



The Association Between Parenting Style and Criminal Behavior

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Introduction

- The United States has the sixth-highest incarceration rate in the world (NCES, 2023).
- The adolescent background of a criminal is a crucial aspect of psychological issues that can lead to future deviant and criminal behaviors in many cases (Boutwell, 2008; Gambill, 2016).
- Many parents are not taking the correct precautions to prepare their children for success despite research showing numerous benefits of knowledgeable parenting (Chang, 2009; Hirschi, 1969).
- With adolescents' psychological health in mind, it is becoming increasingly important for parents to know how to properly raise their children (Gault-Sherman, 2012).
- It has been shown that a stronger parental relationship would lead to less criminal tendencies as an adolescent because the child would feel as if their parent was watching over them even if not present (Gault-Sherman, 2012).

Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between parenting style and whether or not the child is incarcerated?
- Does the association between parenting style and whether or not the child becomes incarcerated differ for individuals of different races?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=1,235) were drawn from the U.S. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (ADDHEALTH)
- Study was a longitudinal, representative survey of adolescents in grades 7-12 (Wave I) that were followed over time and surveyed again in their late 30s to 40s (Wave V).

Measures

- Parenting style was measured on a scale of 0-7 based on 8 questions asked to the child regarding how many strict tendencies their parents had towards them. A score of 0 represents parents who are not strict as the child responded "no" to each question, where a score of 7 represents strict parents as the child responded "yes" to all questions
- Participants were asked in Wave V whether or not they have been incarcerated in their lives and were coded dichotomously.
- Participants' race was asked prior to completing the survey and a variable was created containing each of the race options given in the survey

Results

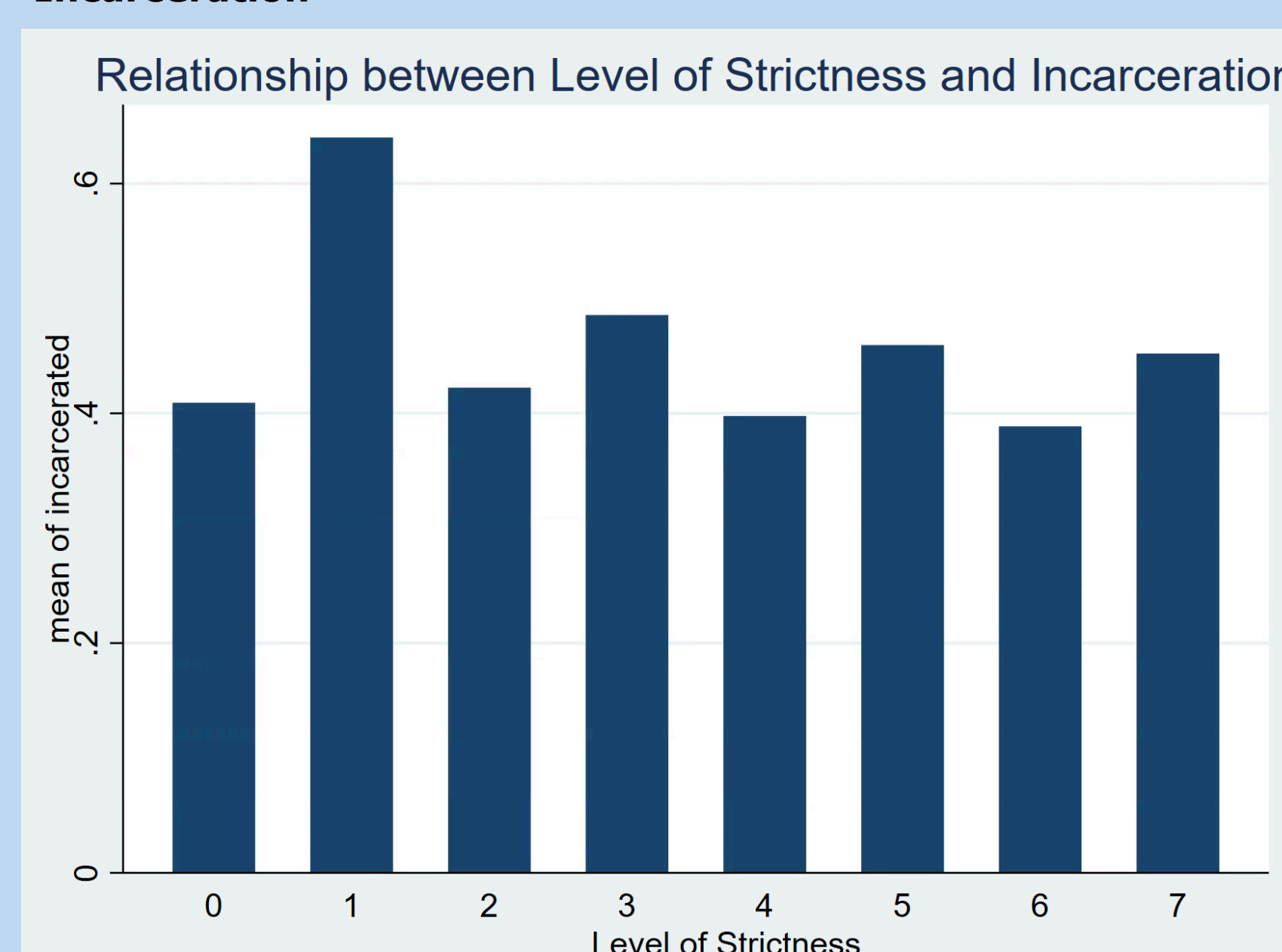
Univariate

- 2.8% of participants had parents with 0 strict tendencies, 1.18% had parents with 1 strict tendency, 4.29% had 2 strict tendencies, 8.39% had 3 strict tendencies, 13.58% had 4 strict tendencies, 20.85% had 5 strict tendencies, 28.14% had 6 strict tendencies, and 20.14% had 7 strict tendencies
- 56.68% were not incarcerated, 43.32% have been incarcerated
- Race : 62.1 % White, 23.75% Black, 3.38% Native American, 4.06% Asian, 6.55% Other

Bivariate

- A chi-squared test of independence revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between parenting style and criminal behavior, $p > .05$ and $X^2 = 10.2$
- Visually able to distinguish that there is no difference between each level of strictness and incarceration. The highest percentage of incarceration comes at a level of strictness of 1, and the lowest is at a level of strictness of 6 (Figure 1).

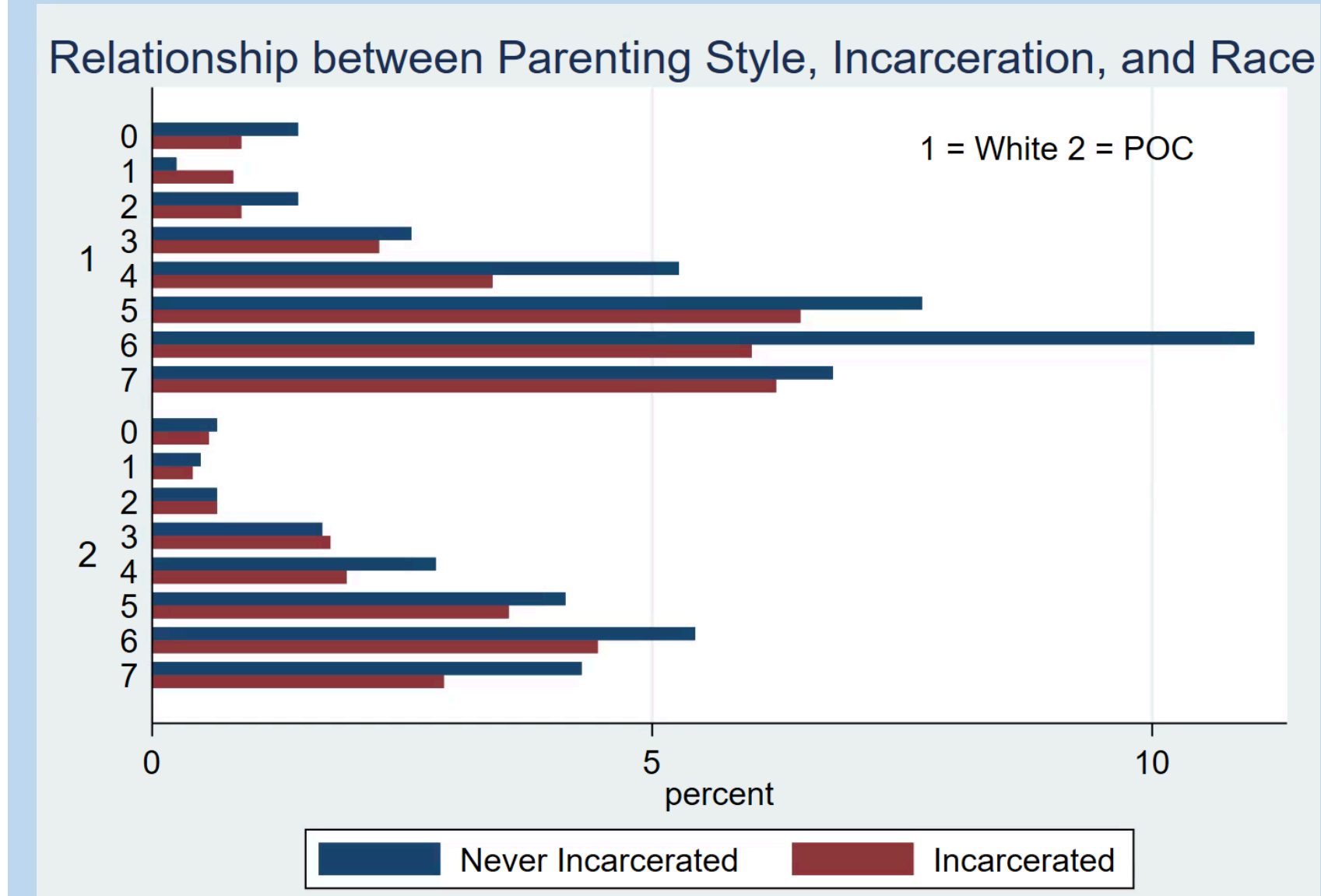
Figure 1. Relationship Between Level of Strictness and Incarceration



Multivariate

- Race is a moderator for the relationship between parenting style and incarceration, separated by White and POC (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Relationship between Parenting Style, Incarceration and Race



Multivariate Cont.

- After controlling for race, parenting style and incarceration, there is still no statistically significant relationship. (OR = .977, $p > .05$).
- There is no significant evidence to say that there is a difference between parenting styles and incarceration across different races, or in general
- A white child is not significantly more likely to be incarcerated than a POC given similar or different parenting styles (O.R. 1.09 $p > .461$)

- Although there is no significant relationship, there may be other factors that can control for high incarceration rates in our country

Discussion

- As seen in our results, parenting style does not play a significant role in incarceration as our results had a high p-value
- Parenting style also does not play a significant role in incarceration among white children and persons of color
- Parenting coaches and psychologists might use this information in order to eliminate a possible reason that incarceration rates in our country are extremely high. Therefore, we can look at other reasons for such a high rate
- Although research has said that parenting style can play a role in a difference in deviant behaviors, it is not significant given our data. There may be some extreme cases but it would be considered fairly rare.
- Further research is needed to determine what can be done to reduce the likelihood of a child becoming incarcerated in the future

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