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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CHILD CONTACT AND  
PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AMONG PARENTS IN PRISON

By

DÉSHANÉ E. VELASQUEZ

MAY 2016

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Cynthia Searcy

Major Department: Economics

America has the highest incarceration rate in the world with an estimated 2.2 million inmates, and more than five million American children have at least one parent in jail (Murphey, 2015). Prior to imprisonment, many parents are employed, contribute economically to family life, and are engaged in parenting their children. Parent-child relationships that may have been strong pre-incarceration may not thrive once the parent goes to jail due to limited communication and the inmate's inability to provide financial support for his/her family. Further, once the parent is released from prison, s/he faces fewer options for employment with a criminal history.

Developmental programs in prison such as job training and parenting skills exist to mediate these negative outcomes. Although program participation is associated with a

20% likelihood of increased employment among inmates, little research explores the motivating factors behind program participation (Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2008). This study poses three research questions that explore child contact and program participation as factors of increased employment post-release. In detail, the first research question explores factors related to child contact in prison, focusing on the history of parent-child financial support prior to incarceration. The second research question explores the relationships between child contact in-prison and program participation. Finally, this paper tests a third research question to explore child contact and program participation as factors of employment outcomes post- release.

Interesting findings from the study suggest that parental inmates with frequent child contact in-prison are likely to have been their child(ren)'s primary source of financial support prior to incarceration. Inmates with frequent reports of child contact are also more likely to participate in developmental programs during their sentences and more likely to be employed post-release. These associations may exist because parental inmates have a sense of responsibility after being in touch with their children. Therefore, policymakers should consider removing contact barriers that complicate phone access and visitation privileges between parental inmates and their minor child(ren).

EXPLORING THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CHILD CONTACT AND  
PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AMONG PARENTS IN PRISON

BY

DÉSHANÉ E. VELASQUEZ

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Research Honors Degree Distinction  
of  
Bachelor of Arts  
International Economics and Modern Languages, French Concentration  
in the  
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies  
of  
Georgia State University

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

2016



## ACCEPTANCE

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Thesis Advisor. It has been approved and accepted by the Advisor, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Research Honors degree distinction of International Economics and Modern Languages, French concentration, in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies of Georgia State University.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Cynthia S. Searcy

Dr. Sarah L. Cook, Associate Dean  
Honors College  
Georgia State University  
May, 2016

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the Summer of 2012, I attended a Goizueta Scholarship Foundation Luncheon, hosted by Georgia State University and the Honors College. At this luncheon, scholarship recipients had the opportunity to network with the university faculty. At my round table, my mother sat on my left, and Dr. Cynthia Searcy sat to my right. Looking back on this afternoon, I would have never imagined the impact that Dr. Searcy would have on my life throughout the next 4 years. She even told me to keep my major as International Economics and Modern Languages. Honestly, I had no clue what I was doing when I selected this major on the drop-down menu of my admission application. International Economics and Modern Languages (IEML) sounded “eccentric,” which sounded like me, so I went with it.

After the scholarship luncheon, Dr. Searcy and I kept in touch. During my freshman year, I joined her seminar cohort of “GSU 1010,” new student orientation. From then on, she never stopped challenging me. She encouraged me to apply as a “walk-on” into the Honors College, since I was not accepted as an incoming freshman. Then, after frustratingly venting about the lack of quality employment opportunities for students, she opened her office doors for me to conduct my first research project under her guidance as a University Research Assistant. Our first project in 2013 was an evaluation of charter systems in Georgia, and this study opened my eyes to the world of research. Then, our second project was an examination of BMI misreporting trends among students. After this project, we realized that sticking to the IEML major seemed to work well. So, Dr. Searcy guided me to my next step-- mastering my foreign language

skill in French. I remember her telling me, “Déshané, we’ve got to get you to France for at least a semester.” And, so I did. I spent 5 months away from home at the University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, and I was extremely homesick. But, Dr. Searcy reminded me that I was growing as an individual and “learning how to find the beauty of uncertainty.” When I came back from France, senior year came right around the corner. I knew that this year would be demanding, but I was ready for the academic year because I knew that this was my chance to prove myself. “Are you sure you want to do the research honors thesis?” I was sure. I wanted to give the last leg of my Undergraduate collegiate experience my all. And, so I did.

Dr. Searcy, thank you for believing in me.



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## INTRODUCTION

America has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with an estimated 2.2 million inmates. Over the past thirty years, the number of inmates has increased by 500 percent. The justice system affects more Americans today than ever before, with an estimated 4.7 million either on parole or probation. (Porter, 2016). Certainly, the minor children of these inmates are also affected. A report from Child Trends states that more than five million (approximately 7%) of American children have at least one parent in jail (Murphey, 2015). Parent-child relationships that may have been strong pre-incarceration may not thrive once the parent goes to jail. For example, out of 52% of state inmates and 62% of federal inmates who are parents to minor children, only 40% received visits from their children (Roxburgh & Fitch, 2013). Thus, when parents are sent to jail, their children may also feel the consequences of their crimes.

Prior to imprisonment, many parents are employed, contribute economically to family life, and are engaged in parenting their children (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Turney, 2015). Once that parent is sentenced, his or her family may notice a significant drop in both financial and emotional support. Consequentially, these sudden changes may have negative effects on the children and their caregivers. As studies suggest, the children of inmates are more exposed to economic and social disadvantages than their counterparts (Turney & Wildeman, 2013). While research exists on the impact of parental incarceration on their children and families, few studies explore how the inmates themselves are affected by the familial and social disturbance of being

incarcerated (Roxburgh & Fitch, 2013). Furthermore, there is a lack of research on how child contact affects inmates' motivation to improve their lives through program participation in prison. This research explores child contact as a motivator for inmates to seek self-help through developmental programs in prison. Specifically, it focuses on factors that may be associated with frequent child contact and program participation in parenting skills, job training, educational training, and employment counseling programs. Next, it explores if this child contact and program participation are associated with employment outcomes post-release.

This paper starts with background information focused on the effects of incarceration on parental inmates and their relationships with minor children. Specifically, it reviews research about the benefits of child contact and discusses the associations between program participation and employment outcomes post-release. Next, this paper tests three research questions to link child contact and program participation in-prison to the likelihood of employment post-release. In detail, the first research question explores factors related to child contact in prison, focusing on the history of parent-child financial support prior to incarceration. The second research question explores the relationships between child contact in-prison and program participation. The third research question explores child contact and program participation as factors of employment outcomes 5-7 months post-release. Findings from the statistical models are presented for each research question, concluding with a discussion of public policy implications for inmates with children.

## BACKGROUND

High stress and anger levels among parental inmates can lead to friction in the relationship with their children and families. A Virginia study of 57 pairs of inmates and their child caregivers using the "The Messages Project," reports that parent- child relationships are significantly strained during incarceration (Loper, Phillips, Nichols, & Dallaire, 2014). This strain can manifest in the form of high stress levels among parental inmates. For example, a study using the 2004 Survey of Inmates in States and Federal Correctional Facilities from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics concluded that inmates with children are significantly more distressed than inmates who do not have children (Roxburgh & Fitch, 2013). Due to long distance and lack of communication, disparities in stress and anger levels among inmates may be expected.

Some studies suggest, however, that frequent child contact in prison can reduce these stress and anger levels. Specifically, mail contact between incarcerated parents and their child(ren) has shown to decrease anger, especially among mothers. (Roxburgh & Fitch, 2013). Child contact such as sending/receiving mail and phone calls, as well as visitation, may encourage a sense of responsibility, and even motivation, to provide stable financial support post-release.

Leveraging this motivation is important, because parental inmates tend to have limited chances of finding work post-release due to deficits in human capital and social network disruptions associated with incarceration. Ex- offenders have to work diligently upon release to tackle stigma and discrimination. For instance, a study in Ohio, Texas and Illinois reported that 70% of inmates felt that their criminal history negatively affected

their job search (Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2008). This difficulty in finding employment is not entirely discriminatory. Employers face restrictions from federal, state, and local regulations, which may discourage or prohibit them from giving an inmate a chance to work (Raphael, 2011; Berrien, 2012). Specifically, the government has employment prohibitions in the airport security, law enforcement, banking, and port industries for felons that have been convicted within the past ten years (Berrien, 2012). (Raphael, 2011; Berrien, 2012).

Inmates are not entirely limited by their criminal history, however, if they used their time wisely while incarcerated. Inmates engaged in trade and job training in prison were almost 20% more likely to be employed 8 months after their release, compared to non-participating inmates (62% vs 41%) (Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2008). These programs are beneficial, because it is one of the only ways that inmates are able to invest in their human capital during their sentences. Educating oneself, or investment in human capital, is known in economics to increase employment opportunities (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011).

Although program participation is associated with increased employment outcomes, little research explores what encourages inmates to participate in these programs. This research will contribute to the existing literature by investigating a potential link between child contact and increased program participation, which then is expected to translate to increased employment outcomes post-release. Specifically, this paper empirically estimates the factors associated with child contact in prison and if frequent contact increases the likelihood that a parent will participate in an education or

training program. It then estimates program participation in prison and child contact post-release as factors of employment post-release. If child contact is positively related with increased program participation and employment, then policymakers may want to consider removing barriers that make it difficult for inmates to talk to their children while in prison.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research aims to explore relationships between child contact and program participation, which in turn may be associated with a higher likelihood of employment after prison. It hypothesizes that inmates who are in contact with their children on a frequent basis are more likely to participate in parenting and other enrichment programs while imprisoned, which leads to better employment outcomes after their release. It uses data from the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities (SISFCF) to explore the first two research questions:

**R1: What factors are associated with an inmate's likelihood to have contact with his/her children while in prison?**

This research question will explore associations with child contact among parental inmates. The dependent variable was recoded from responses to questions S7Q10A-C of the SISFCF, which asked inmates to describe the frequencies of phone, mail, and visitation contact with their minor children. The child contact variable is discrete and indicates who responded that they contacted their children daily/ almost daily, or at least



once a week, either by phone or mail. The inmates who reported receiving visits from their children at least once a month are also represented in this variable.

Independent variables included in this research question are gender, age, race, offense type, time incarcerated, and parent-child financial support history. These variables were recoded from the responses to questions S1Q1A, S1Q2A, S1Q3C\_1, S2Q2C, S2Q3C, and S10Q12B\_2 , which respectively ask inmates to report their date of birth, sex, race (white inmates are compared to nonwhite inmates in linear regression model), offense type (property, drug, and public order offenders are compared to violent offenders in the linear regression mode), admission date, and whether or not parental inmates reported to be their child(ren)'s primary source of financial support.

I expect females to be more likely to have contact with their children compared to males given the greater role that women play in child rearing. Also, I expect the older parental inmates and those who have been incarcerated for longer periods of time to have less contact with their children. These parents could have more difficulties getting in touch with their children, or have not been successful in keeping their parent-child relationship strong over the years. I have no expectations for the direction of associations with race and offense type. Finally, I expect parents with a history of financially supporting their children to have a strong interest in maintaining their parent-child relationships by contacting their child(ren) frequently in-prison.

The model is specified as:

$$\text{Child Contact} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Prior Inmate-Child Financial Support History} + \beta_2 \text{ Gender} + \beta_3 \text{ Age} + \beta_4 \text{ Race} + \beta_5 \text{ Offense Type} + \beta_6 \text{ Years Incarcerated} + \varepsilon_i$$

**R2: How is child contact and visitation associated with inmates' participation in parenting, educational, job training, and parenting skills programming in prison?**

This research question seeks clarity on child contact as a motivator for parents to seek self-help through programs in prison. My dependent variable and principal independent variable of interest are program participation and child contact, respectively. Parental inmate program participation includes programs that provide educational training, such as high school or GED courses, as well as job training, employment counseling, and parenting skills development. These dependent variables are estimated as separate models and correspond to questions S10Q11A, S10Q10A, S10Q12B\_1, and S10Q12B\_2 of the SISCF, respectively. I expect that parents who have frequent contact with their children are likely to participate in developmental programs. When parents are in touch with their child(ren), this exposure could provoke a sense of responsibility in the inmate prior to release and be a factor in the difference between inmates who participate in programs and those who do not.

Similar to the first research question, other independent variables in the program participation model include gender, age, white, offense type, and time incarcerated. I expect females to be more likely to participate in programs, because women participate in education programs at higher rates than men in the general population. I expect older inmates to participate in programs less than younger inmates, because they may have already developed these skills prior to incarceration or may be more discouraged about their prospects of finding work the longer that they are in prison. I have no expectations for the relationships with race and offense type.

This model is specified as:

$$\text{Program participation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Child Contact} + \beta_2 \text{ Gender} + \beta_3 \text{ Age} + \beta_4 \text{ Race} + \beta_5 \text{ Offense Type} + \beta_6 \text{ Years Incarcerated} + \varepsilon_i$$

**R3: How is program participation in prison, child contact post-release and financial obligations post-release associated with increased employment outcomes?**

This research question concerns employment outcomes of ex-offenders at 5-7 months post-release. It uses data from the Urban Institute's Returning Home Survey, an effort by [add short description of what agency conducted the survey.] The dependent variable, employment 5-7 months post-release, represents parental inmates who responded that they worked to question 266 of the second Post-Release survey. The independent variables of interest, which include in-prison program participation and daily child contact 30-60 days post-release, come from questions 125 and 20-26. I expect for inmates who participated in programs in-prison, as well as those with daily child contact to be more likely of finding employment at 5-7 months post-release. These inmates could have a stronger sense of responsibility and commitment to their children to obtain more stable and higher employment outcomes. Other independent variables, such as gender, age, race, before-prison education, offense type, and time incarcerated are from questions 3,1,5, 11, 84, and 83, respectively.

I expect men and inmates who have graduated high school or obtained their GED before prison to be more likely to find employment 5-7 months post-release. Due to social advantages, I expect Whites and younger ex-offenders to be more likely to find employment. Also, in comparison to violent offenders, I expect for drug, property, and

public order ex- offenders to have lower employment outcomes, because violent crimes are least associated with government restrictions on employment, unlike the other offenses, which include drug trafficking, theft, or money laundering. In addition, violent offenders could use anger management requirements to vouch for their change in behavior, whereas drug, property, and public order offenders may not have such requirements to use to their advantage.

This model is specified as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Employment 5-7 Months Post-Release} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Child Contact} + \\ & \beta_2 \text{ Programming In-Prison} + \beta_3 \text{ Gender} + \beta_4 \text{ Age} + \beta_5 \text{ Race} + \beta_6 \text{ Before Prison Education} \\ & + \beta_7 \text{ Offense Type} + \beta_8 \text{ Time Incarcerated (Years)} + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

## **DATA AND METHODS**

This study uses data from the 2004 U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. The research questions explore variables from a 9- month long Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities (SISFCF). This nationally representative data incorporates inmate responses to a questionnaire administered to 36 federal prisons and 1,549 state prisons. (United States Department of Justice: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

Table 1 reports the demographic characteristics of inmates in the data presented for federal and state prisons. The sample of 3,686 federal inmates is 74% male and 47%

white, 42% black, and 25% Hispanic.<sup>1</sup> The average age of inmates is 37.5. Most of the inmates at the federal level are never married (45%), although 26% are married and 21% are divorced. The majority of the federal inmates in this sample were drug offenders (42%). Federal drug offenders include those who were arrested for crimes such as conspiracy, or manufacturing illegal substances (Bennardo, 2013). Property offenders (30%) and violent offenders (25%) are also present in the sample, which include those convicted for crimes such as theft and tax evasion, as well as murder and forcible rape. Finally, nearly 78 percent of inmates have minor children.

At the state level, the sample of 14,499 inmates is 80% male and 50% white, 43% black, and 18% Hispanic. Similarly to those at the federal level, most state inmates have never been married (55.3%). The majority of inmates in the state sample are violent offenders (49.9%), who could have committed crimes such as assault or aggravated stalking. Property, drug, and public order offenders make up 24%, 22%, and 5% of the state sample, respectively. These inmates could have committed crimes such as vandalism, possession of marijuana, or prostitution (Sapp, 2014). Finally, 78 percent of state prisoners are parents of minor children.

This study also uses data from the years 2001 to 2006, when the Urban Institute conducted the Returning Home surveys. This longitudinal, multi-state project incorporated responses from a total of 1500 inmates in Ohio, Illinois, and Texas state

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<sup>1</sup> The SISFCF allows inmates to self-identify multiple races.

prisons. Seeking to define the challenges of prisoner reentry, these data include information on inmates and their reintegration process, including program participation in prison, post-release employment expectations while in prison, and post-release child contact and employment information. The sample includes responses from interview-based surveys administered on 4 occasions: pre-release, moment of release, 30-60 days post-release, and 5-7 months post-release (Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2008).

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of inmates in the first survey. The pre-release survey sample of 1500 inmates is 83% male and 69% Black, 18% White, 11% Pacific Islander/ Mixed, and 10% Hispanic<sup>2</sup>. The average age of inmates is 35.6. Most of the inmates have never been married (59%), but 25% are married and 7% are divorced. The majority of the federal inmates in this sample are public order offenders (43%), followed by 30% property, 19% drug, and 8% violent offenders. Prior to incarceration, 49% of inmates had education levels below high school- level, 30% had a high school degree/ GED, and 16% attended college or graduate school. Finally, 57% of inmates are parents of minor children.

These data are used in linear probability models that explore the three research questions presented in the previous section. This method permits me to estimate the probability of an event occurring—in this case, an inmate having frequent contact with his/her child (R1), program participation in prison (R2), and employment after prison

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<sup>2</sup> The Returning Home Survey allows inmates to self-identify multiple races.

(R3). This estimation method is similar to a multiple regression model, except that the dependent variables are discrete. Although linear probability models can result in probabilities of events that are greater than 1 or less than 0, the purpose of this research is to explore associations, not causation, making the magnitude of the estimates for each independent variable less important than understanding the overall relationships.

## **FINDINGS**

This section begins with a review of summary statistics for the variables of interest for each research question. It reports descriptive statistics from the SISFCF federal and state surveys about the caretaking responsibilities that inmates had for their children before incarceration. It also reports child contact and program participation levels by prison type. Then, it reports descriptive statistics from the Returning Home surveys about in-prison program participation. It also reports post-release employment, recidivism, and parent-child relationship information. Following the summary statistics, findings from all three research questions are presented along with a discussion of their policy implications.

### **Summary Statistics**

Table 3 reports the parent-child relationship information of federal and state inmates who are parents of children under 18 years old. The majority of inmates provided or shared most of their child(ren)'s child care needs before prison (93% and 91%). Also, many of them were either the primary source of financial support (66% and 54%) or lived with their child(ren) prior to incarceration (58% and 47%) at the federal and state levels,

respectively. In addition, most parental inmates reported that their children lived with the other parent/stepparents (76% and 75%), and most of the children who had siblings lived together (63% and 61%). Moreover, more than one quarter of both federal and state (27% and 33%) parental inmates reported that their child(ren)s' guardian received some form of public financial support to care for their child(ren). A small number of parental inmates reported that their children either lived with their grandparents (23% and 24%), other relatives/friends (11% and 10%), or foster home/ agencies (5% and 8%) , at the federal and state levels, respectively.

Table 4 reports the child contact and program participation levels of federal and state inmates with minor children. Although the majority of federal inmates reported speaking to their child(ren) at least once weekly, state inmates did not talk to their children as frequently (56% and 24% respectively). Federal inmates also reported higher frequencies of program participation of all types compared to state inmates. For example, inmates in federal prisons participated in educational training (43% vs 31%), vocational training (32% vs 27%), and parenting skills programming (23% vs 13%) at levels that are consistently higher than inmates in state prisons. Lastly, the inmates of this sample have been incarcerated for about 4 years.

Table 5 reports the program participation levels of parental inmates from the Returning Home Survey. Although most parental inmates reported that programs were not offered at their state facilities, 34% of them reported participation in employment counseling programs, 31% in educational training, 22% in parenting skills classes, and 20% in job training programs.



Table 6 reports information on the parents of minor children who completed surveys that were administered at 30-60 days and 5-7 months post-release. Although 73% of respondents reported difficulty finding employment at 30 to 60 days post-release, almost half (46%) of them were employed 5-7 months post-release. 82% of parents reported being financially supported by their families, but 86% of parents also reported supporting their minor child(ren) financially. Also, 56% of parents reported having daily child contact 30 to 60 days post-release. However, only 38% of parents lived with their minor child(ren), despite the majority of them (56%) reportedly paying rent at 5 to 7 months post-release. Finally, 26% of parents reported having been arrested since their release at 5 to 7 months post-release.

### **Multivariate Results**

This section reports results from the linear probability models exploring predictors of child contact, the association between child contact and prison program participation, and the associations of both child contact and program participation on the likelihood of employment after prison. The models control for a number of inmate characteristics that may also have associations with child contact, program participation and employment outcomes but are not the focus of this study.

Table 7 explores financial support history, gender, age, race, offense type, and the average amount of years incarcerated as factors associated with child contact. In both federal and state samples, financial support history is positively associated with the probability of child contact. Specifically, inmates who report providing prior financial support for their children have a 11% (federal) and 12% (state) greater likelihood of

having frequent contact with their children. These relationships are statistically significant at the 99.9% level. Control variables largely have expected associations. Males are less likely to have frequent contact with their children as well as older inmates. Finally, property and drug offenders are more likely to have contact with their children compared to violent offenders.

Tables 8 and 9 explore child contact, gender, age, race, offense type, and the average amount of years incarcerated as factors related to program participation. Across both federal and state samples, frequent child contact is positively correlated with participation in job training, employment counseling, and parenting skills programming. Specifically, federal inmates with frequent child contact were 10% more likely to participate in job training and 12% more likely to participate in parenting skills programming. These results are statistically significant at the 99.9% significance level. In addition, state inmates with frequent child contact were 6% and 4% more likely to participate in parenting skills programming and job training programs respectively, compared to federal inmates who were 1% more likely to participate in employment counseling programs.

Control variables largely have expected associations. For example, age is negatively associated with all levels of program participation, and non-White inmates are 3% more likely to participate in job training programs. In addition, public order offenders in state prisons are 13% and 10% less likely to participate in job training and educational training program respectively, compared to violent offenders. Lastly, drug offenders are more likely to participate in employment counseling and parenting skills programs

compared to violent offenders at the federal level (3% and 4%). However, at the state level, drug and property offenders in are 4% and 7% less likely to participate in job training programs.

Table 10 explores child contact and program participation as factors of employment post-release. Child contact is positively correlated with employment post-release. Specifically, ex-offenders with daily child contact are 11% more likely to be employed post-release. Moreover, ex-offenders who reported to have at least a high school diploma or GED before prison were 10% more likely to be employed post-release. Interestingly, violent offenders were 21% more likely to be employed than drug offenders. Lastly, there is a 3% association with employment post-release for inmates with more years incarcerated.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research explores associations between child contact and program participation of parents in prison and seeks to link these factors to employment post-release. Factors associated with child contact after prison are relatively unexplored in previous literature. In this study, financial support prior to imprisonment is associated with an increased likelihood to be in frequent contact with minor children in prison. Likewise, women and inmates that are not involved in violent offenses are more likely to have frequent child contact in prison. Child contact can lead to reduced stress and anger levels, but the benefits of child contact can go beyond stress relief (Roxburgh & Fitch, 2013). This research provides evidence that child contact increases participation in job

training, employment counseling, and parenting skills programs in prison. It also finds that frequent child contact increases the likelihood of finding employment post-release.

Parental inmates may develop a sense of personal responsibility when in contact with their children, which motivates them to improve their education and parenting skills while in prison and pursue work post-release. Therefore, policy makers should consider removing contact barriers that complicate phone and visitation privileges, especially to those inmates in state prisons who report weekly phone contact with their children in lower proportions compared to federal inmates (24% vs 56%). A reason for this difference may be that state prisons house more violent and drug offenders than federal prisons. Violent offenders can have lower levels self control and higher levels of aggression and may have their phone privileges revoked more frequently as punishment for violence in prison (Woessner, 2014). Drug offenders may have their phone privileges less frequently rewarded due to zero-tolerance policies that seek to prevent drug smuggling in prison (Shivley, 2015). Further, it is expensive to monitor phone usage, and state prisons may have fewer resources to pay for it.

While prisons have legitimate reasons for restricting contact with individuals outside of prison, policymakers should evaluate if these reasons outweigh the benefits of permitting inmates to stay in contact with their children. Although further research is needed to examine why child contact is associated with increased program participation and employment, this relationship suggests positive outcomes for inmates, their families, and society.

**Table 1:  
SISFCF Demographic Information**

	<b>Federal</b>	<b>State</b>
<b>Average Age</b>	37.5	35.4
<b>Male Proportion</b>	74.0%	79.8%
<b>Race</b>		
White	47.0%	49.6%
Black	41.9%	42.6%
Hispanic	24.5%	17.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.2%	5.3%
Asian	1.4%	0.9%
Pacific Islander/ Other	6.8%	5.1%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Never Married	44.8%	55.3%
Married	26.4%	16.6%
Divorced	21.0%	20.0%
Separated	5.8%	5.7%
Widowed	2.0%	2.4%
<b>Type of Offense</b>		
Violent	24.6%	49.9%
Property	30.2%	23.5%
Drug	42.2%	21.8%
Public Order	3.0%	4.9%
<b>Inmates with Minor Children</b>	77.6%	77.9%
	<b>n = 3686</b>	<b>14499</b>

Notes: Respondents were able to identify with more than one race

Data Source: United States Department of Justice  
Bureau Statistics Survey of State and Federal  
Correctional Facilities

**Table 2:**

**Returning Home Demographic Information**

<b>Average Age</b>	35.6
<b>Race</b>	
Black	69.0%
White	18.3%
Hispanic	10.4%
Pacific Islander/ Other	11.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.1%
Asian	0.5%
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Never Married	58.7%
Married	25.3%
Widowed	2.2%
Divorced	6.9%
Separated	6.9%
<b>Education Before Prison</b>	
Less than High School	48.7%
High School/ GED	31.7%
Some College or More	15.9%
<b>Type of Offense</b>	
Drug	19.1%
Violent	8.0%
Public Order	42.6%
Property	30.2%
<b>Inmates with Minor Children</b>	57.0%
<b>Male Proportion</b>	82.5%
	<b>n = 1500</b>

Notes: Race values are not mutually exclusive.

Parental inmates who responded that they have children under the age of 18 are reflected in the variables that represent data on parents of minor children.

Data Source: Urban Institute- Returning Home Study, Pre-Release Survey

**Table 3:**  
**SISFCF Parent/Child Relationship Information**

	<b>Federal</b>	<b>State</b>
<b>Parental Support Prior To Incarceration</b>		
Inmate Provided/ Shared Most of Child Care	93.0%	91.1%
Inmate Was Primary Source of Financial Support to Child(ren)	65.9%	53.9%
Children Lived with Inmate Prior to Incarceration	57.6%	46.7%
<b>Current Minor Child Living Status</b>		
Children Living Together	63.2%	61.2%
Guardians Receiving Public Financial Support to Care for Child(ren)	26.6%	32.7%
<b>Current Caregiver of Inmate's Child(ren)</b>		
Child's Parent/Step-parent	75.9%	75.1%
Child's Grand-parents	22.5%	24.2%
Other Relatives/Friends	11.0%	10.4%
Foster Home/Agency/Other	5.0%	7.6%
	<b>n=</b>	<b>2149 7641</b>

Notes: Percentages only reflect information of inmates who responded that they have child(ren) under 18 years old.

Current Caregiver of inmate's children is not mutually exclusive.

Inmates with two or more children responded to the question asking if their children live together.

Public financial support includes Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), WIC, or any other financial assistance to help care for the child(ren).

Data Source: United States Department of Justice Bureau Statistics- Survey of State and Federal Correctional Facilities

**Table 4:**  
**SISFCF Child Contact and Programming Information**

	<b>Federal State</b>	
<b>Child Contact</b>		
Inmate Talks to Their Child(ren) by Phone at Least Once Weekly	55.8%	23.8%
Inmate Sends/ Receives Mail from Their Child(ren) at Least Once Weekly	34.5%	30.9%
Inmate Is Visited By Their Child(ren) at Least Once Monthly	21.2%	19.7%
<b>Program Participation</b>		
Educational Training	43.4%	30.7%
Vocational Training	32.3%	26.8%
Parenting/Child Rearing Skills	23.4%	12.6%
Employment Counseling	13.0%	9.5%
<b>Average Years Incarcerated</b>	4.03	4.89
	<b>n=</b>	<b>2726 9710</b>

Notes: Percentages only reflect information of inmates who responded that they have child(ren) under 18 years old. Educational Training includes GED, high school, college, english as a second language, and basic- level courses.

Data Source: United States Department of Justice Bureau Statistics- Survey of State and Federal Correctional Facilities



**Table 5:**  
**Returning Home In- Prison Program Participation**

	<b>Employment Counseling</b>	<b>Educational Training</b>	<b>Parenting Skills</b>	<b>Job Training</b>
Program Was Not Offered	60.7%	41.2%	62.6%	71.9%
Respondent Did Participate in Program	33.9%	31.0%	21.9%	19.9%
Respondent Did Not Participate in Program	5.5%	27.7%	15.5%	8.2%
<b>n=</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>668</b>

Notes: Percentages only reflect information of parental inmates.

Data Source: Urban Institute Returning Home Study, Moment of Release Survey

**Table 6:**  
**Returning Home Post-Release Parental Information**

	<b>30-60 Days Post-Release</b>	<b>5-7 Months Post-Release</b>
<b>Post-Release Employment Outcomes</b>		
Parent Is Currently Employed	29.4%	45.9%
Parent Believes It's Hard to Find Job	73.4%	67.9%
Parent Is Financially Supported By Family	79.4%	81.9%
<b>Parent Has Been Arrested Since Release</b>	10.3%	26.3%
<b>Post-Release Parent- Child Relationship</b>		
Minor Child Lives With Parent	32.0%	37.5%
Parent Pays Money For Rent	36.0%	56.0%
Parent Supports Minor Child Financially	54.8%	85.5%
Minor Child Has Contact with Parent Daily	56.0%	49.8%
<b>n=</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>504</b>

Notes: Percentages only reflect information of inmates who responded that they have child(ren) under 18 years old. Information on parents working full time is only reflecting those who were employed at the time of the survey.

Data Source: Urban Institute Returning- Home Study Post Release Surveys

**Table 7:**  
**Linear Probability Model (Research Question 1)**  
**Frequent Child Contact In-Prison**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Federal</b>	<b>State</b>
Primary Source of Financial Support Prior to Incarceration	.109 ***	.117 ***
Male	-.097 **	-.179 ***
Age	.001 **	-.006 ***
White	-.019	-.065 ***
Property Offenders	.090 *	.066 **
Drug Offenders	.095 **	.056 **
Public Order Offenders	-.066	.016
Years Incarcerated	-.001	-.005
	<b>n= 2766</b>	<b>14445</b>

Notes: \*p< .05 \*\*p< .01 \*\*\*p < .001

Child contact includes weekly phone calls, weekly mail or monthly visits.

The property, drug, and public order offenders are in comparison to violent offenders

Data Source: United States Department of Justice Bureau

Statistics- Survey of State and Federal Correctional Facilities

**Table 8:**  
**Linear Probability Model (Research Question 2)**  
**Program Participation In-Prison**

Independent Variables	Educational Training		Job Training		
	Federal	State	Federal	State	
Child Contact	.089	-.013	.097 ***	.035 *	
Male	-.018 **	-.080 ***	-.034	-.033	
Age	-.005 ***	-.006 ***	-.004 ***	-.005 ***	
White	.016	-.022	-.019	-.030 *	
Property Offenders	-.052	-.022	-.063	-.067 **	
Drug Offenders	.013	-.011	-.047	-.043 *	
Public Order Offenders	.043	-.102 *	.053	-.128 *	
Years Incarcerated	.020 ***	.022 ***	.024 ***	.031 ***	
	<b>n=</b>	<b>2728</b>	<b>9714</b>	<b>2729</b>	<b>9710</b>

Note: \*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001

Program participation only reflect information of inmates who responded that they have child(ren) under 18 years old. Educational Training includes GED, high school, college, english as a second language, and basic- level courses. Property, drug, and public order offenders are in comparison to violent offenders. Data Source: United States Department of Justice Bureau Statistics- Survey of State and Federal Correctional Facilities

**Table 9:**  
**Linear Probability Model (Research Question 2)**  
**Program Participation In-Prison**

Independent Variables	Employment Counseling		Parenting Skills	
	Federal	State	Federal	State
Child Contact	.013 *	.030 **	.116 ***	.064 ***
Male	-.071 *	-.038 **	-.108 ***	-.166 ***
Age	-.002 **	-.001 *	-.008 ***	-.033 ***
White	-.013 *	-.035 ***	-.023	.011
Property Offenders	.053 *	.032 *	.042	.010
Drug Offenders	.028 *	.022	.080 **	.007
Public Order Offenders	.117	.032	.088	-.018
Years Incarcerated	.011 **	.009 ***	.012 ***	.011 ***
	<b>n=</b>	<b>2726</b>	<b>9711</b>	<b>2726</b>
		<b>9710</b>		<b>9710</b>

Note: \*p< .05 \*\*p< .01 \*\*\*p < .001

Program participation only reflect information of inmates who responded that they have child(ren) under 18 years old. Educational Training includes GED, high school, college, English as a second language, and basic- level courses.

Property, drug, and public order offenders are in comparison to violent offenders.

Data Source: United States Department of Justice Bureau Statistics- Survey of State and Federal Correctional Facilities

**Table 10:**  
**Linear Probability Model (Research Question 3)**  
**Employment Outcomes 5-7 Months Post-Release**

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<b>Independent Variables</b>	
Daily Child Contact (30-60 Days Post- Release)	.114 *
Participated in Programming In-Prison	.037
Male	.043
Age	-.001
White	.105
High School Degree or More Before Prison	.104 *
Drug Offense	-.214 *
Property Offense	-.173
Public Order Offense	-.091
<b>Years Incarcerated</b>	.032 ***
	<b>n= 448</b>

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Notes: \*p< .05 \*\*p< .01 \*\*\*p < .001

Employment Post-Release, Pay Rent variables are from responses in the Post-Release Survey administered 5-7 months post-release. The Daily Child Contact variable is from the Post-Release Survey that was administered 30-60 days post-release. All other variables are from the Pre- Release survey, administered to inmates in-prison. These survey data were merged by respective respondent identification numbers as the key variable in SPSS.

The property, drug, and public order offenders are in comparison to violent offenders

Data Source: Urban Institute- Returning Home Survey

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## VITA

### DÉSHANÉ E. VELASQUEZ

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#### EDUCATION

**Georgia State University (GSU)** | Research Honors Distinction | Magna Cum Laude  
International Economics and Modern Languages, French Concentration  
May 2016  
GPA: 3.72

**University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ)**  
Semester Foreign Exchange Program  
Spring 2015

#### INTERNSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Operation HOPE, Inc.** **Atlanta, GA**  
Youth Empowerment Fellow Sept 2015- Present

- Evaluate student test performance as a measure of financial literacy program effectiveness  
—Note: To date, I have personally taught Banking On Our Future to over 500 students
- Represent the Atlanta market and promote the brand at special events, such as at the Economic Empowerment Fair at Greenbriar Mall and S.T.E.M. Wars at Atlanta Metropolitan State College
- Assist in planning, preparing, and promoting special events (by phone and in-person), such as the Silver Rights Speaker Series and the HOPE Global Forum

**Dun and Bradstreet Credibility Corp** **New York, NY**  
Business Development Intern Summer 2014

- Assisted in branding by researching potential partners and redeveloping promotional materials
- Identified productive campaigns and sought through sponsorship proposals for 25 business plan competitions at universities across the country
- Evaluated sales and renewal data for over 4,000 enterprise clients

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

**GSU Andrew Young School of Policy Studies (AYSPS) Dean's Office** **Atlanta, GA**  
Research Assistant Oct 2013- May 2016

- Conducted thesis project on parental incarceration, studying the impact of child contact and program participation as factors of increased employment outcomes
- Performed statistical analyses on aggregate data pulled from sources, such as: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
- Evaluated and drew conclusions on policy efficacy based on findings to present in conferences

**UVSQ Center of Language Resources** **Guyancourt, France**  
English as a Second Language Tutor Jan 2015- May 2015

- Served as an English linguistic model to an average of 50-75 students weekly
- Intensively prepared 5 students to score >785 (Working Proficiency Plus) on the TOEIC test
- Candidly presented American English through innovative conversation-oriented lessons

#### PUBLISHED RESEARCH AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Research Honors Thesis Presentation: Exploring the associations between child contact and program participation among parental inmates – available at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=7LVBGYTL0MM>

- **Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference (GSURC)** Apr 2016  
Velasquez, Deshane (2016) "Examining the Landscape of Charter Systems in Georgia," DISCOVERY: Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal: Vol. 3, Article 8.  
Available at: <http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/discovery/vol3/iss1/8>
- **GSURC and AYSPS Public Service and End of Year Research Conferences** Apr 2014

#### INVOLVEMENT

Nominee | **GSU Campus-wide Rising Star** Apr 2014

- Recognized as an established student leader at the Royal Flame Awards Ceremony

Student Member | **Georgia Economic Developers Association** Mar 2014- Present

- Engage in events that encourage dialogue on economic development

Ambassador | **GSU Honors College** Aug 2013- Present

- Recruit and speak with prospective students interested in joining the Honors College

Dedicated Member | **Delta Sigma Pi** Apr 2013- Present

- Participate in events and community service that promote professional development

#### SKILLS

French: Fluent (CEFR Level: B2) | Stata: Medium | IBM SPSS: High | Microsoft Suite: High