CHILDREN, INCARCERATED PARENTS, AND INTERVENTIONS

A Project

Presented to the faculty of the Division of Social Work
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

by

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SPRING
2013
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Dale Russell, Ed.D., LCSW

Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

CHILDREN, INCARCERATED PARENTS, AND INTERVENTIONS

by

Tiffany Totten

The research study is aimed to identify factors that attribute to the high rate of incarceration and the implications of parental incarceration. The research study is aimed to identify evidenced-based practice for incarcerated offenders. The research study is also aimed to examine the perceptions and attitudes of correctional officers, medical professionals, and social workers providing services to incarcerated parents. The research study examines the mental and physical impact of incarceration, racial disparities, disproportionate minority confinement (DMC), co-parenting, and kinship. One major finding in this study suggest that social workers in the community and prison social workers should collaborate to provide comprehensive services to children with incarcerated parents.

__________________________, Committee Chair
Serge Lee, PhD

__________________________
Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge a power greater than myself by giving all praises, glory and honor unto him. I would like to thank the almighty for making this research project and all things in my life possible. I thank him for keeping me focused on my goal(s) and never giving up. Most importantly, I thank him for the strength, motivation, and endurance that he bestowed upon me to complete this project. I would like to acknowledge my partner, friend, and confidant that supported me from the beginning to the very end. “Thanks for having my back.” I would like to thank my family for their love, patience and support. To my brother as you often say, “Anything worth having is worth fighting for.” To my dear mother Brenda, I thank you for instilling the value of education in me as child and continuing to support me throughout my educational and professional endeavors. In your words, “You can do it.” To my advisor I thank you for your support and for “Expecting nothing less than my best.” Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. “May my Heavenly Father’s love, peace, and joy abound with you all forever.”
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States incarcerates a larger proportion of its people than any other country. The U. S. inmate population has increased since the 1970s by more than sixfold. Seven million people or approximately 1 in every 31 adults are either incarcerated, on parole or probation, or currently under some form of state supervision. Research projects that if current trends continue that one in three African American males, and one in six Hispanic males born are expected to be incarcerated some time in their lives (Gottschalk, 2011). Substance abuse appears to be inevitably interrelated to criminal behavior for example, it is estimated that 80% of those in the nation’s prisons and jails may be seriously involved with alcohol and illicit drug use (Hiller, Webster, & Thomas et al., 2005).

Approximately 50% of youths in a correctional setting have a parent in the adult system (Mumola, 2000). In recent decades the number of children with parents in prison grew dramatically, sparking interest in what happens to children while their parents are incarcerated. Stigmatization is often one of the adverse unintended consequences of parental incarceration Consequently, the phrase “children of incarcerated parents” has become more than an amiable descriptor; it is now a label delineating a group of children based on a stigmatized characteristic shared by their parents (Phillips & Gates, 2010). New generations of children are more likely to become at-risk for intergenerational incarceration (Miller, 2006).
The current Master’s Project aims to identify factors that attribute to the high rate of incarceration and the implications of parental incarceration. The study also aims to identify best practice model using evidenced-based practice methods for incarcerated offenders. The research study is intended to raise awareness in the social work profession, and begin finding ways to identifying children affected by parental imprisonment and provide cultural competent interventions.

**Background of the Research Problem**

The number of children affected by parental incarceration has grown dramatically in the past decade (Phillips & Gates, 2011). Several studies conducted by Mumola (2000) revealed significant information about incarcerated parents. For example, 44 percent of parents in state prison were violent offenders, 13 percent drug traffickers, and 77 percent were reported to have a prior conviction. Roughly, 60 percent of parents in state prison reported drug use in the month before his or her arrest and 25 percent reported a history of alcohol dependence. Approximately 14 percent of incarcerated parents reported a mental illness, and 70 percent did not possess a high school diploma. There are a number of risk factors to consider when a parent is arrested or incarcerated (Phillips, Erkanli & Keeler et al., 2006). Miller (2006) state that the most prevalent adverse reaction for children with incarcerated parents is depression and complications with forming relationships, which may result in aggressive and delinquent behavior.

Aaron and Dallaire (2010) suggest that when parents are incarcerated they leave behind children and families burden with the absence of a parent(s), social stigma, and financial woes. Katz (1998) state that political pressures create “one size fits all” policies...
not suitable to meet the needs of particular families and children. Mothers separated from their children because of homelessness, imprisonment, or removal by the Department of Social Services (DSS) overlaps because these populations crisscross (Schen, 2005). On the other hand, the absence of males impedes the number of adults to be responsible for supervising young people in the community (Balthazar & King, 2001). Although most recidivism research reflects focusing more on male prisoners rather than female prisoner family and community ties during and after incarceration have been found to reduce recidivism (Thompson & Harm, 2000).

The research problem speculated for this Master’s Project is that there is a lack of preventive services for children with incarcerated parents who are at-risk for intergenerational incarceration. In addition, there is a lack of in-prison substance abuse treatment, rehabilitative services, and other re-entry programs that stress the importance of mother daughter and father son relationships with one’s parents when there are no known risk factors. Although there are social workers employed in correctional facilities there is not enough focus on family involvement and family re-unification. More research is needed on how parental roles can be maintained during periods of incarceration while maximizing the potential of the family unit.

**Purpose of the Study**

Criminal offenders are generally criticized and marginalized by society based on their past or present criminal background. This research project examined social workers’ correctional officers’, and medical professionals perceptions regarding racial disparity among incarceration parents. However, the need to address abusive parents,
mental health issues encountered by them, and the risk factors associates being abusive parents are given little attention. At the core of this research is the desire to promote the value of social work by acknowledging the worth of the person.

Oftentimes individuals return to the community after incarceration generally may not view him or herself as a valued member of the community. The same is true with those incarcerated and may not believe they no longer have a role in the family. Currently, there is a lack of research that explores the interventions needed to assist children with incarcerated parents. The study may identify new knowledge in how best to intervene with this population group.

The author of this Master’s project expects to find that the paternal role of incarcerated offenders is non-existing and lacks bonding, nurturing, and socialization. The researcher also expects to find racial disparities among African American offenders as compared to Caucasians, Hispanics, and other racial groups. On the other hand, the maternal role is maximized through co-parenting, collaborations, and child rearing upon reunification with the primary caretaker. There is little or no effort to encourage or foster the father’s role, which may offer discipline, stability, and reunification as a measure of rehabilitating the father’s level of responsibility and accountability to the family unit.

**Theoretical framework.** There are two social work theoretical frameworks that were utilitzed to enhance the focus of this study. The first theoretical framework is Naturally Occurring support relationships (Pettus-Davis, Howard, & Robert-Lewis et al., 2011). This theory defines naturally occurring support relationships as a subtype of informal social support that may include parents, siblings, partners, friends, or neighbors. These
relationships are established during the course of an individual’s life and not in the context of formal support. Apparently, there are descriptive studies that indicate that former inmates have naturally occurring social support who offer some type of post release support to assist with re-entry. The more an individual is attached to others, the more the individual believes in values, and the more that a person is willing to invest in involvement with normal everyday activities, such as work, raising children, or participating in family functions, the less likely he or she is to engage in deviant behavior.

The second theoretical framework utilized in this research by Pettus et al. (2011) is the Social Support Perspective, which presents a conceptual framework for a naturally occurring social support intervention for former prisoners with substance abuse problems. The social perspective provides a lens, which to view various ways in which social relationships influence individual responses to life situations, ailments, stresses, and success. In addition, the social network exposes individuals to social controls and peers that influence normative health behaviors. Participation in social networks provides uniformity, purpose, and a sense of stability and inclusion. This interconnectedness contributes to psychological states that are physiologically and psychologically healthful. Multiple sources of social support maximize the likelihood of an individual receiving the quality and quantity of support needed in the event of a stressor.

**Study Limitations.** This research project is limited by its small sample size and time limits. As a result, of the small sample size it is difficult to generalize the findings to the criminal justice population or the United States population at large. The researcher was
limited in collecting data from social workers working in an all-male correctional facility opposed to collecting additional data from a female facility. Although some social workers who voluntarily participated in this research possess previous experience working with children in other social service agencies, including juvenile hall others did not. The research conducted comprises of social workers with various years of professional experience with knowledge of parental incarceration and family reunification plans, which makes these results extremely valuable to finding ways to prevent intergenerational incarceration.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review will provide an overview of the criminal justice population and the characteristic that plague offenders. The need for more mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and other rehabilitative services is necessary to affect change at the jail level (Katz, 1998). Most importantly the literature revealed the need to conduct a policy analysis in regards to sentencing laws and adoption policies that prevent family reunification (Cheng, 2010; Genty, 1998). Recent research indicates that when parents are incarcerated or become caught up in the criminal justice system, their children, and families are affected significantly, and our failure to pay attention to improving parole services is unfortunate (Petersilia, 2001) as an avenue for rehabilitation. Parental imprisonment presents unintended consequences for children, which are not easy to remedy with a traditional justice system focused on punishment. There is anecdotal evidence that children who have at least one parent in prison are at greater risk of experiencing anxiety and depression (Chui, 2010) a vulnerable group with various risk factors for adverse outcomes (Aaron & Dallaire, 2009).

Cecil, McHale, and Strozier et al., (2008) suggest that kinship care is the most optimal arrangement for many children with incarcerated mothers, providing safety, affection, and an increased chance of maintaining connection. Crain (2005) highlights Texas Department of Criminal Justice GO KIDS (Giving Offenders’ Kids Incentive and Direction to Succeed), and other program initiatives as interventions for children and
incarcerated parents. As an intervention for incarcerated parents with substance abuse problems, evidenced-based practice for correctional settings shows that the use of in-prison substance abuse treatment prior to release with a continuum aftercare plan has been proven to reduce recidivism for incarcerated offenders (Golder, Cloud & Bessel et al., 2005) and help with improving the quality of their lives after incarceration.

Significantly, Browning, Miller, and Spruance, (2001) indicate that the social stigma attached to children of incarcerated parents results in feelings of fear, loneliness, and embarrassment, and referred to as a hidden population. Reportedly, the Child Welfare league of America argues that, because of parental incarceration, many of these children experience multiple temporary placements, decreased quality of care, financial hardships, and damage to family bonds. Unfortunately, because of these traumas, they are at high risk for poor academic achievement, substance abuse, delinquency, and criminal behavior that will contribute to their own incarceration. Surprisingly in that same report, it was predicted that approximately 50 percent of the children of incarcerated parents will enter the juvenile justice system before their eighteenth birthday.

The literature will examine the racial disparities within the juvenile and adult criminal justice system. The definition of Disproportionate Minority Confinement (DMC) is profoundly explained to support the findings of existing data as it relates to the disproportionate confinement of African Americans. It showed how Black juveniles caught up in the criminal justice system were treated harshly and labeled by court workers (Mooradian, 2010). The first notability of mass incarceration is steep numbers
of African Americans serving time behind bars. As reported by Roberts (2004), at the end of 2002, Black men accounted for 586,700 inmates in United States jails and prisons, which outnumbered White men 436,800 and Hispanic men 235,000 with sentences of one more than one year. On the other hand, African American women imprisoned represented an all-time high of 36,000 as compared to White women of 35,400, and Hispanic women who accounted for only 15,000 in jails and prisons at the end of 2002. Similarly, Balthazar and King, (2001) stated that a record high of incarceration of African Americans demands more than silence from the social work profession.

According to Mumola (2000), state and federal prisons housed an estimated 721,500 parents with minor children in 1999. Overall, approximately 1.5 million U.S. children had a parent in prison representing 2% of all minor children in the country, an increase of more than 500,000 children since the early 1990s. Most of these children, some 58 percent, were younger than 10 with an average age of 8. An estimated 336,000 families with minor children had an incarcerated parent. Federal prisons reported housing 44 percent of black parents with minor children. Black children were nine times more likely than White children to have a parent imprisoned. This is primarily as a result of discriminatory sentencing policies for drug offenses against African Americans carrying an average prison term of over 12 years and 10 years in federal prisons. Therefore, the prison population is predominately male, and disproportionately African American, African American fathers make up the majority of incarcerated parents (Browning, Miller & Spruance, 2001).
A 2007 report by Dehart and Altshuler (2009) state that the United States prisons incarcerated 744,200 fathers and 65,600 mothers, collectively representing 1,706,600 children across the nation with incarcerated parents. Shortly thereafter Baker, McHale, and Strozier et al. (2010) estimate that over 250,000 children in the United States had a mother who was incarcerated, and 70 percent of women incarcerated had at least one child, and three-quarters of children of incarcerated mothers have fathers involved in some type of criminal activity. In another report provided by Litchenwalter, Garase, and Barker’s, (2010) there are more men than women incarcerated in the United States while the Sentencing project (2007) reports that between 1985 and 2005, the number of women in prison grew at double the rate of men at 404% compared to 209% respectively. A significant study in 2002, revealed that 2.8 percent of female prisoners were HIV positive compared to 1.9 percent male prisoners (Staton-Tindall, Frisman, & Leukefeld, et al., 2010). In 2004, an estimated 2.1 million people were incarcerated and many of whom were anticipated to have a substance abuse problem, which is attributable to some degree the increased number of drug offenses (Tyuse & Linhorst, 2005), while the rates of offenders with mental illness (OMI) in prison to be higher further estimated to be 24% of offenders diagnosed with a mental illness (Bewley & Morgan, 2010).

Katz (1998) states that are three characteristics that plague jailed women which included substance abuse, extensive histories of victimization, and regressive criminal behavior that increase children’s risk of abuse and neglect. Katz also found that one study reported that 61 percent of women in jail used cocaine during the week prior to their incarceration, and 83 percent had significant drug problems. Another study in 1999 also
by the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that almost 3 percent of the nation’s adult population, or 1 in every 34 adults, was incarcerated, or on probation or parole (Baltzar & King, 2001).

Mumola (2000) report that the length of incarceration differs between men and women. For example, Mumola found that half-and two-thirds of incarcerated mothers were primary caretakers of their children prior to incarceration. Mothers on average serve 49 months and fathers serve an average of 82 month. Reunification with children has consequences with the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (AFSA), AFSA specifies that a child in foster care for 15 to 22 months more the state will relinquish parental rights (Oser, Knudsen, & Staton-Tindall et al., 2009).

Golder et al. (2005) studied in prison-based therapeutic communities, (TC), for example, in a three-year study of parolees that received the full continuum of care after release were seven times more likely to be drug-free. Similarly, five-year analyses indicated that 42 percent of participants who completed the continuum of care returned to custody compared to 86 percent of parolees that participated in the in-prison program. These individuals require multiple needs when reentering into the community, including education, vocation, social/community, and mental, and physical healthcare. Drug offenders make up for the largest population of prisoners transitioning back into the community.

**Incarceration**

In a report by Katz (1998), he revealed that jails lack the rehabilitative programs generally found in prisons like drug treatment services, educational opportunities, and
parenting classes. Katz report can be supported by another report by Lewis, Garfinkel, and, Qin (2007) found that individuals who enter into prison often have inherent capital deficits such as low-education, mental health issues, and substance abuse dependence. As a part of the problems in the prison systems, Lewis and colleagues also state that substance use is very high with jail inmates. Chui (2010) suggest from an earlier study that most prisoners often return to struggling communities, in which obtaining employment, stable housing, and other social services needed for successful reintegration are not available.

The Impact of Parental Incarceration

Miller’s (2006) study states that paternal incarceration generally results in family tensions while on average maternal incarceration may have a greater impact, specifically child placement options; moreover long-term foster care is expensive (Cheng, 2010) and poses risk to the child’s well-being. Miller provides further insight by stating that the child welfare system is a strong possibility for permanent placement for children of single parents in the correctional system. Moreover, Miller raises a concern from a social work perspective that economic factors are important to consider when addressing parental incarceration. For example, individuals employed prior to incarceration, loss of his or her income can have devastating impact on families. Lack of parent-child relationship can cause irreversible damage to family bonds; therefore Miller suggest that face-to-face visits or written contact is highly encouraged.

The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act require child welfare services to heighten its concern for children and families affected by maternal incarceration.
Women in prison report experiencing separation from their children to be the most painful aspect of imprisonment. Most mothers are in prison for crimes not related to lack of parenting and were more than likely living with their children prior to incarceration. These women live with the fear of losing custody of their children while imprisoned continues to be a primary concern. Other legislation intended to provide a protective factor for children by requiring states to file for termination of parental rights for children who have been in out-of-home placements for 15 of the past 22 months. Sadly this legislation does not exclude mothers separated from children as a result of incarceration (Schen, 2005).

Parental imprisonment is largely to blame for the increase in foster care caseloads between 1985 and 2000 (Wildeman, 2009), shamelessly no one has inquired about the attitudes of citizens profoundly affected by incarceration and how it changes an individuals’ attitude toward social control (Clear, Rose, & Ryder, 2001). Wildeman provides research that shows class inequality in the risk for parental incarceration and disparities between White children of college-educated parents and all other racial groups; one common element in generational incarceration (Crain, 2005) lack of educational and occupational attainment by prisoners. The overwhelming effects of maternal incarceration specifically in the adjustment of their children the data that supports the adverse effects of children affected by their mother’s incarceration is surmountable (Cecil et al., 2008).
Parental Incarceration and the Stigmatization

The loss of a parent can have subtle effects on a child. Children retain bonds with parents regardless of the label placed on their parents by the larger society. Research has discovered that once a parent is incarcerated or detained, children experience feelings of shame, stigma, isolation, blame, guilt, and anger. They experience the shame of having an incarcerated parent. The parent’s incarceration is often not discussed outside the family unit for fear of stigmatization and isolation from his or her peers. The children will often times blame him or herself for the incarceration making the assumption that they could have prevented the imprisonment of their parent’s incarceration (Browning, Miller & Spruance, 2001). Depending on cultural factors, most children are aware of society placing a stigma on criminal behavior, especially having an incarcerated mother (Miller, 2006), which may reduce the child’s ability to socialize with his or her peers.

Incarceration Substance Abuse and Mental Illness

Commonly substance abuse is interrelated to criminal behavior Hiller, Webster, and Garrity et al. (2005) and without intervention the prison experience becomes the standard for most of these individuals (Petersilia, 2001). Kubiak (2004) examines the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill and ‘War on Drugs’ individuals with substance abuse problems, and with both substance abuse and mental health problems have had a significant effect of incarcerating unprecedented numbers of with co-occurring disorders. Kubiak reports a 2005 survey of state prisoners and jail detainees indicated 10 percent reported overnight stay in a psychiatric hospital, and six-teen percent were estimated to be mentally ill. Kubiak provides more statistical data that approximately 5 percent federal
inmates also reported mental and emotional problems, and an estimated 7 percent were mentally ill. This constituted roughly 238,000 inmates in state jail, prisons, and federal institutions combined with severe mental health problems. A reasonable amount of research has determined that substance abuse and mental health problems are common in correctional settings; however most correctional facilities are not sufficiently equipped or staffed to meet the needs of this special population.

Kubiak also suggest that substance use disorders and PTSD are a major issue for men and women entering into jails and prisons have histories of psychological trauma and substance abuse disorders (SUD) prior to incarceration and rarely is this discussed in the relation to incarceration. In some cases prison can become a new site of trauma for some offenders, or the element of trauma-related disorders on recidivism. As many as 50% of offenders transitioning into community-based substance abuse treatment are said to have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and SUD and research show that they demonstrate poorer long-term outcomes in comparison to those without the co-occurring disorder. Those individuals consume a large proportion of human demand and fiscal resources in the mental health and substance abuse treatment service are among the most difficult to treat, often requiring recurrent hospitalizations and intensive residential treatment services.

Estimates of PTSD may be particularly higher among incarcerated offenders for several reasons, such as involving illegal drug seeking behaviors, residing in poverty stricken areas, which may increase exposure. Additionally, stress, prison life may be a trigger traumatic memories or create new traumatic experiences. For example, the threat
of violence and rape within male prisons and codes of silence maintained by inmates and guards. Similarly, imprisoned women offenders face the threat of sexual assault by male correctional officers. Although the use of in-prison substance abuse treatment programs have been implemented little attention has been given to an integrated approach needed to treat co-occurring disorders. As the United States prison population continues to lead the world in incarceration rates, greater numbers of minority men and women are experiencing incarceration. It is vital that social workers and other mental health workers assess incarceration as a possible breeding ground for trauma.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy reported that 70 to 85 percent of state prison inmates are in need of substance abuse treatment; however, only 13 percent receive any kind of treatment while in jail or prison (Petersilia, 2001). Scholars have realized the importance of obtaining research on mental health services available to offenders with mental illness (OMI) specifically research needs to determine what the most appropriate treatment for this population. Some research suggests that the greater incidence of OMI in prison could be primarily because of the number of offenders serving lengthy sentences (Bewley & Morgan, 2010); while social workers can initiate a policy analysis and call for an end to the use of criminal law to address drug use (McBride, McElrath, & Hardwood et al., 2009). The practice referred to criminalization of mental illness, has persisted to the point that urban jails in some states are filled with more persons with mental illness than state mental hospitals (Ngozi, Coulson-Clark, & Nkechi, 2010).
Low Income Fathers-Non-Custodial Parents

Turetsky (2007), report that fathers typically enter prison owing approximately $10,000 in debt and return home owing $20,000 or more because the debt continues to accumulate. The study emphasizes that incarcerating low-income fathers for nonpayment of child support further impede their obligations as fathers. Alternative sentencing, such as work release and home detention usually are not feasible solutions for low-income fathers. Work release can only be an option if the parolee has a job and an employer, which is willing to complete tedious work-release paperwork; low-income individuals often do not work for employers who value their specific skills enough to accommodate work-release conditions. Therefore, fathers exit the detention center owing more child support than they when they left, and no more job skills than when they entered.

HIV and Incarceration

The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) recently estimated that 25 percent of people living with HIV are confined to correctional institutions a year. The DOJ further estimated that AIDS cases in prison are three times higher, and the HIV infection rate is approximately 10 times higher in male and female correctional settings than in the general population. The impact impingement of HIV disease is disproportionate in low-economic populations, it is estimated that the prevalence of HIV infection is considered to be five times higher for incarcerated males (Spector, 1998). Correctional facilities have been recognized by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as key environments for improving HIV prevention efforts. Two-thirds of the HIV positive incarcerated individuals are diagnosed and begin initial treatment while jail or prison and may return
to the community within 2 years of his or her arrest. Periods of incarceration and community re-entry opens a window of opportunity for offenders for reducing HIV transmission high risk behavior. Post-release is identified as a time of high risk behavior for many formerly incarcerated people, to include those diagnosed as HIV-positive. Multiple factors such as employment, housing, mental health, and substance abuse are interconnected to increased post-release transmission risk behavior (Catz, Thibodeau & Spruce et al., 2011).

**Racial Disparity**

Balthazar and King (2001) raise the issue of racial disparity as a result of both crime rates among some racial groups and differential treatment by the criminal justice system; primarily by the end of 1997 African American men and women were more likely to have been in prison than Whites. There are several reasons for disparities like change in sentencing policies in the 1970, sentencing guidelines, mandatory minimum sentences for various crimes during the early 1980 and racial bias. Roberts (2004) report that the growing expansion of the prison population is attributed to young black men in grossly disproportionate numbers. Most of the inmates in prison today are Black. Nearly one-third of Black men in their twenties are under the supervision of probation, on parole, or serving time in jail or prison. The disparity between Black and White incarceration rates has widened along with escalating inmate numbers.

Roberts also state that African Americans experience an enormous rate of imprisonment, and the social effects of imprisonment are condensed in their communities. Twenty-first century marks the transformation of prison policy is most
likely characterized as the mass incarceration of African Americans. Social scientists continue to investigate empirical methods to assist with understanding the impact of crime control policies and to supply supportive data to judges, legislators, and policymakers. Prison is now a common expectation and predictable experience particularly for African American men in their twenties.

Ironically, DMC (Disproportionate minority confinement) was recognized in the 1988 amendments to the United States Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act 1974. This initiative involved individual states participating in the Title II, Part B, and formula Grants program, to reduce the disproportionate confinement of government-defined minority groups in any jurisdiction. Ironically, when an offender is considered by decision-makers to be “Black,” this may attribute to ‘DMC’. Interestingly, the initiative found that juvenile court workers were more likely to attribute delinquent behavior among ‘Black’ youth to internal factors such as ‘lack of responsibility’, and delinquency by ‘White’ youth to external factors, such as poverty (Mooradian, 2010).

**Juvenile Offenders Adjustment on the Inside**

Monahan, Goldweber, and Cauffman (2010) found that juvenile offenders report high rates of mental health symptoms upon arrival to a juvenile detention facility, the time period immediately following detainment may warrant significant impact on determining the one’s mental health symptoms while incarcerated. This significant oversight points to important risk factors for depressive symptoms, stressful events, and lack of social or familial support with an increased risk for and developing interpersonal problems and suicide. Indeed, social support may play an important role in minimizing
concurrent stressors (such as separation from family and adjusting to confinement). In addition, there is reason to believe that parental support in particular may play a significant role in reducing youths’ depressive symptoms during the initial adjustment period. In the state of California, juveniles in secure facilities are prohibited from receiving visitors during the first week of detention and visitation is often suspended when youth are in solitary confinement for infractions.

**Sentencing and Racial Disparities**

Boldly, Ngozi et al. (2010) attack the issue of race and ethnicity in the sentencing process and scrutinizes the judicial system because race and ethnicity seem to be the central focus to the sentencing phase rather than the crime itself. Ngozi et al. found a study conducted to review 32 cases on sentencing and ethnicity, and concluded that race and ethnicity was a key factor in sentencing. The results also revealed that African American and Hispanic offenders were more likely than Whites to be sentenced to prison, specifically if they were male, young, and unemployed. The case reviews revealed that the offences were less serious and that African American males who has prior convictions received harsher sentencing are perceived as recidivist, while his or her White counterparts received community service for the same crime and perceived as rehabilitated. The same found to be true for African American and Hispanic women.

Ngozi et al. suggest possible solutions to remedy the problem of sentencing and racial disparities. Uniform sentencing and rehabilitation must be a priority as a way to salvage the African American community, otherwise the United States will find itself unable to compete with the global society, it will have rendered one-fourth of its
population dependent, crippled, and unable to compete. The reality is that prosecutors should be held accountable for the occurrence of racial disparities in sentencing and that the role of the prosecutor is not only to promote incapacitation, but to ensure the justice system is administered in a fair and equitable manner. Ngozi et al. also found that one study blames the disproportionate disparity in African American representation in prison on the choice of incarceration as the sole remedy to the social problems of African Americans: lack of male role models, single parenting, and unemployment.

Interestingly, Ngozi et al. examines racial profiling as another way that minorities are discriminated against and imprisoned. The evidence suggest that minorities are more likely to be arrested for behaviors than Whites however both Whites and African Americans commit crimes at equivalent rates: African American neighborhoods are targeted more for drug enforcement in comparison to his or her White counterparts. Ultimately, African Americans are most likely to be stopped and frisked by law enforcement agents, searched, or arrested. More of young African American men are failing in schools and less of them are enrolling in colleges, and universities. Clear, Rose and Ryder (2001) agree that it is indisputable that incarceration affects minority males more than other racial ethnicities

Ngozi and colleagues recommend several other solutions to the criminal justice system and policy reform beginning with a uniform sentencing approach. Provide rehabilitation and treatment programs for minority inmates while in prison. Provide sensitivity training for judges, attorneys, and other extensions of the criminal justice system. Consider making treatment centers alternatives to prisons, specifically in the case
of victimless and nonviolent crimes. Reform current parole practices that perpetuate high rates of recidivism among minority groups. Pressure the media to tone down on their racially biased and stereotypical perceptions of African Americans in the news when reporting and entertainment. Provide prisoner post-incarceration assistance to help with their transition from prison to community. Eliminate mandatory sentencing and its guidelines.

**Risk Factors for the Children Left Behind**

Using an ecological lens Crain (2005) report that millions of children affected by parental incarceration and with whom many of these children live, varies between relatives, out-of-home placements, including juvenile hall, next is to consider the well-being of the child. Crain focuses on the relationship of parents and children prior to the parent’s incarceration; regardless of the quality of the relationship, and found the child experiences a significant loss, pain, grief, and abandonment separated from the parent. The age of the child must be considered a factor at the time of separation as well as the child’s developmental stage to endure the loss. With a parent removed from the family unit, the family must reorganize and restructure his or her dynamics, which means that children may be unsupervised as the remaining parent is left to work two jobs or work longer hours to provide for the family. The unintended consequences of parental incarceration is that these children are more likely to display delinquent behaviors, as they may have both a delinquent parent and older sibling after whom they learn to be defiant (Aaron & Dallaire, 2009).
Subsequently, the Osborne Association (1993) found that children of incarcerated parents were more likely to experience low self-esteem, fear, anxiety, sadness, loneliness, and guilt (Browning, Miller, & Spruance, 2001); if parental incarceration continues to rise these children are at high risk for criminality and incarceration (Wildeman, 2009). There is well-established evidence associated between family risk factors and children increasing risk to become involved with the criminal justice system as they are exposed to the antisocial behaviors of his or her parents they are likely to abuse substances and develop conduct disorder (Phillips, Erkanli & Keeler et al., 2006). Researchers conceive that when a child witnesses their parent’s arrest, they are more likely to develop mental issues (Miller, 2006). Numerous studies support children’s reactions to parental incarceration that include academic challenges, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, disruptive behavior, and identification with the incarcerated parent (Dehart & Altshuler, 2009).

**INTERVENTIONS**

**GO KIDS/SKIP Programs**

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) shares a common perspective with social workers by taking in consideration the value of relationships with emphasis on offenders on parole and probation and their children. GO KIDS advocates the importance of preserving the family unit and providing positive interventions and prevention services to the at-risk children of parents involved in the TDCJ. In addition, the program extends its services to caregivers of children of offenders by providing educative services and legal, health, and employment resources to assist with these types
of children. Other services include mentoring, parenting, stress management, social, and mental health services, home-based interventions, and school advocacy.

Emphasis is placed on positive youth development to break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration the primary focus of services is geared toward creating a sense of personal safety, self-worth, and responsibility, and offering support and leadership from caring adults. The program also promotes in-prison programs created to strengthen the parent-child relationship. The resources provide parenting skills and training that offers activities to foster and encourage parent-child connections. GO KIDS offer support for offenders on parole and probation by making available resources related to counseling, family preservation, therapy, crisis intervention. GO KIDS is an invaluable tool for criminal justice professional nationwide.

The TDCJ also offers Supporting Kids of Incarcerated Parents (SKIP) program and the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. The Girl Scouts program provides opportunity for incarcerated mothers and their daughters to build relationships and provides services to the mother post release. The SKIP program primarily focuses on responding to the needs of children, their caregivers, and their parents, and it provides interdependent sessions to assist with strengthening family ties. Currently TDCJ offer a number of reading programs for example, the Women’s Storybook Project, which helps to improve the parent and child reading skills.

TDCJ currently offers other programs and initiatives to support incarcerated parents and their children. The Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas provides children with support, leadership, socialization, and fun by paring them with positive adult role
models. The Amachi program provides a focus to children and youths who have parents currently or formerly incarcerated. The essential goal is to assist these individuals with achieving their highest level of potential by engaging them in interactive mentoring relationships with people of faith.

The No More Victims Inc. program focuses on the deterrence of violent, abusive, and victimizing behavior, with a specific focus on parent-child relationship. It also offers education, emotional support, and empowerment to both children and parents. The KickStart initiative distinctively encourages productive student conflict resolution, gang prevention, drug, and alcohol free lifestyles, and continue high school until they graduate. Martial arts is utilized to enhance resiliency through its values and philosophies. The West Texas Boys Ranch offers young men guidance, leadership, and structure through a family-based and Christian environment.

**Evidenced-Based Practice-Adult Corrections**

Golder, et al. (2005) also sheds light on evidenced-based practice Prison-based therapeutic community (TC). TC have been instituted in correctional settings in response to the large majority of offenders with drug-related crimes into the system. Prison-based TCs typically are 24 hours, seven days a week, and self-contained units within the larger prison inmate population that focuses on the use of community as the primary foundation for facilitating social and psychological change in individuals to support and help residents achieve and maintain a drug-free lifestyle. They provide supportive data that have been tested to prove the effectiveness of a multistage TC. The three stages of continuum of care (1) a prison-based TC (2) a community-based work release TC (e.g.,
residential drug treatment facility), and (3) finally a community-based aftercare component (e.g., for example, out-patient or sober living environment). To conclude the results a three-and five-year study was conducted for post-release outcomes of this multistage TC treatment for drug-involved offenders, and there is a long-term support for the continuum model of TC treatment for correctional settings.

A study conducted in 2004 suggests that substance abuse treatment in correctional settings may not only reduce reincarceration but have rendered to be cost effective. The study was based on a Delaware work release program and aftercare treatment program conducted by Kathyrn E. McCollister of University of Miami’s Health Services Research Center on prison-based treatment and aftercare for offenders in California. These two studies concluded that correctional facilities should consider implementing work release and aftercare substance abuse treatment as a means of reducing recidivism among drug-abusing offenders. The Delaware study shows that criminal offenders taking advantage of substance treatment in work release setting spent 49 days less in reincarceration as compared to those who only participated in the mandated work release program. Other studies provide evidence that in-prison treatment reduces inmate drug use, inmate infractions, and reduced correctional staff absenteeism. The Delaware study also concluded that the cost of $65 to provide job training, substance abuse treatment, and avoid one day of reincarceration was more than the $57 cost of daily incarceration the economic benefits are employment, reduced dependence on substances, social welfare programs, and cost of health consequences associated with substance abuse (St. Gerard, 2004).
Co-Parenting/Kinship Care of Young Children

An effective co-parenting alliance is mothers and grandmothers working collaboratively to care for children during the incarceration of the biological mother. These co-parenting individuals share equal power in the family structure, and no co-parenting adult is excluded from his or her role, individuals also share the executive power in the family. Incarcerated fathers usually rely on their children’s mother to maintain contact, while on the other hand; incarcerated mothers’ contact with their children is enabled by their grandmothers and not fathers. Research shows that positive and healthy co-parenting uniformity stabilized by high levels of inter-parental support and solidarity, and low levels of animosity influence the social and emotional health of toddler and preschool-aged children in nuclear families (Cecil et al., 2008).

Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts

Considerably Tyuse and Linhorst, (2005) explain the use of drug courts and mental health courts have been created to reduce the number of incarcerated people with mental illness and substance disorders. The specialized courts primary mission is to prevent incarceration and facilitate community-based treatment offenders while protecting the public. Family drug courts are used to mandate substance abuse treatment for parents in danger of losing custody or visitation rights of their minor children as a consequence of their substance use or drug-related offenses. Today mental health services in correctional facilities are unlikely to provide rehabilitative components; rather, they are more likely to focus on behavioral symptoms that threaten security and departmental policies (Golder et al., 2005).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

To reiterate this research study is aimed to identify factors that attribute to the high rate of incarceration and the implications of parental incarceration. The goals of the research are aimed to identify best evidenced-based practice for abusive parents, mental health issues encountered by them, and the risk factors associates being abusive parents. The research project will also examine racial disparity among incarceration parents. Currently, there is a lack of research evidence that explored the interventions needed to assist children with incarcerated parents. It is the hope by this researcher that findings from the current Master’s Project may help to identify new knowledge in how best to intervene with this population group.

Research Design. The research design for this Master’s Project utilized the exploratory, quantitative, cross-sectional design that to determine the relationship between children of incarcerated parents and their propensity to repeat the same behavior because of lack of resources. Participants in this research study were 37 social work professionals knowledgeable in the area of children with incarcerated parents. To be clear, no incarcerated parents and their children were recruited as subjects. Only professional who were knowledgeable in providing services to incarcerated parents were recruited as research subjects. The targeted professionals included social workers at California Department of Corrections/Correctional Medical Facility (CMF)/Department of State Hospitals (DSH), Vacaville, California.

The researcher utilized an exploratory, quantitative, cross-sectional design to assist
with laying the ground work for future knowledge that can contribute to understanding possible ways to intervene with the hopes to create evidence-based practice model. The researcher found this design to be appropriate for the research study because there is less knowledge about the aforementioned problem. Findings from this research study could be used to develop hypotheses for future researchers. Because of the limited insight into the problem and defining possible solutions a hypotheses could not be formulated prior to the data collection. Using this design helped the researcher to understand the relationships between various variables, which could be used to predict a relationship among antecedents. Because exploratory designs imply the assumption that more knowledge is needed to develop intervention methods the researcher found this design to be most effective for this study.

In addition, using this design allowed the researcher to use a small sample size that was not representative of the overall population used in this study. The cross-sectional survey design used allowed the researcher to seek to understand what respondents may want, his or her beliefs, and attitudes, perceptions of social roles, norms, and behaviors in social environments.

**Instrumentations.** The researcher used a survey questionnaire that consisted of a total of 21 questions. Respondents were asked questions in four sections. Section I focused on demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, job title, rather he or she had previous experience working with children with incarcerated parents, and if he or she provided direct services to incarcerated parents. Using a Likert Scale of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree,” or “Neutral,” for sections II and III
of the research questionnaires. Specially, Section II questions focused on maternal and paternal incarceration. Section III concentrated on parental incarceration and sentencing. Section IV acquired information related to policy analysis were asked, even if respondents were not social workers which provided answers choices such as “Yes, they should”, “No they shouldn’t” or “Unsure/Don’t know” referring to social workers. The researcher experienced some difficulty in constructing the survey questionnaire, in which several attempts were made to reiterate the primary focus of the research study. The researcher was redirected by the research advisor during this process to ensure that the questions were relevant to the study purpose and each question was appropriate to the answer scale.

Data Collection Procedures.

The researcher met with the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) supervisor face-to-face and respectfully requested approval for the researcher to recruit social work participants from Correctional Medical Facility (CMF) /Department of State Hospitals (DSH), California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and received written approval to conduct the research survey. The researcher also received approval via e-mail from the program director of the High Custody Intermediate Treatment Center (HCITC) unit within in CMF/DSH to recruit correctional officers and medical professionals (nurses, registered nurses, and medical treatment assistants (MTA’s) as participants in this study. Once the researcher was granted permission to conduct the research study with social workers assigned to various units the researcher administered the survey questionnaire in a public office space designated by each unit. Once the
researcher was granted permission to conduct the research study with correctional officers (CO’s) and medical professionals in the HCITC unit the surveys were administered in the nurse’s station and the CO’s assigned work station both areas are designated in a public place within the institution. Before administering the questionnaires, the researcher explained the consent form, including confidentiality and safety to each of the participants.

Over a period of three days from February 25-27, 2013 the researcher hand delivered, administered and collected the questionnaires, social workers assigned to various housing were left alone to complete the survey in his or her assigned work area. Correctional officers and medical professionals assigned to the HCITC unit were left alone to complete his or her questionnaire at their designated work stations. The questionnaire took 5 minutes to complete, once the surveys were completed the researcher secured them and placed them in the appropriate envelops.

**Protection of Human Subjects.**

The researcher was required to complete the Human Subjects Protocol Application (IRB) to conduct this study. The detailed processes used to complete the IRB petitioned the researcher to summarize the study’s purpose, research design, data collection procedures, data analysis plan and methods to ensure the protection of data obtained, data handling, data destruction, and who had access to the data. The research advisor reviewed and commented on the researchers’ application throughout this process to finalize submission approval. The areas of primary concern were obtaining approval from the agency, data collection plans specifically who, how, and where. Once the research
advisor approved the IRB application for submittal to the IRB reviewers the researcher submitted the application for the second phase of the approval.

The data collection plan and procedures to recruit participants was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study on February 21, 2013 and assigned approval 12-13-070. This research project is considered exempt from risk as the questions only reflect perceptions by participants. None of the questions targeted the respondents personally, therefore this study is exempt under 45 CFR 46.101 (b) (2). The researcher and advisor were the only ones to have access to the data. Once the data was entered the forms were destroyed. There was no use of medical procedures, user of equipment, drugs, or pharmaceuticals used in this research. The researcher avoided any real or perceived conflict of interest by not offering inducements, which may appear to persuade participants’ participation. Documents from the survey were destroyed to ensure confidentiality. Taking all aspects of this research into consideration this study is considered to be exempt from risk.

**Statistical Analysis Plan.** The researcher used the SPSS computer software to conduct the descriptive statistical analysis of the data collection from respondents using a questionnaire. The researcher generated a hypothesis for further research using the appropriate level of measurements and statistical test to formulate the outcome.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

As discussed in the Methodology Chapter respondents who participated in this Master’s research Project are correctional officers, medical professionals, nurses, medical assistant technician, psychiatric technicians, and social workers employed at California Medical Facility (CMF)/Department of State Hospitals (DSH) in the greater Sacramento/Yolo Counties. Specifically, respondents were recruited from the acute, intermediate, and High Custody Intermediate Treatment Center (HCITC), for incarcerated male offenders. All respondents assigned to acute, and intermediate units have direct contact with offenders receiving mental health services. Correctional officers and medical professionals are sometimes assigned to the mainline or general population housing units (CMF) which provides more exposure to this diverse population. Several respondents, report having previous experience working with children with incarcerated parents this too provides additional insight to this research study. Below were some of the findings from the research study.
### Table 1

**Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African American</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Latino</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Latino White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Latino Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the variable racial background (see Table 1), 11 of the respondents (29.7%) identified themselves as African Americans, 8 (21.6%) White/Caucasian, 7 (18.9%) Hispanic/Latino and 6 (16.2%) Asian. The remaining 13.5% (n=5) identified themselves as either Pacific Islander or others.

Table 2

**Gender of respondent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When acquired the research subjects about his or her gender (see Table 2), twenty-two (59.5%) of the respondents identified themselves as female and fifteen (40.5%) stated that they were male.
Table 3

*Job title of the participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Clinical Social Worker</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Social Worker</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctional Officer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Professional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctional Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While inquired about job title (see Table 3), 29.7% (n= 11) stated that they were Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), 24.3% (n= 9) Clinical Social Workers with a Master’s degree, 24.3% (n= 9) Correctional Officers, 18.9% (n= 7) as medical professionals, followed by 2.7% (n= 1) as Correctional Officer Medical Professional.
Table 4

*Previous experience with children with incarcerated parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the variable, of how many respondents had previous experience with children with incarcerated parents (see Table 4), Twenty-one (56.8%) said yes, fifteen (40.5%) said no, one respondent did not answer this question. Respondents with previous experience working with children with incarcerated parents may be qualified to provide insight into what happens to children when parents are incarcerated, which most are likely to experience out of home placements (e.g., group homes, foster care, juvenile hall).
When asked if there are no known risk factors should incarcerated parents be allowed to maintain his or her parental role (see Table 5), 64.9% (n= 24) said they Agree, 24.3% (n= 9) said they Strongly Agree, 5.4% said they Strongly Disagree, The remaining 5.4% (n= 2) said Disagree or Neutral. The data shows concern for at-risk children for intergenerational incarceration and maintaining a parent-child relationship may serve as a potential intervention.
When inquiring about respondents' perceptions of incarcerated parents and the importance of co-parenting when there are no known risk factors (see Table 6), 51.4% (n= 19) said they Agree, 24.3% (n= 9) said they Strongly Agree, 13.5% (n= 5) said Neutral, 8.1% (n= 3) said they Disagree, followed 2.7% (n= 1) said they Strongly Disagree. The data may support the idea that co-parenting can assist with additional support for the parent-child relationship with children with incarcerated parents and possibly reduce the unintended consequences of stigmatization shared by their parents.
Table 7

*Most incarcerated parents predisposed to alcohol drugs crime and violence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When determining if most incarcerated parents were predisposed to alcohol, drugs, crime, and violence (see Table 7), 45.9% (n= 17) said they Agree, 43.2% (n= 16) said they Strongly Agree, 8.1% (n= 3) said they Strongly Disagree, followed by 2.7% (n= 1) said Disagree. There were 0 responses for Neutral. The data supports this research study, that 80% of incarcerated persons are involved with drugs or alcohol.
### Table 8

**Offender’s parents' history of substance abuse or incarceration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When measuring respondents knowledge on whether offender’s parents’ have a history of substance abuse or incarceration (see Table 8), 45.9% (n= 17), said they Agree, 24.3% (n= 9) said they Strongly Agree, 24.3% (n= 9), followed by 5.4% (n= 2) said Disagree. There were 0 responses for Strongly Disagree. The data supports the research study, that substance abuse and criminal behavior are interconnected and children have the propensity to repeat the same behaviors.
Table 9

**Majority of offenders serving lengthy sentences are African American**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about the racial disparities among inmates that the majority of offenders serving lengthy sentences are African Americans compared to other racial groups (see Table 9), 32.4% (n= 12) said they Agree, 32.4% (n= 12) said they Disagree, 18.9% said they Strongly Agree (n= 7), 13.5% (n= 5) said Neutral, followed by 2.7% (n= 1) said Strongly Disagree. The perception of respondents that agreed to this question is greater than those who did not. This data supports the research study that one in three African American males are expected to be incarcerated at some time in their lives.
Table 10

**African Americans more likely to receive longer prison terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When furthering the examination of racial disparities respondents perceptions that African Americans are more likely to receive longer prison terms than other racial groups for similar crimes (see Table 10), 32.4% (n=12) said they Agree, 24.3% (n=9) said they Disagree, 24.3% (n=9) said Neutral 10.8% (n=4) said they Strongly Agree, 8.1% (n=3) said they Strongly Disagree. The data supports the research study that there is evidence African Americans are more likely to be incarcerated at a higher rate than other racial and receive longer prison terms.
Table 11

Social workers involvement with family reunification process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes they should</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure Don't know</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When inquiring about respondents attitudes and perceptions of increasing social workers involvement the family reunification process for incarcerated parents (see Table 11), 81.1% (n= 30) said Yes they should. 16.2% (n= 6) said Unsure Don’t know. There were 0 responses for No they shouldn’t. One respondent declined to answer this question. The data supports the need for social workers to be more involved in the family reunification process as research states there is approximately 50% of youth in a correctional setting who have a parent in the adult system and the number of parents in prison has risen dramatically. Social may be able to assist with increasing the social support that is needed for a parent-child relationship, which may influence the deterrence of juvenile incarceration.
Table 12

Social workers to provide preventive services to children of incarcerated parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes they should</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No they shouldn't</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure Don't know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When speculating whether social workers should provide preventive services to children of incarcerated parents (see Table 12), 91.9% (n= 34) said Yes they should. The remaining 5.4% (n= 2) said No they shouldn’t, or Unsure Don’t know. One respondent declined to answer this question. The data supports this research study that there is a need for preventive services to reduce the new generations of children from becoming at-risk for intergenerational incarceration.
When questioned about social workers in the community and in-prison social workers collaborating to provide comprehensive services to children with incarcerated parents (see Table 13), 83.8% (n= 31) said Yes they should. The remaining 16.2% (n= 6) said No they shouldn’t or Unsure Don’t know. The data supports the research study by encouraging social workers to take in account the contributing factors of parental incarceration and how children are predisposed environmental and social factors that places him or her at-risk to repeat the same behaviors.

Table 13

Comprehensive services to children with incarcerated parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes they should</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No they shouldn’t</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

Social workers discriminatory sentencing practices at macro level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes they should</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No they shouldn't</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure Don't know</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When inquired about if social workers should find ways to prevent and eliminate discriminatory sentencing practices at the macro level (see Table 14), 62.2% (n= 23) said Yes they should, 29.7% (n= 11) said Unsure Don’t know. 5.4% (n= 2) said No they shouldn’t. One respondent declined to answer this question. The data supports the research study that social workers should acknowledge the disproportionate number of African Americans incarcerated by an unjust system and begin to exercise the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) by acting to prevent discrimination against any group of people.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY

The major findings of this research project supports several factors needed to address the identified problem. The research study revealed that the attitudes and perceptions of correctional officers, medical professionals, and social workers were highly in favor of a parent-child relationship for children with incarcerated parents. The study also indicates that this relationship can be strengthen by encouraging co-parenting by caretakers of these children. In addition, the parents of incarcerated children are most likely to have had a parent with a history of substance abuse or incarceration. The study suggests that social workers can and should play a key role in providing intervention, prevention, and comprehensive services to children of incarcerated parents. The study also supports the racial disparities among African Americans and other racial groups and calls social workers out to find ways to prevent or eliminate discrimination at the sentencing level.

The research findings of this study subjectively support the theoretical frameworks that naturally occurring relationships and social support relationships influence individual responses to life situations, ailments, stresses, and success. The study intrinsically identifies the importance of parent-child relationship with children of incarcerated parents, the caretakers of these children, which may include parents, siblings, partners, friends, or neighbors. The findings support the theoretical framework that the more an individual is attached to others, the more the individual believes in values, and the more that a person is willing to invest in involvement with normal
everyday activities, such as work, raising children, and the less likely he or she is to
engage in deviant behavior. The research findings support the theoretical frameworks that
suggest social networks provide uniformity, purpose, and a sense of stability and
inclusion. This implies that parent-child relationships between children and incarcerated
parents can be psychologically healthful for both the parents and children. Essentially,
multiple sources of social support maximize the likelihood of an individual receiving the
quality and quantity of support needed in the event of a stressor (Pettus et al., 2011).

The major findings in this research study are consistent with the literature review and
supports other researchers findings. Strozier et al. (2008) suggest that kinship care is the
most optimal arrangement for many children with incarcerated mothers, providing safety,
affection, and an increased chance of maintaining connection. The findings of this
research project suggest that when there are known risk factors incarcerated parents
should be allowed to maintain his or her parental role and co-parenting should be
encouraged followed by the support of more involvement with social workers in the
reunification process for incarcerated parents. The research findings show that most
incarcerated offenders are likely to have a predisposition to alcohol, crime, drugs, or
violence as children and his or her parents have a history of substance abuse or
incarceration. These results may be consistent with the Office of National Drug Control
Policy that reported 70 to 85 percent of state prison inmates are in need of substance
abuse treatment (Petersilia, 2001).

The findings of this research project supports the literature review regarding racial
disparities among incarcerated offenders, which presume that the majority of African
Americans are serving lengthier sentences and are more likely to receive longer prison terms for similar crimes committed by other racial groups. The data is supported by Balthazar and King (2001) that as a result of differential treatment by the criminal justice system; primarily by the end of 1997 African American men and women were more likely to have been in prison than Whites. There are several reasons for disparities like change in sentencing policies in the 1970, sentencing guidelines, mandatory minimum sentences for various crimes during the early 1980 and racial bias. Interestingly, Roberts (2004) also reiterate the research data by providing evidence that the growing expansion of the prison population is attributed to young Black men in grossly disproportionate numbers and most of the inmates in prison today are Black.

The research study suggest that social workers should ways at the macro level to prevent and eliminate discriminatory sentencing practices. The findings support the literature review that uniform sentencing and rehabilitation must be a priority as a way to salvage the African American community. Prosecutors should be held accountable for the occurrence of racial disparities in sentencing and that the role of the prosecutor is not only to promote incapacitation, but to ensure the justice system is administered in a fair and equitable manner (Ngozi et al., 2010).

The research study indicates that social workers in the community and in-prison should collaborate to provide preventive and comprehensive services to children of incarcerated children. The literature review state that once a parent is incarcerated or detained, children experience feelings of shame, stigma, isolation, blame, guilt, anger, low-self-esteem, fear, and anxiety (Browning, Miller & Spruance, 2001) this means that
social workers may assist with decreasing these problems by providing therapeutic individualized interventions. Both findings reflect the literature reviews unintended consequences of parental incarceration that these children are more likely to display delinquent behaviors (Aaron & Dallaire, 2009) and the need to provide interventions deserves attention. Additionally, if parental incarceration continues to grow these children are at high risk for criminality, incarceration (Wildeman, 2009) or intergenerational incarceration.

**Implications for Social Work**

The implications to social work on the micro level demands that social workers in the community and in-prison social workers began to identify this “hidden population” and provide intervention and preventive services to avoid an increase in offenders in the juvenile justice and adult criminal system. Relatively, there will be an increase in alcohol and substance abuse by, the children with incarcerated parents as evident within this study are more likely to repeat the same behaviors. Significantly, the combination of these factors contribute to the low academic achievement of this population and without preventive services they are more likely to develop interpersonal problems with depression, low-self esteem, and an increase chance of co-mordity.

Implications on the macro level also demand that social workers not remain silent to the discriminatory sentencing practices targeting African Americans. Social workers must exercise its core values by eliminating discrimination against any group of people; this seeks to identify the dignity and worth of the person and ultimately defines the importance of human relationships through social justice. As agents of change social
workers should challenge policy makers to conduct a policy analysis to make the necessary changes to implement fair sentencing practices for all offenders regardless of race or ethnicity. Social workers can also take this same opportunity to find ways to implement specialized services for this population in an effort to prevent intergenerational incarceration.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The recommendations for future research should include the attitudes and perceptions of correctional officers, medical professionals, psychologist, and rehabilitation therapist from both male and female institutions. Research and data collection should be done at county jails, social service agencies, group home staff, and school social workers. Last conducting interviews with the caretakers of children with incarcerated parents can provide an in-depth experience into the lives of the children with incarcerated parents and his or her caretaker(s)

**Study Limitations**

This research study was limited in its sample size, time limits, and restricted to the male prison population. The majority of the respondents in this study are primarily assigned to the Department of State Hospitals within the Correctional Medical Facility, which means the researcher did not conduct surveys with correctional officers, medical professionals or social workers assigned to the general population within the designated institution. The study did not include the attitudes and perceptions of the inmate population itself regarding their parental role while incarcerated or the barriers to maintaining a parent-child relationship during incarceration.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
Survey Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey questionnaire. Please do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire since all responses are confidential and anonymous. Circle each question as instructed or write your answer on the line next to the individual question.

Section I: Demographics

1. ____ What is your gender?
   1. Male
   2. Female

2. ____ How do you identify your race or ethnicity?
   1. American Indian / Native American
   2. Asian
   3. Black / African American
   4. Hispanic / Latino
   5. White / Caucasian
   6. Pacific Islander
   7. Other

3. ____ What is your job title?
   1. Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
   2. Clinical Social Worker (CSW or Masters of Social Work)
   3. Correctional Officer
   4. Medical professional

4. ____ Do you have any previous experience working with children with incarcerated parents?
   1. Yes
   2. No

5. ____ Do you provide direct services to incarcerated parents? In case you do not please skip this question?
   1. Yes
   2. No
Section II. Questions regarding maternal and paternal incarceration. Put your response in front of each question using the following scales.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree
5. Don’t know

6. ____ When there are no known risks factors, incarcerated parents should be allowed to maintain his or her parental role.

7. ____ When there are no known risk factors, primary caretakers of children with incarcerated parents should be encouraged to co-parent with either or both parents.

8. ____ Most offenders are likely to report that he or she were raised by a single parent and experienced out of home placements as children (e.g., group home, foster home, or juvenile hall).

9. ____ Incarcerated parents are less likely to be assigned to a penal institution located close to his or her permanent or last known address.

10. ____ A large proportion of incarcerated parents were most likely predisposed to risk factors, such as alcohol, drugs, crime, and violence as children.

Section III. Questions related to parental incarceration and sentencing.

11. ____ The majority of offenders serving life sentences or awaiting death row are more likely to report, that one or both biological parents have a history of incarceration, substance abuse or both.

12. ____ The majority of offenders serving lengthy sentences are more likely to be African American as compared to Caucasian, Hispanic offenders, and other racial groups.

13. ____ When appropriate male offenders sentenced to life, death row, or long-term sentencing should be allowed supervised specialized visits to bond with children ages 0-7 at the time of sentencing.

14. ____ When appropriate at the time of sentencing incarcerated parents known to have incarcerated adult children should be given the option to be housed together in the same institution according to his or her gender.
15. ____ African Americans are more likely to receive longer prison terms than Caucasians, Hispanics offenders, and other racial groups for similar crimes.

16. ____ When appropriate convicted offenders with minor children should be provided counseling services for family re-unification at the time of sentencing.

Section IV. Questions related to policy analysis. Even if you are not a social worker, please respond to questions #17 to 21 as well.

17. Social workers should be more involved in the family re-unification process for incarcerated parents.

   1. Yes, they should
   2. No, they shouldn’t
   3. Unsure/Don’t know

18. Social workers in the community should be encouraged to provide preventive services to children of incarcerated parents.

   1. Yes, they should
   2. No, they shouldn’t
   3. Unsure/Don’t know

19. Caretakers of children with incarcerated parents should be provided remedial services, access to groups, and individual strategies to assist with defiant behaviors.

   1. Yes, they should
   2. No, they shouldn’t
   3. Unsure/Don’t know

20. Social workers in the community and in-prison social workers should collaborate to provide comprehensive services to children of incarcerated parents and their families when appropriate.

   1. Yes, they should
   2. No, they shouldn’t
3. Unsure/Don’t know

21. Social workers should find ways at the macro level to prevent and eliminate discriminatory sentencing practices.

   1. Yes, they should
   
   2. No, they shouldn’t
   
   3. Unsure/Don’t know
References


