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The Impact of Parental Incarceration on Psychopathy, Crime, and Prison Violence in Women

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Abstract

There is a growing interest in understanding the consequences of parental incarceration. Unfortunately, research exploring the long-term criminological and personality effects in female offspring is limited, particularly among second-generation female offenders. In a sample of 170 female offenders, we first assessed the correlations between psychopathy facets, prison violence, and types of crime. Next, we tested the association between childhood exposure to paternal and/or maternal incarceration on adulthood psychopathic traits, criminal offending, and prospective prison violence over 12 months. Correlations showed the interpersonal facet was positively correlated with fraud-related crime and prison violence. The affective facet was positively correlated with violent crime and prison violence. The behavioral facet was associated with prison violence and drug-related crime. Multinomial logistic regressions showed higher interpersonal facet scores were associated with an increased likelihood of having experienced paternal incarceration. Higher affective facet scores, violent crime, and prison violence were associated with an increased likelihood of having experienced maternal incarceration, regardless of if the father had been incarcerated or not. It is evident that having any parent incarcerated during childhood can be harmful to daughters; however, our findings dovetail with prior research showing that maternal incarceration leads to more detrimental outcomes for women.

Keywords

psychopathy; parental incarceration; violence; gender differences; prison misconduct; female offenders; crime

More than 1.7 million children in the United States are affected by parental incarceration at any given time (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008) and approximately 10 million children will experience parental incarceration sometime before the age of 18 years (Mauer et al., 2009). Even with a reduction in overall incarceration rates for men, there has been a steady increase of incarcerated women (Carson, 2018), and the rate of incarcerated

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mothers has doubled since 1991 (up by 131%; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). There are notable long-term impacts of having a parent incarcerated as a child that can be seen into adulthood, including greater risk of psychopathology, internalizing and externalizing traits, illegal drug use, having a criminal conviction, and becoming incarcerated (Gifford et al., 2019). However, there is a scarcity of research aiming to understand the long-term correlates of parental incarceration among second-generation female offenders. Research has shown that the effects of childhood adversities (e.g., parental incarceration) can be generationally transmitted (Geller et al., 2009), but not all female offenders have experienced parental incarceration. Thus, it may be important to understand how the long-term effects of parental incarceration differentiate female prisoners on personality traits and criminal behavior.

Losing any parent to incarceration has been shown to be more detrimental than other forms of parental separation (e.g., parental death, hospitalization, disharmony; Murray & Farrington, 2005). A possible explanation may be because parental incarceration increases the risk of exposure to other adverse childhood experiences (e.g., neglect, exposure to violence, poverty, household instability; Wildeman & Wakefield, 2014). In some cases, the child of an incarcerated parent may suffer from the shame and stigma of having a parent in prison, causing additional social isolation (Mauer et al., 2009). Furthermore, the traumatic experience of parental incarceration may impact the child's security and attachment with parents, which interferes with typical psychosocial development impacting personality and increasing the risk of delinquency (Makariev & Shaver, 2010; Thomson, Kuay, et al., 2018).

Both maternal and paternal incarceration are linked to detrimental consequences for the child. Children of incarcerated parents have greater difficulties in school and have higher rates of substance use, poor health, delinquency, home instability, poor social adjustment, and externalizing and internalizing problems (Arditti, 2012; Hagan & Foster, 2012; Lee et al., 2013; Murray & Farrington, 2005, 2008; Murray et al., 2012). The link between parental incarceration and offspring criminal behavior is particularly well-established (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016). In a meta-analysis including 45 samples, Murray et al. (2012) found that children with incarcerated parents were at a higher risk for antisocial behavior compared with their peers. Furthermore, male and female adolescents who had an incarcerated father were at increased risk of illegal drug use during early adulthood (Roettger et al., 2011). Similarly, results from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health data ($N = 12,844$) showed that parental incarceration was associated with criminal offending and illegal drug use (Mears & Siennick, 2016). Although there is strong evidence linking parental incarceration to criminal behavior and violence in adulthood (Huebner & Gustafson, 2007; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Mufti et al., 2016; Mufti & Smith, 2018; Murray et al., 2007; Rakt et al., 2012), the study on the effects on women have been largely overlooked (Miller, 2006; Mufti & Smith, 2018). Yet, existing research suggests that the experience of parental incarceration as a child may impact sons and daughters differently (Geller et al., 2009; Wildeman, 2010). Furthermore, studies involving women have relied on self-report data for criminal history and violent behavior, and measures of violence are often retrospective. In addition, there remains little discussion or evidence on the relation between parental incarceration and psychopathy, which is considered one of the most important constructs in the criminal justice system (Thomson, 2019).

Moderating Effects of Gender of the Incarcerated Parent and Gender of the Child

There is little understanding of the comparative effects of having a mother incarcerated when compared with having a father incarcerated, or having both parents incarcerated. This is important to understand because differential exposure to paternal versus maternal incarceration may give rise to unique parent-specific risk factors for mental illness, risky personality traits, and delinquency in the child. Prior research has shown that when fathers are incarcerated, their children are more often cared for by the child's mother, which may provide a protective buffer against the trauma of losing a parent to prison (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). This may be especially true when noncustodial or absentee fathers are incarcerated. However, when a mother is incarcerated, the child is more likely to be physically displaced to live with other relatives (e.g., grandparents) or placed in foster care (Mumola, 2000). Thus, the consequences of maternal incarceration are more likely to cause an immediate physical impact on the child, such as lower financial resources, instability, and a change in living arrangements, as well as the immense psychological impact from a traumatic separation with a mother (Mumola, 2000). Furthermore, because there are fewer women's prisons it is more likely that women will be held in facilities further away from the child's residence, making visits much more difficult (Hagan & Coleman, 2001). Research assessing the long-term effects of maternal incarceration have found that adults who experienced maternal incarceration during their childhood reported poorer self-perception, lower levels cognitive empathy, higher levels of internalizing, and a greater likelihood of having a history of arrest, conviction, and incarceration (Dallaire, 2007a; Grant, 2006; Mufti et al., 2016; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Thomson, Kuay, et al., 2018). Thus, it seems that maternal incarceration has a lasting impact on criminality and personality traits well into adulthood.

Even less understood are the differential impacts of maternal versus paternal separation by incarceration, as well as the differential impacts of parental incarceration on girls relative to boys. Although there is compelling evidence linking parental incarceration to risky personality traits and criminal behavior, these studies have almost exclusively focused on male offspring. This limits our understanding of the consequences of parental incarceration, especially as research suggests that girls may be more affected by parental incarceration than boys (Murray et al., 2007). For instance, when compared with boys, girls exposed to parental incarceration have an earlier onset of sexual relationships, higher engagement of risky sexual behaviors (Smith et al., 2006), and are at an increased risk of criminal offending (Murray et al., 2007). To further our understanding of the consequences of parental incarceration for women, the aim of the present study is to test the association between maternal and paternal incarceration and adult levels of psychopathy and criminal behavior in female offenders.

Psychopathy and Parental Incarceration

Psychopathy is a disorder characterized by personality and behavioral features and has been an integral construct for understanding risk of violence and criminal behavior in men and women (DeLisi, 2016; Gray & Snowden, 2016; Klein Tunte et al., 2014;

McKeown, 2010; Thomson, 2018, 2019, 2020; Thomson et al., 2016; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2004). Psychopathy, as measured by the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy (LSRP) scale, includes three facets that subdivides the personality items into interpersonal (e.g., grandiose, manipulative, superficially charming) and affective (e.g., callous lack of empathy, no remorse) facets, while the behavioral facet captures unstable, angry, and impulsive attitudes toward life (Garofalo et al., 2019; Sellbom, 2011). The interpersonal facet of the LSRP is associated with low agreeableness and meanness, and higher levels of narcissism and moral disengagement (Garofalo et al., 2019; Sellbom et al., 2018). Garofalo and colleagues (2019) suggest that the interpersonal facet of the LSRP captures a broader array of psychopathic traits when compared with the interpersonal facet from other self-report psychopathy measures (e.g., Self-Report Psychopathy Scale; Paulhus et al., 2016). The affective facet is related to a lack of empathy, guilt, and morality, low agreeableness and conscientiousness, and higher levels of coldheartedness (Garofalo et al., 2019). The behavioral facet is associated with higher levels of impulsivity, chronic antisocial and violent behavior, negative emotionality and emotion dysregulation, as well as a predictor of borderline personality traits (Christian & Sellbom, 2016). Recent research in women has reported that the facet model of psychopathy is more sensitive than the traditional 2-factor model for detecting sex differences in correlates of psychopathy (e.g., violence, aggression, intelligence) (McKeown & Thomson, 2019; Thomson, Bozgunov, et al., 2019; Thomson, Vassileva, et al., 2019).

Thomson (2019) proposed that psychopathy is a biopsychosocial personality disorder, whereby biological and environmental vulnerabilities contribute to the development of psychopathy. Indeed, genetics are responsible for about half of the variability in psychopathy (although molecular genetics indicates this may be much lower; <20%), leaving at least half of the variability in psychopathy due to environmental factors (Thomson, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for research to begin exploring how environmental factors, such as adverse childhood experiences, contribute to the development of psychopathy. Unfortunately, study of the association between parental incarceration and psychopathy in offspring has been limited to a male sample in the United Kingdom (Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development; J. Murray & Farrington, 2008). This longitudinal data included 411 boys born in the 1950s, and found those who had either a mother or father with a criminal history (e.g., conviction or criminal record) had higher total psychopathy scores at 34 years (Bamvita et al., 2017) and 48 years of age (Farrington & Bergström, 2018). At the facet level, boys who had a mother with a criminal conviction were more likely to have higher scores on the interpersonal and affective facets, whereas boys who had a father with a criminal conviction had higher behavioral facet scores (Bamvita et al., 2017). Boys with a father who had a higher number of violent crimes were more likely to have *both* higher antisocial and affective psychopathic traits (Bamvita et al., 2017). Although these are the first results aiming to understand the impact of parental incarceration and psychopathy, these results suggest that parental incarceration may play a role in the development of psychopathic traits.

The Current Study

The aim of the present study was to understand the relations between childhood exposure to paternal and/or maternal incarceration and (a) criminal behavior, (b) prison violence, and (c) psychopathic traits in second-generation women prisoners. To test these aims, we used a retrospective self-report of exposure to parental incarceration (mother, father, or both), official records of criminal conviction history (e.g., violent crime, drug crime, fraud, and property damage), institutional files for prospective prison violence over a 12-month period, and self-report psychopathic traits. Given that this is the first study to include incarcerated women when testing the link between parental incarceration and crime, prison violence, and psychopathy, our expectations were initially developed by findings including male or mixed sex community samples. Prior research has found parental and paternal incarceration to be related to future aggressiveness (Antle et al., 2020); thus, we hypothesized that having had a father and both parents incarcerated would be associated with violent crime and prison violence. Evidence suggests maternal incarceration is linked to criminality more generally (e.g., probation and conviction; Huebner & Gustafson, 2007; Tasca et al., 2011); thus, we hypothesized maternal incarceration would be associated with all criminal conviction types. Our hypotheses for psychopathy were based on the Bamvita et al. (2017) study on males. Thus, we expected maternal incarceration would be associated with higher affective and interpersonal facet scores, while paternal incarceration would be associated with higher affective and behavioral facet scores. We did not postulate a specific hypothesis for both paternal and maternal incarceration.

Method

Participants

For the present study, we recruited female prisoners to assess if second-generation offenders differed in criminal history, future violence, and psychopathy from first-generation female offenders. Participants ($N = 170$, $M_{\text{age}} = 38$ years, age range: 20–61 years) were recruited from a women's correctional facility that houses maximum, medium, and minimum custody level female offenders. Inmates receiving intensive psychiatric treatment ($n = 11$) in the mental health unit or under suicide watch in the medical facility were not targeted for recruitment ($n = 3$). Participants self-identified as Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (52%), Caucasian (27%), Asian-American (9%), and other ethnicities (12%; Native American, Native Alaskan, African American, Hispanic American, and Mexican). About 64% of the sample completed a 12th-grade education or higher. In total, 25% of the participants had been convicted of a violent crime, 57% convicted of a drug-related crime, 37% of a property-related crime, and 25% for all other crimes (e.g., fraud, escape, probation violence, prostitution). Participants did not receive any compensation or incentive for participation. Participants were informed prior to consent that their involvement was for research and not part of the correctional institutional files. The present study was approved by the institutional review board at the University of Hawai'i.

Measures

Parental incarceration.—Participants in both samples were asked, “Were any of your biological parents incarcerated during your childhood (0–18 years)?” Participants responded by circling the following options: “Father,” “Mother,” “Mother and Father,” or “None.” In total, 36% ($n = 62$) of the women had experienced at least one instance of parental incarceration during childhood.

Criminal offense type.—Institutional files were used to assess the most recent criminal conviction. These were coded as violent offenses (e.g., assault, homicide, kidnapping), drug offenses (e.g., possession, trafficking, manufacturing), property-based offenses (e.g., arson, burglary, vandalism), and fraud. Criminal offense was coded as either *present* (1) or *absent* (0).

Prison violence.—Official reports of prison violence were coded over a period of 12 months after the questionnaire administration. Violence misconducts were coded using the Hawai'i Department of Public Safety and Corrections Administration Policy and Procedures Manual. In accordance with prior prison-based violence research (see Steiner & Wooldredge, 2014), violent misconducts were coded if the offense included causing physical harm, threatening to cause physical harm, or attempting to cause physical harm to another offender or staff member.

Psychopathy.—Participants completed the LSRP (Levenson et al., 1995) scale to measure the 2-factor and 3-facet model of psychopathy. The LSRP is a widely used measure of psychopathic traits and has been validated for use in female offender populations (see Brinkley et al., 2001; Thomson et al., 2016). In the present sample, the interpersonal ($\alpha = .85$), affective ($\alpha = .67$), and behavioral facets ($\alpha = .85$) had low to adequate internal consistency. Because there is limited research exploring the association between psychopathy and different forms of crime, we present the correlations among psychopathy facets, crime, and prison violence (see Table 1). The interpersonal facet was positively correlated with fraud-related crime and prison violence. The affective facet was positively correlated with violent crime and prison violence. The behavioral facet was associated with prison violence and drug-related crime.

Data Analytic Plan

Statistical analyses were conducted using R Studio (R Core Team, 2016). To examine whether psychopathic traits, criminal offending, or violence (as continuous variables) increased the likelihood of having a parent incarcerated (categorical, group-defining variable), a series of multinomial logistic regressions (MLR) were conducted using *nnet* package (Venables & Ripley, 2002). Odds ratios and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals were included to provide an index of effect sizes, with intervals furthest away from 1 indicating stronger effects. To help protect against Type 1 errors, we assessed the overall model likelihood ratio test (LRT), as well as the LRT for each predictor before examining the individual coefficients.

Results

Crime as Markers of Parental Incarceration

The MLR testing the association between types of crime (e.g., violent crime, drug crime, property crime, and fraud) and type of parental-incarceration was significant, $\chi^2(15, N=170) = 42.65, p < .001$. However, the LRT showed the only predictor to emerge was violent crime, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 16.44, p = .001$ (see Table 2). The LRT was not significant for drug crime, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 5.07, p = .167$, property crime, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 2.16, p = .540$, or fraud, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 6.89, p = .076$. When compared with the no parental incarceration group, violent crime increased the odds of being in the mother-only (odds ratio [OR] = 5.97; $p = .005$) and both parents (OR = 6.90; $p = .002$) incarcerated groups. When compared with the father-only group, violent crime increased the odds of being in the mother-only (OR = 5.28; $p = .031$) and both parents (OR = 6.10; $p = .018$) incarcerated groups. Violent crime did not differentiate women from the mother-only to both parents incarcerated groups ($p = .856$).

Prison Violence as a Marker of Parental Incarceration

The model testing the association between parental incarceration and prison violence was significant, $\chi^2(6, N=170) = 23.50, p < .001$, and the LRT for prison violence was significant, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 14.26, p = .003$. When compared with the no parental incarceration group, a greater number of prison violence incidents increased the likelihood of women belonging to the mother-only group (OR = 1.41; $p = .024$) and both parents incarcerated group (OR = 1.59; $p = .001$). When compared with the father-only group, prison violence increased the likelihood of being in the mother-only group (OR = 1.43; $p = .021$).

Psychopathy as a Marker of Parental Incarceration

Psychopathy facet scores significantly predicted parent-specific incarceration, $\chi^2(12, N=169) = 55.03, p < .001$ (see Table 3). Higher interpersonal facet scores, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 14.28, p = .003$, increased the likelihood for women being in the father-only group when compared with no parental incarceration (OR = 1.19; $p = .001$) and mother incarceration (OR = 1.21; $p = .009$) groups. Higher affective facet scores, LRT; $\chi^2(3) = 15.65; p = .001$; OR = 1.38; $p = .005$, increased the likelihood for women being in the mother-only group when compared with women without parental incarceration. Elevated affective traits (OR = 1.39; $p = .002$) increased the likelihood of having both parents incarcerated when compared with women without parental incarceration. Higher levels of affective traits increased the likelihood of having a mother incarcerated (OR = 1.27; $p = .049$) and both parents incarcerated (OR = 1.32; $p = .017$) relative to likelihood of father-only incarceration (group). Affective traits did not differentiate women belonging to the both parents incarcerated group when compared with mother-only group ($p = .963$). The behavioral facet did not increase the likelihood for women having experienced any parental incarceration.

Discussion

Millions of children are impacted by parental incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008), and presumably, half of these children are girls. Research exploring the long-term consequences of parental incarceration among women is sparse (Mufti & Smith, 2018; Thomson, Kuay,

et al., 2018), especially for second-generation female offenders. Thus, the goal of the present study was to assess whether the effects of parental incarceration in second-generation female offenders were of sufficient magnitude and specificity to differentially predict maternal versus paternal incarceration. Our results indicate that there are distinctions for those exposed to maternal incarceration versus paternal incarceration.

Our results suggest that daughters may be more negatively impacted by exposure to maternal incarceration than by exposure to paternal incarceration. For instance, women who committed more prison violence over a 12-month period, had a violent criminal history or higher levels of affective psychopathic traits, were more likely to have experienced maternal incarceration as a child. This association was not influenced by the father being incarcerated or not. The common association between maternal incarceration and violent crime, prison violence and affective facet scores may be unsurprising as affective psychopathic traits are linked to violence in women, and therefore similar correlates may emerge (Thomson, 2018; Thomson, Bozgunov, et al., 2019; Thomson et al., 2018). However, it was surprising that violence more generally (criminal conviction and prison violence) was not associated with paternal incarceration. Research from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, found that boys of incarcerated fathers and mothers had higher levels of violence at 18 years of age (Murray & Farrington, 2008), and boys of incarcerated fathers have been found to display more physical aggression (Wildeman, 2010). Therefore, unlike prior research in male samples, our findings suggest that having a mother incarcerated is a greater risk factor for violence for women, across contexts, rather than having a father incarcerated.

It is important to note that our findings on criminality are consistent with prior research including women, which has found that daughters of incarcerated mothers were 2.5 times more likely to have been incarcerated as compared with daughters of incarcerated fathers (Dallaire, 2007b). Furthermore, paternal incarceration has been found to increase physical aggression for sons but not for daughters (Wildeman, 2010), and maternal incarceration is found to be a stronger predictor than paternal incarceration for daughters' convictions and incarcerations (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016). Therefore, a mother's incarceration may be more detrimental than a father's incarceration to their daughter's criminality and personality.

Although the present study did not test causal paths, we may be able to draw from prior research to help stimulate ideas for future investigations to explore. Based on trauma theory, childhood is a period where secure parental attachment is developed, and as prosocial traits develop from a secure attachment with parents (Grusec & Davido, 2010; Taylor et al., 2013), a traumatic experience of maternal incarceration may impact the child's security, disrupting the development of attachment toward others. Indeed, psychopathy, particularly the affective features, is linked to maladaptive attachment styles and poor parental bonding (Craig et al., 2013; Gao et al., 2010; van der Zouwen et al., 2018). Research has demonstrated that maternal warmth may interrupt the development of affective psychopathic traits in youth (Kimonis et al., 2013; Waller et al., 2014). Thus, while behavioral genetic studies suggest that approximately half of the variance in psychopathy is explained by genetics (see Thomson, 2019 for review), maternal warmth may offset the development of psychopathic traits (Henry et al., 2018). However, if the mother becomes imprisoned then genetically vulnerable youth may lack the environmental protective factors to inhibit the development of

affective psychopathic traits. This is especially true for maternal incarceration over paternal incarceration because children of incarcerated mothers are more often placed in foster or nonfamilial care (Dallaire, 2007b; Mumola, 2000), and because there are fewer women's prisons mothers may be incarcerated further away from their children, making it difficult for regular visits and maintaining close relationships between mother and child. Collectively, the impact of maternal incarceration seems to have a significant impact on their daughters' personality and behavior (Dallaire, 2007a).

Although our results did not find an association between paternal incarceration and criminal behavior, our findings indicate that paternal incarceration may contribute to the development of interpersonal facet scores. This result was inconsistent with our initial hypothesis and with prior research including male offspring (Bamvita et al., 2017). Although there is a scarcity of research assessing paternal incarceration and offspring psychopathy levels, we may be able to extrapolate from research that tests the impact of paternal absence on a child's personality. There is evidence to suggest that an absentee father, particularly during the first 4 years of childhood, is associated with higher levels of interpersonal psychopathic traits in offspring during adulthood (Riser et al., 2011). An absentee father impacts child–father bonding (Murray & Murray, 2010), which is subsequently linked to higher Factor 1 psychopathy scores (a combined measure of affective and interpersonal facets; Blanchard & Lyons, 2016), and personality traits similar to the interpersonal facet (e.g., entitlement/exploitativeness; Lyons et al., 2013). Our findings are not necessarily specific to paternal incarceration, but may be an extension of the effects of having an absentee father. Indeed, more research is needed to explicitly test the link between offspring levels of psychopathy and types of paternal absenteeism.

It is also important to recognize that paternal incarceration can have a detrimental impact on the mother, including the trauma of losing a partner to prison. Typically, fathers are incarcerated for longer periods than mothers, which causes greater stress and financial difficulties for the family (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Research has found that the link between paternal incarceration and child internalizing (e.g., anxiety) is mediated by the mother's levels of depression and parenting stress (Antle et al., 2020). Therefore, it may be that the effects of paternal incarceration on a child is, in part, due to the impact of paternal incarceration on the mother. Similarly, Bishop and Lane (2000) posit that children can develop greater entitlement (a similar characteristic of the interpersonal facet) to paternal absenteeism if a mother responds to the father's absence by overinvesting and overvaluing the child for her own narcissistic needs (e.g., to fill the loss of her partner)—the child may “feel special, but also, paradoxically, deprived” (Bishop & Lane, 2000). Coen (1992) also suggested that the most malignant form of entitlement develops in children when the child is misused and exploited by a parent. As a result, the child recompenses this feeling of exploitation by taking what she wants and exploits others for her own narcissistic gain—a reversal of the original parent to child relationship dynamic (Bishop and Lane, 2000). We have presented two possibilities for the link between paternal incarceration and interpersonal facet scores in second-generation female offenders—nevertheless, the precise mechanisms of this association still need to be unpacked.

Further explanations for the development of psychopathic traits as a consequence of all forms of parental incarceration may also include an increase in poverty (Farrington & Bergström, 2018) and other poor parenting practices (e.g., neglect, parental supervision, inconsistent parenting; Eisenbarth et al., 2018; Forouzan & Nicholls, 2015; Gao et al., 2010; Marshall & Cooke, 1999). However, future research is needed to test the mediators linking parental incarceration to psychopathy. Based on the present findings, it is important that future research includes the facet structure of psychopathy, as it provides more specific associations, further supporting the notion that the facet structure may be more suitable for understanding the impact of parental incarceration in women.

It is important to note that we cannot causally attribute histories of different kinds of offending in these inmates to their parents' incarceration with the present correlative design. Notably, a neurodevelopmental trait of increased antisociality in the parents could have caused *both* high likelihood of the parental incarceration itself *and* criminality in the offspring by way of heritable transmission of aberrant neurodevelopmental traits and dysfunctional behavioral modeling. Nevertheless, the correlational linkages here provide hints of sex-specific transmission mechanisms, and are also suggestive of the possibility that losing a parent to prison may expose children to risk factors that increase the risk of development of psychopathic traits and criminal behaviors (Thomson, 2019). To definitively assess *specific* linkages between parental incarceration and criminality would be exceptionally difficult, given that it would require the inclusion of participant groups characterized by similar criminality in parents, somehow assessed, who somehow escaped, or avoided, arrest and incarceration.

The present study has other limitations. First, we used self-report measures of psychopathy and parental incarceration rates. Although these methods are widely used, there may be a stigma associated with self-reporting parental incarceration, even when the questionnaire is anonymous. Because these measures were all self-report, there is a possibility that associations were inflated due to common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, we did include institutional records of criminal history and prospective violence over a 12-month period. This was a strength of the study design. However, future research should consider integrating a clinical assessment of psychopathy to test the replicability of the present findings. Furthermore, because the aim of the present study was to test the impact of parental incarceration in women, the results may not generalize to male samples. Finally, although we proposed that trauma may explain the link between parental incarceration and offspring levels of psychopathy and criminality, there may be alternative explanations to consider, such as the influences of the home environment, genetics, and types of parenting styles. Thus, we encourage future research to further our efforts to disentangle the consequences of parental incarceration. Given the recent interest in research aiming to understand the consequences and associations of parental incarceration, we look forward to seeing longitudinal studies aiming to understand the long-term consequences and implications of parental incarceration, in addition to further evaluation of the mediators linking parental incarceration to psychopathy and violence.

Prior research has shown that parental incarceration has a negative impact on the child. The current study extends this research, demonstrating that the consequences of parental

incarceration are lifelong and may contribute to the development of psychopathic traits in women, as well as increase the risk of criminal behavior. In particular, we found paternal incarceration was associated with higher levels of interpersonal psychopathic traits, whereas maternal incarceration was associated with higher affective psychopathic traits, violent criminal history, and prospective prison violence. Our results dovetail with prior research, showing that for daughters, having a mother incarcerated is particularly detrimental to adulthood behavior and personality.

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Table 1.

Correlations Between Psychopathy, Crime, and Prison Violence.

Crime Classification	Interpersonal	Affective	Behavioral
Violent crime [†]	.08	.31**	.13
Drug crime [†]	.10	-.10	.18*
Property crime [†]	.15	.03	.13
Fraud [†]	.21**	.04	.15
Prison violence	.19*	.25**	.18*

Note.[†]Spearman's.* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.

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Table 2.

Parental Incarceration Group Comparisons on Crime Based on Odds Ratios (95% CI).

Criminal history						
	Father versus none^a	Mother versus none^a	Both versus none^a	Mother versus father^a	Both versus father^a	Both versus mother^a
Age	0.96 [0.92, 1.01]	0.98 [0.92, 1.05]	0.95 [0.89, 1.02]	1.02 [0.94, 1.10]	0.99 [0.92, 1.07]	0.97 [0.89, 1.06]
Violent crime	1.13 [0.35, 3.64]	5.97** [1.72, 20.76]	6.90** [2.06, 23.10]	5.28* [1.17, 23.91]	6.10* [1.36, 27.32]	1.16 [0.24, 5.57]
Drug crime	2.84 [1.03, 7.86]	0.88 [0.23, 3.27]	0.79 [0.21, 3.02]	0.31 [0.07, 1.40]	0.28 [0.06, 1.32]	0.91 [0.17, 4.99]
Property crime	1.85 [0.70, 4.90]	1.11 [0.29, 4.29]	1.90 [0.51, 7.13]	0.60 [0.13, 2.75]	1.03 [0.23, 4.66]	1.72 [0.32, 9.35]
Fraud	2.77 [1.09, 7.05]	2.26 [0.63, 8.14]	0.51 [0.10, 2.62]	0.81 [0.20, 3.38]	0.19 [0.03, 1.05]	0.23 [0.03, 1.49]

Note. CI = confidence interval.

^aReference group.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 3.

Parental Incarceration Group Comparisons on 3-Facet Construct of Psychopathy Based on Odds Ratios (95% CI).

3-Facet psychopathy						
	Father versus none^a	Mother versus none^a	Both versus none^a	Mother versus father^a	Both versus father^a	Both versus mother^a
Age	0.97 [0.93, 1.03]	0.98 [0.92, 1.05]	0.98 [0.92, 1.04]	1.01 [0.94, 1.09]	1.00 [0.93, 1.08]	0.99 [0.92, 1.08]
Interpersonal	1.19 ** [1.08, 1.31]	0.98 [0.86, 1.12]	1.08 [0.96, 1.21]	0.82 * [0.71, 0.95]	0.91 [0.80, 1.03]	1.01 [0.95, 1.28]
Affective	1.05 [0.87, 1.27]	1.34 ** [1.09, 1.63]	1.39 ** [1.13, 1.71]	1.27 * [1.00, 1.61]	1.32 * [1.05, 1.66]	1.04 [0.82, 1.32]
Behavioral	1.08 [0.92, 1.28]	1.23 [1.01, 1.50]	1.24 [1.00, 1.53]	1.13 [0.90, 1.43]	1.14 [0.90, 1.45]	1.01 [0.78, 1.31]

Note. CI = confidence interval.

^aReference group.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.