihood of their reentry to jail (Cunningham 2001). However, given the high rates of reentry in State



and Federal prisons in such a short period of time (three years), the quality and effectiveness of these programs inmates are in dire need of rigorous evaluation.

The second risk factor that was a statistically significant predictor of child incarceration was the incarcerated inmate's drug abuse. Inmates who reported regular abuse of illegal drugs were 90 percent more likely to report also having an incarcerated child. Even though drug abuse is not always a violent form of crime, it carries with it a lengthy prison sentence (Arditti et al. 2003). Separation from a parent has already been shown to be detrimental to a child's development, and can even lead to a child's incarceration (Breen 1995; Myers et al. 1999; Doerr 2001). Mandatory minimum sentencing laws provide harsh, extremely long sentences for non-violent drug offenders (Scalia 2001). In essence, the "war on drugs"<sup>3</sup>, which aims imprison minor and major drug offenders, could be contributing to the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. As indicated by the results, drug abuse is a contributing factor to having an incarcerated child. Inquiries into amending the current drug sentencing laws are therefore strongly encouraged, and may result in the reduction of the incarceration rates of inmates' children.

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<sup>3</sup> The "War on Drugs" is an initiative undertaken by the United States with the assistance of participating countries, which is intended to curb supply and diminish demand for certain drugs. This initiative is responsible for a set of laws and policies that are intended to eliminate the production, distribution, and consumption of such drugs, and have caused the US prison population to grow rapidly.

The third risk factor that was a statistically significant predictor of child incarceration was that of the current inmate reporting their own parent was currently or had previously been incarcerated. The original premise for this thesis was to argue the existence of an intergenerational cycle of incarceration among inmates and their children. The results of the logistic regression models (as seen on page 67) show that the odds of inmates who reported their own parent was incarcerated and that they had a child that was incarcerated were significantly higher than for inmates who did not report their parent was incarcerated – an average of 64.8 percent higher<sup>4</sup> over the three models. Unfortunately, there is very little information on the details of the incarcerated children (Myers et al. 1999; Johnson & Waldfogel 2002b; Martone 2005).

However, the results of this thesis suggest additional methods for collecting detailed information on the children can begin to form.

By collecting data such as the age at which the child was incarcerated, the crimes the child committed, the reasons for his or her participation in criminal activities (e.g. drug abuse, peer pressure, unemployment), and the placement of the child following their parent's incarceration, stronger relationships can perhaps be uncovered, and more precise evaluations of the relationships between incarcerated parents and their incarcerated children

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<sup>4</sup> The betas (odds ratio value) for each of the Models 2, 3, and 4 were added together (72.1, 60.2, and 62.3 percents respectively) and divided by 3 to get the average percentage.

will possibly lead to successful intervention programs to stop the cycle of incarceration.

### Demographics – Non-Significant Predictors

Of all of the non-significant demographic variables for child incarceration ('Other' ethnicities, marital status, educational attainment, and employment status), the most surprising non-significant predictor was that of the inmate's child living in the household at the time of incarceration. In all of the regression models, the results showed that parents who reported that their children were living with them at the time of their incarceration were less likely to say that their child was incarcerated. The results, however, were not statistically significant. Therefore, this cannot be cited as a significant predictor for child incarceration.

One possible reason for these results could be related to the child's age at the time of the parent's incarceration. Although research suggests that a child witnessing their parent's arrest is more likely to participate in criminal activity as well (Breen 1995), if the child is of an extremely young age (an infant or toddler) then most likely that child will not be able to comprehend the situation. In these cases, it is likely that the child will not "follow in their parent's footsteps", especially if placed with a relative with a stable family and strong ties to the community. However, the results for this variable could possibly change with the existence of detailed datasets on the incarcerated

children. This further strengthens the argument for additional data collection that focuses on the children rather than their parents. For example, it would be useful to conduct an intergenerational analysis that looks specifically at multigenerational incarceration including children, parents, and even grandparents who are incarcerated. Then, one can determine how certain risk factors may change from one generation to the next.

### Risk Factors – Non-Significant Predictors

Although the research highlighting the risks and predictors of child incarceration was encouraging, the results of the logistic regression showed that half of the identified risk factors were not statistically significant predictors of child incarceration.

The physical and/or sexual abuse of inmates was not found to be statistically significant predictors for child incarceration. A small percentage of the population indicated that they had been abused, which could explain the lack of significance. Another reason for the lack of significance of this variable is that, according to Finklehor and Jones (2004), the prevalence of child sexual abuse has been steadily declining. The authors report that just in a span of eight years (from 1992-2000), the number of cases of sexual abuse was reduced by one-half, decreasing from 150,000 to 89,500.

Furthermore, no connection can be made to the time frame of the declining number of cases. Additionally, Finklehor and Jones (2004) argue

that the decline could be attributed to the previous decades of prevention and education, but also concede that the apparent decline could be nothing more than a decrease in the number of reported and investigated cases.

There are other reasons that could account for the lack of significance of the abuse variables including victim resiliency. Abuse research states that victims of abuse tend to develop better coping strategies and lead a more normal life (Coping Strategies in Abused Women 2005).

Also, in the survey, inmates were asked if they were taking prescribed medication for a diagnosed mental illness. Since the majority of prison inmates are low income minorities, it is entirely probable that the population sampled had a larger number of inmates who suffer from a mental disorder, but have not been able to seek treatment from a doctor due to the lack of available finances; therefore, the disorder is not diagnosed and subsequently documented. Therefore, another question that addresses an inmate's mental health could better represent the sample of respondents given their socioeconomic status, as well as other factors.

Visitation by children to their incarcerated parent was also not found to be significant. Holt and Miller (1972) suggest that maintaining contact with family members in jail increases the chance of success of the parent upon that parent's parole, which contrasts the regression results. Additionally, visitation between mothers and children may increase the chance of successful reunification after the mothers' release from prison

(Casey-Acevedo et al. 2004) Although there has been an increase in programs for mothers and children, there has not been a corresponding increase in research addressing the nature or frequency of prison visitation, especially by children.

### Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this research project. There was a plethora of variables related to the incarcerated inmate; however, there was not a large selection of questions in the survey inquiring about the children of the inmate.

In order to fully explore the risk of incarceration, especially to compare children of inmates already incarcerated to those not yet incarcerated, more details are needed on the incarcerated children themselves. These include: nature of the child's offense, where the child was living at the time of arrest, and the age of the child at the time of offense. These variables could be compared to the existing data on the inmates, and stronger, more precise links to child incarceration can be examined. For example, to strengthen the argument for increased parent/child visitation, it would help to know the circumstances behind the limited frequency of reported visitation. If the inmate's child is in jail, then naturally the incarcerated parent would not be fortunate enough to receive regular visitations by their child. The current

data set was not able to capture these types of situations; therefore, the variable could not be measured.

Also, there is no data on which child of the inmate is in jail. The question in the survey used for the dependent variable in this analysis only asks the inmate if he or she has ever had a child incarcerated. There is no distinction between local jails, state or federal facilities, or juvenile facilities in which the child was held or incarcerated. This is important when examining the effect that loss of contact with the parent has on the child. Sentences in federal facilities tend to be longer, and for more violent crimes. Also, as discussed below, federal facilities tend to be farther away from an inmate's former place of residence, limiting the chances of visitation between parents and their children.

Also, it would be extremely helpful to know the circumstances surrounding the child's placement after the incarceration of the primary caregiver. Knowing that the child was placed with a family member who lives an extreme distance from the prison would explain the lack of visitation to the incarcerated parent. According to Mumola (2000), over 60 percent of inmates in state facilities were incarcerated more than 100 miles from their previous residence, and 43 percent of federal inmates were incarcerated more than 500 miles from their previous residence. Supporting arguments for the existing research advocating for the increased number of institutionally

implemented visitation programs (Kazura 2001; Fischer 2002) would be further strengthened by this extra available data.

Investigating the lack of significance in the risk factors presented would strengthen any subsequent research of this nature. There are several possible reasons that could cause the risk factors to not be significant in the models. The main reason is lack of detailed information. In the survey administered to the inmates, for example, there is no way to tell when the inmate's parents abused drugs. If the abuse was not witnessed by the child because the child hadn't been born as of that time, or the child was not living in the home with the inmate, then the risk to the child is likely minimal compared to a child or adolescent fully exposed to drug abuse.

The  $R^2$  was also relatively low, with 16.9 percent for the full logistic regression model. The low  $R^2$  suggests that there are a large number of variables that were not presented in this thesis that could better explain the variance in the model. Some of these variables include: age of the child or children with the incarcerated parent, if one or both of the child's parents are incarcerated<sup>5</sup>, factors that influenced the child to participate in criminal activities (i.e. peer pressure), and nature of the crime the child committed (violent vs. non-violent).

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<sup>5</sup> The data analysis for this thesis did not examine whether the incarcerated inmate's spouse or partner was also incarcerated, which could affect the impact on the child by having both of his or her parents incarcerated.



The data were collected in 1997, which limits the number of the inmates that could have been surveyed. Numerous books and research papers focusing on the steeply rising prison population have been published since the 1997 data were collected and made available for analysis (Beck 2000a, 2000b; Child Welfare League of America 2001; Doerr 2001; Belsky & Pasco-Fearon 2002; Logan & King 2002; Banks 2003; Locke & Newcomb 2003; James 2004; Pilowsky et al. 2004; Bernstein 2005; Martone 2005; Poehlmann 2005; Kwon et al. 2006). It is entirely possible that the results found in the analysis focused on in this thesis would be more significant with a larger number of sampled inmates with incarcerated children.

With further research regarding the relationship between inmates and their children, current standards and practices for activities such as prison-based visitation programs, drug rehabilitation programs, education within the institution for inmates, and other such programs can be revamped to better accommodate the situations of the inmates (such as a transportation program for relatives raising the inmate's child who live too far to travel to the prison for visits).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS

The results presented in this thesis seem to negate the findings of the researchers presented in the literature review. All of the risk factors, when examined individually, seem to be strong predictors of inmates having a child incarcerated. However, there are certainly many factors that have not been studied that seem to affect the likelihood of an inmate having an incarcerated child. The findings presented in this thesis contribute to the current research by highlighting the disparities in the relationship between the presented risk factors and incarcerated children of inmates.

The research on incarcerated parents is rather limited, as is the analysis done on their children. Future research should focus not solely on the inmate's criminal history, nature of offense, and related variables, but also on obtaining detailed information on the inmate's child or children. This can include age at which the inmate had the child, which could account for some risk to the child in the household. Coupled with other factors including socioeconomic status (SES) and available familial resources (including possible babysitters, additional financial contributors) such data could paint a clearer portrait of child risk (Johnson & Waldfogel 2002b).

As stated previously, there is no agency that maintains specific records of children with incarcerated parents. As a result, there is no thorough way to

keep track of their progress both socially and academically during their parent's incarceration. The research done in this thesis only brushes the surface of the risk that these children face. Even though there was not an abundance of significance in the researched risk factors, there is still cause for further study. The findings presented in this thesis suggest that intervention in the lives of children with incarcerated parents could help to reduce further incarceration (Henggeler, Melton, & Smith 1992; Schoenwald et al. 1996; Sherman 2000; Barnhorst 2004). By examining children of incarcerated parents in more detail and any activities (provided through their schools or otherwise) they may be participating in, the benefit, or lack thereof, can be demonstrated and can lead to the possibility of expansion or deletion of these types of interventions. Ultimately, future research can help to establish a working system of identifying children with incarcerated parents, thus breaking, and perhaps ending the intergenerational cycle of incarceration.

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