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A Phenomenological Study of Attachment and Juvenile Justice Involvement

Amanda Jean Gibson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Amanda Gibson

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

A Phenomenological Study of Attachment and Juvenile Justice Involvement

by

Amanda Gibson

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MS, Argosy University, 2015

BS, Central Michigan University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

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Abstract

Juvenile criminal offending has become a serious social concern. The strongest predictors of juvenile delinquency are low parental attachments, the absence of capable guardians, and an unstable family structure. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son, and how it also influenced the sons' involvement with the juvenile justice system. The theoretical base for this study was attachment theory. This theory was suitable for this study as attachment theory is a framework for understanding the development of an individual's social functioning and social behavior. Participants were recruited through a method of purposeful sampling selection. In-depth semi-structured interviews with 7 adult male participants were held face-to-face. The data from the interviews were analyzed and coded using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Three themes emerged from the analysis: trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and feeling lost because of not having a role model. By acknowledging participants' experiences, the results of this study can be used to develop literature regarding paternal incarceration, attachment, and the negative effects relating to children and their juvenile justice involvement. This knowledge can assist in positive social change by focusing on school retention, as the dropout rates for this population are high. By engaging families right after the father's incarceration and providing resources, this can help prevent future issues that are caused by paternal incarceration.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

More than 2.7 million children in the United States currently have at least one incarcerated parent. That is one in every 28 children (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2018). This incarceration creates disrupted attachments. The absence of capable guardians is significantly linked to adolescent criminal actions (McCord, Spaz-Widom, & Crowell, 2011). Juvenile criminal offending has become a serious social concern. This problem developed in the mid-1980s with the noticeable growth of juvenile violence (McCord et al., 2011). Children from single family homes had higher rates of committing crimes than those in stable two-parent households. Low parental involvement and unstable family structure have been shown to be the most important risk factors in determining future juvenile delinquency (Howell, 2015). Parental absence is positively related to aggressive behaviors in children (Howell, 2015). Parental incarceration is now recognized as an adverse childhood experience (ACE). This is classified as a combination of stigma, shame, and trauma (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son, and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. Studies on incarcerated fathers and the father-child relationship have the potential of advancing the literature and identifying the importance of building father-child bonds (Lee, Sansone, Swanson, & Tatum, 2012).

In this chapter, I will provide a brief summary of researched literature related to the topic as well as the importance of this study. The problem statement will be listed in detail providing evidence that this problem is significant. The purpose of the study will then be presented indicating the intent. This will be followed by the research questions. The theoretical framework of the study will be described as well as the relationship between the theory and the research questions. The nature of the study, including the phenomenon being investigated and methodology, will be listed. Definitions of key terms will be provided, and assumptions that give meaningfulness to the study will be listed. Lastly, the scope of the study will be given, providing all limitations and identifying any potential significant contributions to social change.

Background

Children of incarcerated parents are a particularly vulnerable group and have higher chances of behavioral problems, mental health issues, and emotional instability than their peers (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011). Paternal incarceration can disturb many aspects of a child's life, including their financial circumstances, parental attachment, and stability. These children can develop unhealthy coping mechanisms and associations with delinquent peers, which can lead to juvenile justice involvement (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011). Adams (2018) reviewed literature since the early 2000s referencing what was known about incarcerated fathers and consequences for their children and families. Adams found that paternal incarceration is associated with negative effects on the father-child relationship. In addition, this burden puts a strain on the mother and reduces maternal mental health, which can impact the mother-child relationship and family

functioning. This can cause parental custody issues and may have the child entering the foster care system. This childhood adversity and trauma to the child can result in further instability and create a pathway into the juvenile justice system (Adams, 2018).

Swisher and Shaw-Smith (2015) focused on paternal incarceration, juvenile delinquency, and depression. The researchers examined how each gender is affected by the paternal incarceration. The results from this article found that the chances of delinquency were stronger for girls who resided with their father prior to incarceration when compared to girls who did not. Girls who had ever lived with an incarcerated father, in contrast, had 26.3% higher chances of delinquency than girls without an incarcerated father. This article contributes to the growing evidence regarding the negative collateral consequences of paternal incarceration for children (Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015). Burgess-Proctor, Huebner, and Durso (2016) compared the effects of maternal and paternal incarceration on adult daughters and sons who have criminal justice system involvement. The results suggested that both maternal and paternal incarceration significantly increase the odds of adult offspring having criminal justice involvement. This effect is especially pronounced for same-sex parent-child dyads, suggesting that adult offending and parental incarceration is gendered.

Lee et al. (2012) examined the importance of the relationship between children and their incarcerated fathers and suggested that children appeared to benefit when incarcerated fathers were more involved in their lives. Children who continued to have close relationships with their fathers were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior. Porter and King (2015) indicated that paternal incarceration retains a significant effect on

expressive crime, which is partly mediated by reduced attachment to fathers. Expressive crimes are when someone commits a crime that is triggered by an emotion. The authors discovered that the association between paternal incarceration and expressive crime supports Agnew's strain theory and elements of control theory (Porter & King, 2015). Shannon and Abrams (2007) emphasized strain theory and parental incarceration. The authors stated that financial strains and social instability often result from parental incarceration and contribute to maladaptive childhood emotional adjustment. Complicated relationships with caregivers and lack of stability in a child's home environment may cause feelings of insecurity and in turn lead to increased externalization of behaviors (Shannon & Abrams, 2007).

Murray and Sekol (2012) conducted a systematic review to synthesize empirical evidence on associations between parental incarceration and children's later antisocial behavior. Results of this study showed that parental incarceration predicts increased risk for children's antisocial behavior. Will, Whalen, and Loper (2014) noted that the experience of parental incarceration places children at risk for later being incarcerated themselves and for increased antisocial behavior throughout their lives. While existing literature has been helpful in recognizing and forming themes related to behavioral issues and familial and financial strains that are associated with paternal incarceration, there are still major gaps in the literature. This is significantly true when it comes to understanding the reasons why children from this population have increased juvenile justice involvement. Review of past literature (Adams, 2018; Barnert et al., 2015; Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016; Carlson & Knoester, 2009; Fairchild, 2018; Galardi, Settersten,

Vuchinich, & Richards, 2015; Hannon & DeFina, 2012; Howell, 2015; Kautz, 2017; Lee et al., 2012; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Oldrup, 2018; Poehlmann-Tynan, Burnson, Runion, & Weymouth, 2017; Porter & King, 2015; Saunders, 2017; Shannon & Abrams, 2007; Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015; Walters, 2016) has identified that further research is needed on the attachment between the child and incarcerated father, and if a lack of attachment is what leads to juvenile justice involvement. Studies on incarcerated fathers and the father-child relationship have the potential of advancing the literature and recognizing the importance of building parent-child bonds (Will et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

A father's incarceration can increase their children's chances of being involved in delinquent behavior due to the emotional strain that may be precipitated by weakened parental attachments. There is a greater likelihood of delinquency in children of incarcerated fathers due to the tendency for these children to grow up in similar environments as their fathers (Porter & King, 2015). Galardi, Settersten, Vuchinich, and Richards (2015) found that fathers who experienced more childhood risk factors had less frequent contact with their children. Fairchild (2009) indicated that incarcerated fathers have unresolved-disorganized attachments to their children. This category is characterized by possessing a great deal of unresolved loss or trauma and is connected to abandonment tendencies and this is directly related to children displaying externalizing, internalizing, and behavioral problems (Fairchild, 2009).

Most previous research on incarcerated parents focuses on the significance of sustaining the relationship between children and incarcerated mothers, with limited

studies examining the relationships between children and their incarcerated fathers.

Maternal and paternal incarceration significantly increases the odds of offspring having criminal justice involvement (Will et al., 2014). This effect is especially pronounced for same-sex parent-child dyads, proposing that the parental incarceration offending outcomes is gendered. This suggests that the incarceration of their fathers is related to sons engaging in criminal behaviors. Children who have a close relationship with their fathers were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016).

In addition, behavioral problems, emotional difficulties and strained relationships with others were widely present in children with no to limited contact with their fathers. A child whose father is incarcerated can have developmental issues due to lack of emotional bonds, limited father-child contact, and long periods of separation from their father (Lee et al., 2012). Kjellstrand and Eddy (2011) argued that incarceration has a role in addressing criminality, but there is not a clear understanding as to its broader implications. It may inadvertently create a system that increases disadvantage for children whose only crime was being born into a family with an incarcerated father. Incarceration is a significant barrier when trying to maintain and establish attachments with children. Visitations and phone calls are often restricted, and this results in limited contact. This then causes children to question the father's future role in their lives, and they many began to emotionally distance themselves (Oldrup, 2018). Loper, Carlson, Levitt, and Scheffel (2009) found that incarcerated fathers reported more parenting stress concerning their children than incarcerated mothers. This study recognizes the difference of

separation from children on fathers in prison. Separation stress in turn is associated with difficulties building and maintaining healthy family relationships (Loper et al., 2009).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father, and son and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. The United States has the largest incarceration rate in the world (Sickmund et al., 2018). Due to a multitude of factors, many children of incarcerated fathers are living in poverty, struggling in school, and expressing maladaptive coping tools. The strongest predictors of future juvenile delinquency were low parental attachments, absence of capable guardians, and unstable family structures (Howell, 2015). Children with incarcerated fathers tend to have less cooperative parents with poorer relationships. Incarceration is associated with a host of changes in children's families that indirectly link incarceration to children's behaviors (Dwyer, 2018). This study gains insight from these individuals and explores their child-father relationship and how that related to their juvenile criminal involvement.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of men in early adulthood with their father who was incarcerated during their childhood?
2. How were son-father relationships and attachment affected by the father's incarceration?

3. How did the father's incarceration influence the son's juvenile crime?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this study was the philosophical perspectives of attachment theory. This theory helped to explain the attitudes and behaviors of research participants. The research questions formulated for this inquiry were developed to capture the meaning and reality of the lived experience as expressed by children of incarcerated fathers. An account of their experiences, represented by the influence of attachments, was emphasized. Attachment theory was first developed by John Bowlby (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002). Bowlby was concerned with the closeness and emotional bonds that are developed between children and caregivers. Attachment theory explains how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences subsequent development. This theory also suggests that the critical period for developing attachment is from infancy to age 5. If an attachment has not developed during this period, the child will suffer irreversible developmental consequences, such as reduced intelligence and increased aggression (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002).

A parent's role in their child's development is vital. The way that parents interact with their child will greatly predict how attachments will form. This relationship is the first bond that the child will have and will be the blueprint for relationships throughout the child's life (Miller, 2012). Attachment theory is a framework for understanding the development of an individual's social functioning and social behavior. The theory states that all children have a biologically based tendency to seek attachments and bonds with a caregiver. The presence of this relationship or lack thereof will then be the foundation for

the child's social behavior (Stern & Cassidy, 2017). Attachment theory predicts that secure attachments shape a child's emotional regulation, cognitive models of relationships, and capacity to care for others. These attachments organize cognitive processing of social information, inform emotional and physiological responses to threats, and guide social behavior across development (Stern & Cassidy, 2017). The quality of a child's attachment may strongly contribute to empathy. In adolescence, low empathy is displayed in aggressive and antisocial behaviors (Flight & Forth, 2007). Paternal incarceration disrupts contact patterns and meaningful relationships with the incarcerated father. Separation from the father can generate a set of adverse emotional reactions from anger to sadness which can interfere with the optimal development of the child emotionally and socially (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011).

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study has a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research studies groups and individuals in their natural settings to understand meaning that a person places on their experiences. Qualitative researchers strive to produce meaningful interpretations of phenomena and events. The goal is to make sense of what is going on, reach an understanding of the human experience, and describe this understanding (Babbie, 2017). Understanding of a phenomenon or event comes from exploring the totality of the situation. Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data. This can be done through observation, participation, interviewing, and ethnography (Babbie, 2017).

Phenomenology focuses on lived experience and how people relate, understand, and provide meaning to the lived experience (Patton, 2015). Phenomenology is the collection and analysis of individuals' experiences related to a specific phenomenon from their point of view. This approach helps researchers understand the human factor. It answers questions as to how people perceived a phenomenon and placed it into context. This approach is not bound by time or location. It takes into account first person sources through interviews and journals. The goal is to understand the world through the eyes of the participants who had direct experience with the topic being studied (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This approach works well, as it conceptualizes the participants' lived experience and provides an understanding of how this experience felt for them.

Definitions

The following key concepts were fundamental terms used in the current study.

Attachment. This term describes the initial bond that is formed during childhood and is directly associated with physical and mental health and overall functioning in adulthood. Attachment has long-term effects on personality development, psychopathology, and interpersonal skills. This perceived attachment then reflects one's beliefs, attitudes, and expectations (Hooper, Tomek, & Newman, 2012).

Anxious attachment. This is characterized by feelings of inadequacy, intense fears of abandonment, and heightened worries of rejection. Children develop this attachment style when caregivers are inconsistent at attending to their needs (Hooper et al., 2012).

Avoidant attachment. This is developed when a child's attempts for comfort from a caregiver are overlooked. A child with an avoidant attachment will grow up with a

dismissive caregiver who does not comfort the child when the child is in distress (Levy & Johnson, 2019).

Secure attachment. This is developed between a child and a caregiver when the caregiver is consistent with attending to a child's needs. This can promote comfort, reduce negative affect, and allow the child to develop a healthy, realistic sense of self (Ungvarsky, 2019).

Caregiver. In this study, this term is an adult other than the biological parents who are raising the child as a result of parental issues that prevents them from raising their own child (Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012).

Delinquent. For this study, this refers to an individual under the age of 18 who is disobedient and breaks laws or rules (Bartol & Bartol, 2017).

Gendered. This term indicates that father-son and mother-daughter relationships are affected due to having the same gender identify (Burgess-Proctor, et al., 2016).

Juvenile justice involvement. This term refers to adolescents under the age of 18 who are accused of committing a delinquent or criminal act. Processes include arrest, detainment, petitions, hearings, adjudications, dispositions, placement, probation, and reentry (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.).

Lived experience. This refers to the participants' perceptions regarding the unique and complex phenomenon of having an incarcerated father and juvenile justice involvement (Van Manen, 2016).

Maladaptive behavior. This is behavior that inhibits a child's ability to adjust to having their father incarcerated (Laviola & Macrì, 2013).

Paternal incarceration. For this study, this term refers to fathers who have been incarcerated in a state or federally ran prison with a sentence of more than one year (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011).

Assumptions

Prior to conducting the study, certain assumptions were made. These assumptions were believed to be true but were yet to be verified. The first assumption was that, through interviews with participants, saturation would occur, and the research questions would be answered. This assumed that a sufficient sample size and enough data were collected to identify all relevant themes. I expected that all participants would be honest when providing responses to interview questions. I assumed that all participants would be able to reflect on their childhood, feelings that they held, and behaviors that they displayed during the incarceration of their father. Another assumption was that I would be able to ask semi-structured interview questions in a way that was free of interruptions, bias, and judgments and able to capture the lived experiences of the participants. I expected that semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions would produce detailed responses relevant to the topic of having an incarcerated father and juvenile justice involvement.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, the scope was delimited to adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, had an incarcerated father for at least a period of 1 year or more during their childhood, and who also had documented involvement in the juvenile justice system. These participants were selected to help provide an understanding of the attitudes, beliefs,

and challenges that this population held during their childhood. Children who had an incarcerated father and no juvenile justice involvement or no incarcerated father, but juvenile justice involvement did not fit the criteria as they did not represent the core focus of the study. These key features were important as they helped align the study's purpose and research questions (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). This study was also delimited to collecting semi-structured interview data. I believed that semi-structured interviews were able to provide relevant understandings of the participants' lived experiences and adequately fulfill the purpose of the study. However, the results may not be transferable to the experiences of children who had juvenile justice involvement and an incarcerated mother, due to gender differences.

Limitations

The selected participants were located in the United States of America. This means that the resulting data may not be transferable to individuals outside of the United States. This lack of generalizability derives from the nature of the qualitative research design. Rather than focusing on generalizability, qualitative inquiry aims to develop theories that are transferable. Transferability allows for connections to be made between personal experiences and elements in a study (Babbie, 2017).

In addition, self-selection bias may have occurred. This occurs when certain characteristics about an individual make them more likely to participate in a study. The results of the individuals who chose to participate in the study could be different from those who chose not to participate. This could be due to the respondents' propensity for participating in the study correlating with the substantive of the topic. Self-selection bias

can lead to biased data, as the respondents who chose to participate may not have represented the entire target population. This can then impact the results of the study, as the participant's perceptions of the experience itself is the source of knowledge (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

As this is a sensitive topic, honesty and openness of participants can present a challenge. Participants may not have felt comfortable discussing in-depth details regarding their juvenile justice involvement or the incarceration of their father. This phenomenon may have taken place many years prior, and the participants could have forgotten aspects of this experience. It could have been difficult for participants to reflect on this challenging time in their life, and it may bring up negative emotions. These profound emotions can then affect the results of the study. Another limitation of this study was that there was not a focus on if the father's incarceration impacted the participants differently based on their age or race. Different lived experiences may exist based on these characteristics. In addition, socioeconomic disadvantage was not emphasized. However, this socioeconomic disadvantage could have been the result of the fathers' incarceration and the reason for the participant's involvement in the juvenile justice system. This is a limitation, as socioeconomic status can have an impact on a child's behavior.

Significance

This phenomenological study was distinctive as it focused on the lived experiences of children with incarcerated fathers, which may be the basis of engagement in delinquent behaviors that result in juvenile justice involvement. This research has

filled a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the attachment deficiencies and strain experienced by children who grew up with an incarcerated father. There are several studies which have focused on the incarceration of a father and attachment issues among their children (Adams, 2018; Fairchild, 2018; Galardi, Settersten, Vuchinich, & Richards, 2015; Lee et al., 2012; Oldrup, 2018; Poehlmann-Tynan, Burnson, Runion, & Weymouth, 2017; Saunders, 2017; Shannon & Abrams, 2007). All of these studies reported disruption of some sort in attachment, resulting in included insecure or disorganized attachment. However, these studies did not report whether children of the incarcerated fathers had juvenile justice involvement. Furthermore, there have been studies about juvenile justice involvement and incarcerated parents that demonstrated a link between these two aspects (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016; Hannon & DeFina, 2012; Howell, 2015; Kautz, 2017; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Porter & King, 2015; Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015). Similarly, studies have demonstrated a link between juvenile justice and attachment (Barnert et al., 2015; Carlson & Knoester, 2009; Walters, 2016). However, the three phenomena, namely father incarceration, attachment with father, and juvenile justice involvement, have not been studied together in a single study. In sum, there is some overlap in studies that have focused on two of these three aspects (parental incarceration, juvenile justice involvement, and attachment), but there appears to be a gap in the research findings in terms of having one study focus on all three aspects.

The results of this study will potentially contribute to social change by providing much-needed insights into what struggles and challenges children with incarcerated

fathers grow up with. Studies on incarcerated fathers and the father-child relationship have the potential of advancing the literature and identifying the importance of building father-child bonds (Lee et al., 2012). A deeper understanding of paternal incarceration, attachment, and juvenile delinquency can demonstrate the great need for more resources to be put into place to help these children succeed. Putting services into place after the father's incarceration can help the family process feelings and be linked to additional financial resources. These services can help reduce internal and external issues that may be linked to paternal incarceration and help reduce children's involvement in the juvenile justice system. This would therefore benefit individuals, communities, and society as a whole by increasing well-being in this group of men, and fewer victims would be created through their offending behavior.

Summary

The problem that this study focused on is the difficulties and challenges experienced by children who grew up with incarcerated fathers and had juvenile justice involvement. The gaps in the literature that were addressed focused specifically on understanding the attachment deficiencies and strain experienced during the participant's childhood. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Bowlby's

attachment theory. The results of this study provided insights regarding the lived experiences of children with an incarcerated father.

The next chapter will present a literature review in order to further address the research problem and gaps. In addition, this review will provide an extended discussion of the theoretical framework. The literature review will focus on themes of caregiver stress and child behavioral problems, attachment issues, and gender-specific links. The influence of these themes will specifically focus on psychological and social trends. By acknowledging participants experiences, the results of this study can be used to increase literature regarding paternal incarceration and negative effects relating to children and their juvenile justice involvement. This knowledge can assist in positive social change by enhancing research, as it will detail much-needed insights into the struggles and challenges children with incarcerated fathers grow up with. Studies on incarcerated fathers and the father-child relationship have the potential of advancing literature and identifying the importance of building father-child bonds (Lee et al., 2012).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Since the 1980s, incarceration rates in the United States have increased dramatically. Currently, nearly one in every 100 adults are in prisons or jails. Ninety two percent of people in prisons are men, and of that, 1.1 million are fathers to minor children (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2018). Approximately half of the children with incarcerated fathers are under the age of 10. This exposes many children and their families to a broad set of challenges associated with paternal incarceration. Mass imprisonment has made paternal incarceration a much more common experience among children in the United States. This normalizes children being raised without their biological father. Since 1991, the number of children with an incarcerated father has grown by 79% (Galardi, Settersten, Vuchinich, & Richards, 2015).

It is important to consider the contexts in which families experience the hardships of paternal incarceration, and how each contributes to the various pathways of risk and resilience for children. Mass incarceration can affect many aspects of individuals' and families' lives. Children of incarcerated parents can provide insights about their lives that others cannot (Dwyer, 2018). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son, and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the literature search strategies, the theoretical foundation, and a review of literature related to key concepts that will guide the study. The literature review section will include an overview of the current literature, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the researched studies. In addition, I will provide rationale for the selected concepts. Finally, the chapter will be summarized and concluded with a discussion on how this study contributes to the current gaps in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review contains research from multiple databases. A search of the literature was conducted to locate peer-reviewed journal articles. The Walden University Library was a key component of these searches. Key criteria for finding credible sites included when the study was published. Outdated material may be superseded by newer studies, as new advancements could replace other studies findings (Walden University, 2015). To ensure validity, I attempted to locate studies published in the last 5 years. Scholarly texts and related research information were obtained. In the search for scholarly information, the following databases were used: Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, Psyc-ARTICLES, PsycBOOKS SAGE Journals Online, and SocINDEX. Other research tools used were Google Scholar. The keywords that were used in the literature review search were *parental incarceration AND juvenile delinquency, incarcerated fathers AND attachment, children of incarcerated fathers AND behavior issues, juvenile delinquency AND paternal involvement, incarcerated fathers AND juvenile crime, children of incarcerated fathers AND development,*

incarcerated fathers, paternal incarceration, attachment to fathers AND social-emotional development.

Theoretical Foundation

Attachment is described as a psychological connection to a meaningful person (Levy & Johnson, 2019). Attachment theorists state that early relationships with caregivers play a major role in the development of a child. When children are born, they have an innate need to form attachment. This attachment can determine behavioral and motivational patterns. These relationships also influence future social relationships. Attachment allows a child to feel safe and secure (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). The majority of attachment research has focused primarily on mother-child attachment, with substantially less attention paid to the father-child attachment. However, research has constantly shown that mothers and fathers play different roles in raising children (Benware, 2013).

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory and the succeeding research produced from it has made attachment theory one of the most influential frameworks in developmental psychology today (Levy & Johnson, 2019). Beginning in the 1960s, Bowlby developed the theory that how well a child is attached to their parents is important to the child's psychological development (Levy & Johnson, 2019). The initial bond that is formed during childhood is directly associated with physical and mental health and overall functioning in adulthood. It also has long-term effects on personality development, psychopathology, and interpersonal skills. This perceived attachment then reflects one's beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. Over the years,

attachment styles have been characterized by different terms and using different methods (Hooper, Tomek, & Newman, 2012). For the purposes of this research, attachment styles will be represented by three main categories: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and anxious attachment style.

Children who have positive interactions with an empathic caregiver who is able to tend to their needs will form secure attachment. Secure attachment between a child and caregiver can promote comfort, reduce negative affect, and allow the child to develop a healthy, realistic sense of self (Ungvarsky, 2019). Secure attachment with the parents then carry over to other relationships. A child raised with secure attachment will feel comfortable seeking support from others, allowing the child to have emotionally close relationships. A child raised in this way will also demonstrate empathy, the ability to understand the emotions of others (Ungvarsky, 2019).

Avoidant attachment develops when a child's attempts for comfort from a caregiver are overlooked. A child with an avoidant attachment will grow up with a dismissive caregiver who does not comfort the child when the child is in distress (Levy & Johnson, 2019). This can cause negative effects on the child's ability to understand and feel their own emotions, resulting in the child giving up on being close to others. Avoidant attachment style is characterized by feeling uncomfortable when others want to get emotionally close (Levy & Johnson, 2019). Individuals with this attachment style often express the need for independence. Children with this attachment style often play alone, struggle to make and sustain friends, and feel that being alone is easier than being

with others. They often lack empathy, are uncomfortable with intimacy, and use avoidance as a defense strategy (Levy & Johnson, 2019).

Anxious attachment is characterized by feelings of inadequacy, fears of abandonment, and worries of rejection. Children with this attachment style have a strong desire for closeness to others. Children develop this attachment style when caregivers are inconsistent at attending to their needs (Hooper et al., 2012). At times the caregiver will be nurturing and respond effectively to their child's distress, while other times the caregiver is distant and emotionally unavailable. Unhealthy attachment style may lead to forms of personality disturbance and emotional distress, including anger, anxiety, depression, and emotional detachment (Hooper et al., 2012). Attachment styles affect not only the child's relationship with early caregivers but also their behaviors. Researcher have suggested that how children view their relationship with their parents, as well as their parent's relationship with each other, will play a vital role in how they view their own relationships later in life. Current adult attachment style classifications are derived from the way the individual interprets and describes their childhood experiences (Hooper et al., 2012).

The issues of father-child attachment have been largely ignored in recent literature. Brown, McBride, Shin, and Bost (2007) observed 46 children, 25 boys and 21 girls between the ages of 2 and 3, and their fathers in their home setting. Qualitative interviews and observations were used to understand the interactions of fathers with their children. Brown and colleagues found that fathers who engaged in positive parenting behaviors, such as having a positive effect, had no effect on attachment security.

However, when fathers did not engage in positive forms of parenting, it was detrimental to the father-child attachment security (Brown et al., 2007). Caldera (2004) observed 60 fathers, mothers, and their infants. Caldera found that a significant predictor of father-child attachment security was the fathers' involvement in caregiving activities such as dressing and feeding the child. Caldera also found that father-child attachment security was significantly related to mother-child attachment security (Caldera, 2004). George, Cummings, and Davies (2010) interviewed 236 fathers, mothers, and their kindergarten age children. Their results showed that less responsive parenting by both mothers and fathers was related to children having insecure attachment (George et al., 2010). The quality of the attachment has a critical effect on development and has been linked to various aspects of functioning and psychological well-being (Levy & Johnson, 2019).

Incarceration creates disrupted attachment (Howell, 2015). Saunders (2017) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study by interviewing 16 children between the ages of 8 to 18 who had an incarcerated parent. Saunders discovered that children who described no or limited attachments prior to the parental incarceration continued to maintain the same type of attachment during the incarceration. Children who described secure attachment with their incarcerated parent prior to incarceration felt that maintaining this relationship with their incarcerated parent was a priority. Lee et al. (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study interviewing 185 incarcerated fathers. The findings indicated that incarcerated fathers who have secure attachment with their children prior to the incarceration had more involvement with their children while in prison (Lee et al., 2012).

These studies indicate that fathers have an important role in attachment and that the type of attachment prior to the incarceration can be a substantial influence for the type of attachment and amount of contact during the incarceration. However, there were no studies located that applied attachment theory to children of incarcerated parents that focused on the children's experience of attachment with the incarcerated parent during their childhood and related this to juvenile justice involvement. My study's interview questions will help provide an understanding on attachment of children with incarcerated fathers and if insecure attachment contributed to juvenile justice involvement. These findings build upon attachment theory and existing literature.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

My extensive review of the literature found detailed studies on behavioral issues related to attachment styles and the important implications attachment can have on future development. Yet, studies have insufficiently addressed attachment with incarcerated fathers and linked this aspect directly to children becoming involved in the juvenile justice system (Dwyer, 2018). It has been noted in the literature that the child's caregiver has a significant influence on maintaining attachment with the incarcerated father (Chui, 2016). It is also prominent in the literature that children from single-parent families are more likely to engage in criminal activities at an early age when compared to two-parent households (Dwyer, 2018). In the following section, the main variables related to this study are noted.

Attachment Issues

Paternal incarceration separates fathers from their children. When compared to other forms of father absence, paternal incarceration is more confusing, financially straining, and stressful for children (Hannon & DeFina, 2012). The consequences of incarceration on families are numerous and varied and include stigmatization, weakening of the family structure, obstacles to parental-child relating, and difficult visitations (Will, Whalen, & Loper, 2014). Previous research on incarcerated parents focused on the importance of maintaining attachment between children and incarcerated mothers, with few studies focusing on attachment between children and their incarcerated fathers (Will et al., 2014). Incarceration creates disrupted attachment. The strongest predictors of future juvenile delinquency are insecure parental attachment, the absence of capable guardians, and an unstable family structure (Howell, 2015). It is difficult for children to maintain contact with an incarcerated father. Separation stress is associated with difficulties building and maintaining healthy family relationships. Early separation from attachment figures, or absence of attachment figures, can predispose children to develop emotional coldness. Children who fail to bond with their caregivers may develop a lack of empathy (Loper, Carlson, Levitt, & Scheffel, 2009).

Empathy is a basic human emotion and cognitive trait needed to maintain healthy relationships. The absence of empathy can lead to serious social-emotional dysfunctions, including psychopathologies (Stern & Cassidy, 2017). People are not simply born with empathy; it is not something that is hardwired. Individual differences in empathy are determined by environmental, biological, genetic, and socialization developments.

Empathy appears early on during a child's development. Variances in empathy can meaningfully change a child's view on relationships and social behaviors throughout their lives. For example, a child who lacks empathy may not display prosocial behaviors such as sharing, helping, and comforting others. Greater empathy is associated with prosocial behaviors and social competence across the lifespan (Stern & Cassidy, 2017).

A parent's role in their child's empathic development is vital. The way that parents interact with their child will greatly predict how attachment will form. If a parent is empathetic towards the child's needs, the child will not only develop secure attachment with this parent but also empathy. This relationship is the first bond that the child will have and will be the blueprint for relationships throughout the child's life. If parents do not attend to their child, a secure attachment and empathy is not likely to develop (Miller, 2012). Attachment theory predicts that secure attachment shapes a child's emotional regulation, cognitive models of relationships, and capacity to care for others. The quality of a child's attachment will strongly contribute to empathy. Particularly, people with unsecure attachment and low empathy fail to see the other person's perspective, and this increases the chances of violence (Stern & Cassidy, 2017).

Attachment is evident in Van Hazebroek, Olthof, and Goossens' (2017) study. The authors conducted a quantitative study by administering questionnaires with 550 children between ages 11 and 14. The results showed that a lack of empathic concern was linked to proactive aggression. Empathy was positively associated with proactive aggression increases, as adolescents without attachment security have a stronger desire to become dominant in social situations with peers (Van Hazebroek et al., 2017).

In one of the largest studies on the topic to date, Li et al., (2015) investigated associations among attachment, empathy, and aggressive behavior in a sample of 6,301 Chinese children between the ages of 11 to 14. The authors conducted a quantitative study by focusing on the children's self-reported attachment security with both mothers and fathers. The results showed that parental attachment and empathy were significant predictors of indirect aggression. Correlation and regression analyses indicated that secure parental attachment was negatively associated with indirect aggression. These findings support existing literature on the impact of parental attachment on aggression (Li et al., 2015). According to attachment theory, stable interactions with parents could be used to explain children continuing to maintain intimate relationships from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents securely attached to their parents have greater psychosocial competence, more positive coping strategies, and less aggression (Li et al., 2015).

Parental incarceration may cause disruptions in children's attachment relationships because of the enforced separation that occurs, especially if the parent and child had a meaningful relationship prior to incarceration, and insecure attachment can lead to psychological distress (George et al., 2010). Research examining the importance of the relationship between children and their incarcerated fathers has suggested that children appear to benefit when incarcerated fathers were more involved in their lives. Children who continued to have a close relationship with their fathers were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Galardi et al., 2015). Lee et al. (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study that examined the relationships of incarcerated fathers with their children while in prison. A purposeful sample of 185 incarcerated fathers were interviewed from a

maximum-security state prison in the southern United States. The findings indicated that incarcerated fathers who were connected to their children prior to going to prison had a more positive perception about their role in their children's lives during the incarceration, and this increased involvement with their children while in prison. This study provides a good argument for not depriving children of the child-father bond despite fathers having long sentences. It is noteworthy that the participants were all from maximum-security prisons, and their experiences might be different from men in minimum or medium-security institutions (Lee et al., 2012).

Similarly, Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study to examine young children's attachment behaviors during paternal incarceration. Seventy-seven children, age 2 to 6 years old, their jailed fathers, and current caregivers participated in this study. The authors looked at disruptions in relationships that occurred when the child was separated from the father. The results indicated that 27% of children witnessed the father's crime and 22% of children witnessed the father's arrest, with most children who witnessed these events exhibiting extreme distress and anxiety. Children who witnessed these events were more likely to have insecure attachment to their fathers. In addition, children's attachment-related behaviors and emotions during the jail visits correlated with the attachment security observed in the home with their caregiver (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017). This indicates that children who displayed insecure attachment in the home, would display this same type of attachment with their parents during jail visits. Behaviors and emotions toward their incarcerated father during visits correlated with their emotions and behaviors with the caregiver who accompanied them.

Caregivers are the ones who regulate the frequency of interactions with the child and the incarcerated fathers. This highlights the key part that the caregiver plays in protective factors towards child's adjustment to prison visits and in forming and maintaining secure attachment between the father and the child (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017). One should note that this study focused on the attachment development of younger children ages 2 to 6. Therefore, these findings may apply differently to children who were older when their father went to prison.

To understand individual experiences of attachment and parental incarceration, Saunders (2017) conducted a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. Sixteen children aged 8 to 18 years old with either an incarcerated mother or father, participated in interviews. The findings revealed that children who described close relationships with their incarcerated parent prior to the incarceration had maintaining a relationship with them during imprisonment as an important goal. This was a priority for both the child and the incarcerated parent. Children who described a limited relationship with their incarcerated parent prior to incarceration, continued to have the same type of challenges during incarceration. These children reported feelings of profound loss and sadness as they reported that no regular contact in their relationship. A common theme was that many of the children participating in this study relied on their caregiver for continued contact with the imprisoned parent (Saunders, 2017). This indicates that contact between the child and incarcerated father is controlled by the caregiver. If a caregiver denies contact between the youth and the incarcerated father, attachment security would be affected, and this could then cause the child to have insecure

attachment in other relationships throughout their lives. It should be noted that this study utilized participants from a wide age range between 8 and 18 years, and due to the variations in age the results may not be generalized for a certain age group.

Galardi et al. (2015) collected data from the 2004 U.S Department of Justice Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities. This is a nationally representative data set that was composed of in-person and computer-assisted surveys. The data included 5,809 incarcerated fathers with children under the age of 18. All participants were between 17 to 67 years of age. This study found that fathers who experienced more childhood risk factors had less frequent contact with their children. The fathers' pre-incarceration contact with the children was also a significant predictor for contact while incarcerated. Men who attended a parenting class while incarcerated also had significantly more contact with their children. It is noteworthy that there were no variables that measured the caregiver's willingness to aid in the child's relationship with the incarcerated father, and no measure indicating whether the father intentionally chose to decrease contact with the children (Galardi et al., 2015). These studies confirmed prior research that found that fathers who had a greater commitment to their children before incarceration, had more frequent contact while incarcerated. While research highlights the value of fathers maintaining relationships with children, other studies have found that children can be traumatized by visiting their fathers in prison.

Adams (2018) reviewed 15 years of literature, tracing studies on incarcerated fathers and family dynamics. The researcher found that visiting prisons is traumatizing for children. Common findings were that prison visitations do not allow the ability to

create meaningful and natural interactions. The overall environment of a prison is not child-friendly, and this can be an intimidating experience for children. The appearance and behavior of the parents can be frightening for the child, as some prisons require the parent to be shackled, in handcuffs, or behind glass walls. These traumatizing experiences can then result in the children not wanting to visit the prisons, causing decreased contact, insecure attachment, and more behavioral problems. In addition, some fathers will insist on the child not seeing them while they are incarcerated, and this lack of contact can also traumatize children as they may feel rejected or abandoned by their fathers (Adams, 2018). The issue of child trauma is critical because of the relationship between trauma exposure and later adjustment (Arditti, 2012). These traumatizing experiences and intense emotions of rejection could result in a loss of the relationship between the father and the child for the foreseeable future. Depriving the child of a father-child bond and consequently causing the child to develop insecure attachment style.

A Danish study conducted by Oldrup (2018) of children, aged 5–27, whose fathers were incarcerated focused on how the incarceration of a father can lead to the loss of attachment between the father and child. This study looked at the incarceration from the children's perspective. A sample was comprised of 36 children who had regular contact before and during the father's imprisonment. This study looked at previous data from in-depth qualitative interviews. Oldrup (2018) found that telephone calls with the father often did not synchronize with the children's activities and these phone contacts had many children feeling disrupted as they had to reschedule their obligations. After

prison visits, younger children were found to have intense emotions. Many of the children also reported that the incarceration made the fathers unable to participate in significant life events. The study showed that synchrony with the father's prison schedule fell on the children with resulting emotional costs as they had to schedule their activities around the father's schedule. It was often difficult for the children to reach their father. This distance and inconvenience then had many children questioning their fathers' future role in their lives and many began to emotionally distance themselves resulting in insecure attachment (Oldrup, 2018).

The above-mentioned studies found that children of incarcerated fathers struggled to maintain relationships while the father is incarcerated. This causes many children to feel rejected by the father, potentially creating insecure attachment. These studies noted that significant attention should be paid to secondary effects of paternal incarceration. The absence of quality time with a parent can affect children emotionally. Problem behaviors emanate as a result of family factors such as single-parent households, parental criminal involvement, and insecure attachment. All of these factors play a significant role in predicting engagement in risky behaviors across all participants. This indicates how important stable households and secure relationships can be for children's wellbeing. However, regular contact between children and their incarcerated fathers may mitigate negative consequences and delinquent behavior. Consistent contact can decrease stress on families and this decreased stress can enhance contact and strengthen family bonds. Both incarcerated fathers and their children can benefit from regular contact (Galardi et al., 2015). In the literature, it was shown that a strong relationship between the father and

child prior to incarceration can increase attachment and contact during the incarceration (Adams, 2018).

Fathers' Attachment Problems

Definitions of fatherhood may be similar among diverse populations and include financially providing, teaching, nurturing, and protecting their children among others (Arditti, 2012). Attachment is fundamentally important to child protection. Attachment is all-encompassing; a fathers' job is to show his child through his responses, that close relationships are attainable, safe, valuable, and able to withstand separation. However, a father who is raised in an environment with insecure attachment will fail to develop foundations for attachment. This will cause deficiencies in understanding the benefits of closeness, consequently being unable to instill secure attachment in their own children (Rees, 2016).

Many incarcerated fathers have histories of multiple childhood risk factors. These risks include parental alcohol or drug abuse, poverty, and parental incarcerations (Fairchild, 2009). This can cause fathers to develop attachment issues as children and then display that same type of insecure attachment with their own child. Fairchild (2009) conducted a mixed-methods exploratory study to apply attachment theory to a group of incarcerated fathers in a minimum-security prison. Thirty-eight imprisoned fathers participated and completed an Adult Attachment Interview. The findings indicated that the largest category of respondents were classified as having unresolved-disorganized attachment. This category is characterized by possessing a great deal of unresolved loss

or trauma. In addition, these same participants reported lower levels of expressing emotional warmth towards their own children (Fairchild, 2009).

Fairchild (2009) study results were also corroborated by Shannon and Abrams (2007). The authors conducted a qualitative study with seven young incarcerated fathers who resided in two different correctional facilities located in Minnesota. Each of the young men in this sample ranged in age from 15 to 17 and came from a variety of racial backgrounds. All but one of the participants had more than one child. The findings highlighted that the majority of the participants had no positive male role model. The researchers found that all participants reported insecure attachment with both their parents and children (Shannon & Abrams, 2007). Despite this study being conducted in 2007, it is valuable as it is the only study, I could identify that included participants who were both incarcerated fathers and minors at the time of partaking in the study. These research studies highlight that the experience of growing up with insecure parental attachment can cause fathers to be distant from their own children due to the inability to form secure attachment. Thus, implying the important role that the caregiver plays in developing, formulating, and maintaining secure attachments in children with incarcerated fathers.

Caregiver Stress

Studies on the effects of parental incarceration have greatly focused on the child-parent relationship with little focus on the caregivers. Caregivers face many challenges and are also adversely affected by parental incarceration. Fathers' incarceration imposes burdens on the caregiver pertaining to family problems, finances, legal issues, and social lives (Chui, 2016). Caregiver distress and depression directly relates to children

displaying externalizing, internalizing, and behavioral problems. Caregiver stress plays a role in the disruption of the incarcerated father's engagement in the family. In confirming these findings, Dwyer (2018) conducted a quantitative study utilizing longitudinal data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. Data for this study focused on children at age nine who reported having an incarcerated father. There were 2,936 children who fit the criteria. The results showed that decreased family well-being accounted for almost half of the total association between parental incarceration and aggressive behaviors in children (Dwyer, 2018). The author defined family well-being in regard to material hardship, caregiver stress, and fathers' engagement. In addition, the results showed that the fathers' weakened family relationships and families' increased material hardship were the strongest and most consistent reasons behind children externalizing and aggressive behaviors. Such hardship leads to caregiver distress, and these findings demonstrated that caregiver distress is associated with adverse child outcomes (Dwyer, 2018).

Children of incarcerated parents may develop emotional and behavioral dysfunctions vicariously through their caregiver's distress as found in studies by Chui (2016) and Adams (2018). Chui (2016) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study focusing on the caregivers of children with incarcerated fathers. Forty-four female caregivers of children with incarcerated fathers participated. The children ranged in age from 6 to 18. The results confirmed that caregivers of children who have an incarcerated father are vulnerable to psychosocial distress. The study found that 57% of caregivers suffered from borderline personality disorder, 42% indicated having severe depression,

and only 1% fell into the “normal” range. In addition, 39% of children demonstrated high levels of internalization, and 26% demonstrated high externalizing problems (Chui, 2016). It is important to note that it is unknown if the psychosocial distress was present prior to the incarceration or as a result of the incarceration (Chui, 2016).

Similarly, Adams (2018) reviewed 15 years of literature since the early 2000s referencing what is known about incarcerated fathers and consequences for their children and families. The study found that paternal incarceration puts a strain on the mother and has a negative impact on maternal mental health, which can impact the mother-child relationship and overall family functioning. This strain can cause parental custody issues and may have the child entering the foster care system. This childhood adversity and trauma to the child can result in further instability and create a pathway into the juvenile justice system (Adams, 2018). This study shows that not only can the incarceration of a father affect the emotional and mental well-being of the child, but it affects the family.

Researchers have constantly found associations between caregiver characteristics and children’s behavioral problems. Geller and Franklin (2014) examined longitudinal data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. The sample consisted of 4,125 mothers with a five-year-old child. The results indicated that mothers with recently incarcerated partners faced odds of housing insecurity that were approximately 50% greater than mothers whose partners were never incarcerated. This housing insecurity was likely associated with the changes in the financial situation following the male partner’s incarceration, thus decreasing the well-being of children with incarcerated fathers (Geller & Franklin, 2014). These studies have shown that caregiver psychological and financial

distress directly relates to children displaying externalizing and internalizing problems. This suggests that greater focus needs to be placed on the mental health of caregivers. However, it is unknown if as a result of limited financial resources, the caregiver was unable to seek professional treatment, and if financial means to gain treatment could help deter caregiver distress and subsequently child behavioral issues. In addition, no emphasis was placed on the gender of the child, and if one gender is affected by caregiver distress more than the other.

Gender-Specific Implementations

Parental incarceration causes a dramatic decline in the level of contact with children and increases the likelihood of disruption in family bonding, thus causing negative outcomes for children. There may be differences in parenting stress and adjustment between incarcerated mothers and fathers as they experience parenting differently bringing about gender-specific stresses. Past studies indicate that incarcerated fathers typically do not have a relationship with their children's mother, thus making it difficult to facilitate contact with the child (Loper et al., 2009). In comparison to incarcerated mothers, fathers have fewer phone calls, letters, and personal visits from their children while incarcerated. In addition, more men are convicted of violent and serious crimes and this leading to longer sentences and greater separation from the children (Loper et al., 2009).

To understand the gender difference in adjustment and parenting stress, Loper et al (2009) conducted a quantitative study by surveying 100 incarcerated mothers and 111 incarcerated fathers who resided in eleven different U.S prisons. The results suggested

that incarcerated fathers reported more parenting stress concerning their children than incarcerated mothers. Compared to incarcerated mothers, fathers had less contact with children and poorer relationships with caregivers, and this lack of contact caused more stress for fathers. For both incarcerated mothers and fathers, there was an association between increased levels of self-reported aggressive and violent behavior in prison. The results highlighted the importance of separation from children on parents in prison. The separation stress is associated with difficulties in building and maintaining healthy family relationships (Loper et al., 2009).

The incarceration of a same-sex parent has important implications for role identification in developing adolescents. The loss of a same-sex parent presents familial strain, emotional struggles, and causes stigmata (Burgess-Proctor, Huebner, & Durso, 2016). Swisher and Shaw-Smith (2015) and Dwyer (2018) focused on parental incarceration and how this phenomenon effected children. Swisher and Shaw-Smith (2015) conducted quantitative research by viewing data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The sample included students in grades 7th to 12th, their parents, and school administrators from 132 randomly selected schools in the United States. A group of 20,745 students and one of their parents completed surveys. Of that, the authors focused on the 14,579 respondents that indicated having a father in prison. The results from this study found that the chances of delinquency were even stronger for girls who resided with their father prior to incarceration when compared to girls who did not (Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015). Girls who had an incarcerated father with whom they had never lived had the same delinquency as girls without an incarcerated father. Girls

who had ever lived with an incarcerated father, in contrast, had 26.3% higher delinquency than girls without an incarcerated father. For boys, associations between paternal incarceration and delinquency did not vary by whether they had ever lived with the father, as paternal incarceration alone was associated with significantly higher delinquency (Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015). This could be due to the lack of a positive male role model and positive associations with male role identification. Implies that boys would seek peer associates as role models despite the fact if they were positive or negative influences. The overall findings were that paternal incarceration is most consistently and positively associated with adolescent delinquency in both boys and girls. (Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015).

Similarly, Dwyer (2018) conducted a quantitative study that utilized longitudinal data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. A sample of 2,936 children were surveyed. The results of the study indicated that there was an association between paternal incarceration and aggressive and externalizing behaviors in children. Children with recently incarcerated fathers tended to have fewer cooperative parents with poorer relationships. This relates to maternal hardship, and disruptions in father's engagement in the family. This research, along with past research, suggests that sons of incarcerated fathers may be more prone to negative behaviors of aggression than sons without an incarcerated father. The total relationship between paternal incarceration and negative behavior in sons was larger than for all children (Dwyer, 2018).

Burgess-Proctor et al. (2016) collected data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health. The authors examined gender differences between

incarcerated parents and offspring. The self-reported effects of parental incarceration after age 18 were emphasized. The data surveyed 7th through 12th-grade students in the United States. Of the sample retained 1,229 or 10% indicated having an incarcerated father and 220, or 2%, indicated having an incarcerated mother. The results of this quantitative study suggested that both maternal and paternal incarceration significantly increase the odds of having criminal justice involvement. This effect was especially pronounced for same-sex parent-child dyads, suggesting that parental incarceration for adult offending outcomes is gendered. The incarceration of a same-sex parent has important implications for later role identification. The loss of a same-sex parent impacts emotional and familial strains and these psychological factors can be the basis for children committing delinquent acts (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016).

These studies contribute to the growing evidence regarding the negative collateral consequences of paternal incarceration for children. Limitations to these studies include the fact that they were quantitative and solely relied on surveys. This format did not allow the researchers to determine if associations observed between child delinquency and father incarceration were due to the father's behaviors that led to incarceration or the incarceration itself. Paternal incarceration separates a child from their father figure and limits their connection to a biological male role model.

Role Models

Researchers suggests that peer relationships are a major risk factor for delinquency, and parental relationships are a major protective factor against delinquency. Gender socialization is one of many elements of family life (Perry & Langley, 2013).

Traditionally, men and women have very different parenting roles. Generally, parents set an early course for the development of their child's values and are critical factors in teaching and modeling behaviors. Children are most likely to model members of their own sex. The presence of a same-sex role model may be especially important in formulating attitudes about gender. If the gender composition of a parent-child dyad is homogeneous this will create higher levels of behavior transmission. Social learning theory emphasized that socialization occurs through modeling and reinforcement. Higher levels of contact and closeness lead to more successful modeling and reinforcement (Perry & Langley, 2013).

Walters (2016) analyzed longitudinal data from the Flint Adolescent Study. This comprised 425 boys and 425 girls between the ages of 14 to 16 years old. The authors focused on questions regarding role models and peer influence. The findings revealed that same-sex role models are more effective than opposite-sex role models in promoting positive behaviors in youth. Having a same-sex role model predicted what type of peers the youth would befriend. These results suggested that same-sex role models can protect youth against negative peer selection (Walters, 2016).

Confirming the importance of same-sex parental role models, Carlson and Knoester (2009) conducted a quantitative study evaluating data from waves 1 and 2 of the National Survey of Families and Households. For this study, 1,090 adults with children from wave 2 were randomly selected when the child was between the ages of 18-23. The authors looked at the self-reported relationship quality across family structures. The researchers found that a biological parent's gender ideology is one of the strongest

predictors of a child's gender ideology. This is also a key factor in predicting the parent-child attitude. Children reported better relationships with their biological parents in intact homes and remarkably better relationships with biological parents than stepparents. According to the intergenerational transmission of attitudes, gender ideology may be continual and reciprocal (Carlson & Knoester, 2009). The presence or absence of a same-gender biological parent determines the extent the child will hold similar gender ideologies. This study emphasized the importance of parental attitudes in shaping the attitudes of their children. A positive emotional relationship and strong identification with the same-sex parent have been found to prevent future delinquency in children and adolescents. Having no role model, on the other hand, may provide at-risk youth with the least amount of protection (Carlson & Knoester, 2009). Despite this study being conducted in 2009, it provided a wealth of information from the adult children's perspective on relationship quality and gender ideology. No recent study was able to be located that combined these two factors.

These research studies show that gender matching is important for effective role modeling. Same-sex role models do a better job of buffering against crime and delinquency than opposite-sex role models. This indicates that role models serve a protective function by keeping youth from associating with antisocial peers and entering into delinquent peer groups. Biological male role models are important, particularly for boys, as they play a critical role in the development of healthy psychological well-being.

Risk Factors for Criminal Behavior

Criminal behaviors are more likely to arise when juveniles are in negative social context. Psychosocial deficiencies, combined with developing cognitive abilities, contribute to adolescents' often immature and short-sighted decision-making (Barnert et al., 2015). In a social environment, juveniles seem to favor reward-seeking behavior and do not weigh risk. As the father is incarcerated and the caregiver has less emotional strength to give, the youth often finds themselves spending more and more time with peers. They are often seeking approval, acceptance, attachment, and status among their peers, especially if they are not receiving this at home (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011).

To understand youths' perspectives on the protective and risk factors for juvenile offending, Barnert et al. (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 incarcerated participants, 12 males and 8 females between the ages of 12 to 17 years old. The analyses identified that three internal needs were expressed by the participants as risk factors, this including lack of attention, discipline, and a role model. Youth of both genders reported struggles fulfilling these innate emotional needs. Participants who reported feeling unloved or neglected has no motivation to spend time with their families or do well in school, and ultimately, they ended up on the streets or in jail. Most participants said that having parents who set bad examples, such as ex-convicts, negatively influenced them, as parental criminal involvement normalized adolescents' delinquency (Barnert et al., 2015). All of the participants did not perceive their communities as a source of stability and support. Instead, they saw their neighborhoods

and neighborhood associates as a trap, leading them down a pathway to incarceration (Barnert et al., 2015).

To better understand the dynamics of peer pressure on juvenile delinquency, Khan (2018) conducted a quantitative study consisting of 400 adolescents. Two hundred male students, and 200 female students between the ages of 13 to 18. The researchers found that youth may feel that they will be alone if they do not follow their peers or peers' interest. The fear of isolation drives them to be a part of a peer group, despite if this group engages in negative activities. Adolescents conform to different values, norms, and behavior due to peer pressure. Peers have an impact on the behavior of an individual. If there is negative influence in a peer group, it leads to negative formulation of character, as the youth spends most of their time with their peers. Boys reported significantly higher levels of peer pressure than girls, as boys are more willing to engage in risky or delinquent behaviors if their peers urge them to do so. Khan (20018) found that youth who do not have strong bonds with their families, or positive role models are more at risk for becoming involved with negative peer activities (Khan, 2018). The risk of engaging with negative peers is especially pronounced when in an environment conducive to this behavior. When a child is surrounded by negative influences, they start to relate to these individuals, and this way of live becomes standard and accepted.

Poverty/ Living Arrangements

Children are shaped directly by the living circumstances of their families (Hannon & DeFina, 2012). Children of incarcerated fathers experience a significant disadvantage in terms of loss of family income due to single-parent households. Childcare needs of a

single parent can significantly decrease the time and flexibility needed to find and keep a job. Paternal incarceration generates additional economic costs for families, including those associated with incarceration, such as paying fines, fees, and expenses for legal representation. Even after the father's release, the family can still experience limited earning capacity due to having an incarceration record (Hannon & DeFina, 2012).

Single-parent family households are often associated with an unstable, and sometimes unsafe, home environment. Children from single-parent families were more likely to engage in criminal activities at an early age when compared to two-parent households (Dwyer, 2018). Haskins' (2015) results indirectly link children's delinquent behaviors to paternal incarceration, by directly relating incarceration to caregiver stress, strained resources, and disrupted family relationships. Haskins (2015) suggests that economic hardships may affect child development via disrupted family processes including marital distress and harsh parenting. Pressures such as the inability to pay bills, unmet basic needs, and having to cut back on necessary expenses cause psychological responses to economic hardships. These pressures place single parents at increased risk for emotional distress causing anger, anxiety, and depression. Disrupted interpersonal processes play key roles in connecting economic problems to child developmental outcomes (Haskins, 2015).

Continued evidence on the links between incarceration and economic hardship were shown in Kjellstrand and Eddy's (2011) quantitative study. The authors used prospective, longitudinal, population-based data, to compare children who experienced parental incarceration and children who did not. For this study, the authors used data

from 655 families. This study collected data from 1st to 5th-grade students who resided in 12 different public elementary schools within the metropolitan area of Oregon. The study then again looked at these same students when they were in the ninth and tenth grades. The data review found that 21 adolescents had a mother who had been incarcerated, 53 had a father who had been incarcerated, and seven of the adolescents had both a mother and a father who had been incarcerated (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). The results indicated that the majority of parents with a history of parental incarceration had a high school education or less. A third of the families with an incarcerated parent had incomes less than \$15,000 year. This shows that financial hardships are prevalent among children with incarcerated parents. In addition to these differences in family context and financial means, differences were found in parenting where parents in families with a history of incarceration were less likely to use effective parenting strategies (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011).

Further links between limited financial means and child behaviors issues were shown in Howell's (2015) quantitative study. This comprised 50 African American single parents that resided in an urban Midwestern city and had children ranging in age from 8 to 17. The results indicated that 60.4% of the children reported having a history of violence, and 58.7% of the children reported being exposed to criminal activity. The results showed that as the income of the parent increases, the criminal engagement among youth decreases. Therefore, the more income the parents received, the less likely their child would engage in criminal activity. Children who are raised in poverty have a higher

rate of exposure to violence due to environmental factors as a result of the loss of income caused by parental incarceration (Howell, 2015).

Similarly, Perry and Bright (2012) looked at 5-year follow-up data collected from the Fragile Families Study. This data included 1,870 African American fathers, mothers, and their children. The researcher found that 50.8% of the fathers in the sample reported being incarcerated at some point before their child reached age five, and 31.4% of the fathers reported having less than a GED or high school diploma. The findings indicated that incarcerated African American fathers earned 47% less annual income than their never incarcerated counterparts (Perry & Bright, 2012). It is important to note that in both Howell (2015) and Perry and Bright (2012) studies data was collected from one cultural group. It is also unknown if existing socioeconomic disadvantage increased the likelihood of parental incarceration, or if the socioeconomic disadvantage was a result of the parent's incarceration. Despite that, these studies both found that children of incarcerated parents experienced more family social disadvantage than children without incarcerated parents.

Hannon and DeFina (2012) reviewed panel data from North Carolina counties covering the years 1995 to 2009, focusing on children with incarcerated parents. The authors' regression models indicated a significant positive accelerating relationship between adult imprisonment and juvenile arrest rates. This study shows that parental incarceration increases the risk of children becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. It is more likely for children to become involved in delinquent behaviors when they reside in low-income neighborhoods. Due to the juvenile's lack of development

maturity, they are more susceptible to peer pressures (Hannon & DeFina, 2012). As shown in the above studies, being economically disadvantaged is a risk for juvenile offending behavior due to single parent households and environmental factors.

Child Behavior Issues

Most prisoners in the United States are parents, and this exposes many children to a broad set of challenges associated with parental incarceration (Kamptner, Teyber, Rockwood, & Drzewiecki, 2017). More than 10 million U.S. children have experienced parental incarceration. Children of incarcerated parents are twice as likely to display antisocial behaviors when compared to children without an incarcerated parent. Children of incarcerated parents tend to exhibit internalization that can bring about depression, withdrawals, and externalization. These built-up emotions can then cause fighting and violent behaviors (Kamptner et al., 2017). Researchers have indicated that having a father spend time in jail or prison is associated with more aggressive behavior among children from childhood through adolescence. Paternal incarceration is associated with co-occurring changes for children and their families, some of which may explain children's negative behaviors (Kamptner et al., 2017).

To understand why the lived experience of having an incarcerated parent may link to juvenile offending, Will et al. (2014) examined historical experiences of 470 first-and second-generation incarcerated adults. The authors identified second-generation offender status based on the prisoner's self-reported experience of having a parent who was incarcerated during the prisoner's childhood. For this study, 470 inmates were randomly selected from ten prisons, 288 men and 182 women participated. From the sample, 314

inmates self-reported a history of juvenile offending. The second-generation offenders described more experiences of conduct disorder, juvenile criminal history, and childhood adversity. The second-generation male offenders reported more frequent juvenile violent and nonviolent offenses than first-generation male offenders (Will et al., 2014). The results showed more childhood adversity for second-generation offenders in comparison to first-generation offenders. This indicated that the relationship between generation status and juvenile conduct disorder was partially caused by the heightened adversities present during childhood due to having an incarcerated parent (Will et al., 2014). These results confirm that growing up experiencing parental incarceration creates more childhood adversity, and this adversity is the likely cause of juvenile criminal involvement.

To elaborate on links between parental incarceration and child behavior issues, Kautz (2017) conducted a phenomenological study considering the lived experience of having a parent incarcerated during one's childhood. Fifteen interviews with six participants between the ages of 18 and 29 from the city of Chicago were conducted. All participants were African American, with half the participants in the sample being young men and the other half young women. The results indicated that the phenomenon of having a parent incarcerated was a very emotional experience for all participants. The authors found that if key aspects were missing the likelihood of criminal behaviors in the children increased. The key aspects were truth regarding the incarceration, the kind of relationship the participant had with the incarcerated parent prior to incarceration, and the availability of a caregiver. These key aspects influenced how the participant adapted to

the experience of parental incarceration (Kautz, 2017). However, it is noteworthy that due to the small number of participants the findings cannot be generalized. The study also did not focus on if the incarcerated parent was the mother or the father, as the gender of the incarcerated parent may have a very different effect on the child based on the child's gender. In addition, the study's participants were all African American and this could be seen as a limitation since all findings are based on one racial group's experience.

Similarly, Howell (2015) found that parental absence due to incarceration and lack of supervision has been linked to aggressive behaviors in children and is significantly connected to adolescent criminal actions. The authors conducted a quantitative study by providing questionnaires to 48 single parents with children between the ages of 8 and 17. The parents reported that 74% of the children receive no attention from the non-custodial incarcerated parent and 22% received attention. Questions were then asked regarding violent behaviors and 36.6% reported that their child had no history of violent criminal activity, and 60.4% reported they had a history. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between parental absence and violent behaviors in their youth (Howell, 2015).

Researchers have shown that children have a 10% increased risk for antisocial behavior if they had an incarcerated parent when compared to peers. To comprehend this further, Murray, Farrington, and Sekol (2012) conducted a systematic review of quantitative data. Results from 40 studies that included data from 7,374 children with incarcerated parents were compared to 37,325 children without incarcerated parents. The findings of this study indicated that parental incarceration predicts increased risk for

children's behavioral problems (Murray et al., 2012). Based on the analyzed studies, preexisting antisocial propensity and the stressful experiences caused by parental incarceration increases chances for antisocial behaviors. In addition, the social modeling process where children who grow up seeing their parents respond to stressful life events with antisocial behavior, would then encourage children to engage in the same behaviors themselves. One drawback of this study was that many children with incarcerated parents were not living with their parents before the incarceration. The results may be different based on the child's living situation prior to their fathers' incarceration (Murray et al., 2012). As their living situation with the incarcerated father could have exposed them to antisocial tendencies. However, past meta-analyses of studies comparing children of incarcerated parents with children separated from parents for other reasons has shown a significantly higher risk for antisocial behavior among the parental incarceration group (Murray et al., 2012).

Similarly, Porter and King (2015) wanted to shed light on why associations between parental incarceration and children's antisocial behaviors exist. The authors utilized longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This data is a nationally representative survey of 12,172 students in grades 7 to 12 during the 1993 to 1994 academic year. Data was again collected when respondents were between 24 and 34 years old. The information gained from this quantitative study was able to generate a comparison group of respondents who had an incarcerated father at the beginning of the data collection and then those who had one in the future. The results found that 2,283 respondents, 15% of the sample, indicated that their biological father

had been incarcerated at some point during their lives. The results indicated that paternal incarceration retains a significant effect on expressive delinquency, which is partly arbitrated by reduced attachment to fathers. The authors discovered that the association between paternal incarceration and expressive crime supports Agnew's strain theory and elements of control theory. Having a father incarcerated increases involvement in expressive delinquent behavior because of the emotional strain that may be precipitated by weakened parental attachment. In addition, there is a greater likelihood of delinquency in children of incarcerated fathers due to the tendency for these children to grow up in similar environments as their fathers, poor parenting, financial strains, and lack of academic achievement (Porter & King, 2015). Approximately one-quarter of children who have an incarcerated parent fail to graduate from high school (Sickmund et al., 2018).

Education and Parental Incarceration

Research on parental incarceration and children's academic achievement has shown that parental incarceration negatively impacts academic outcomes (Sickmund et al., 2018). Individuals who do not graduate high school are more likely to be in state prisons, or homeless. These negative outcomes make it very important to understand the barriers to high school graduation for children of incarcerated fathers (Sickmund et al., 2018). Huynh- Hohnbaum, Bussell, and Lee (2015) analyzed data from Waves III and IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Eighty different high schools participated consisting of children in grades 7th to 12th. Wave IV was conducted when respondents were between 24 and 32 years old. 12,418 young adults were utilized from

the Wave IV dataset. The results showed that the incarceration of either a mother or father was found to reduce the likelihood that the child would complete high school when compared to children without an incarcerated parent. The results indicated that children with incarcerated fathers were found to be at high risk for high school dropout (Huynh-Hohnbaum et al., 2015).

To further verify these findings, Schlafer, Reedy, and Davis (2017) conducted a quantitative study using data from a school survey of youth in one large Midwestern state. The survey was administered to 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders during the 2012–2013 school year. In this study 124,542 youth were surveyed. The results indicated that 15% or 17,272 reported they had experienced the incarceration of a parent or guardian, and 2.1% or 2369 reported that a parent or guardian was currently in jail or prison. The study revealed that parental incarceration was significantly associated with children's school-related outcomes. Children with a parent currently or previously incarcerated had significantly lower grades when compared to their peers with no history of parental incarceration. Overall, the results showed that children who have ever experienced the incarceration of a parent have lower levels of academic achievement and a greater likelihood of receiving disciplinary action when compared to their peers who had never experienced the incarceration of a parent (Schlafer, Reedy, & Davis, 2017). It should be noted that this study did not focus on if the sex of the child had more of an impact on maternal or paternal incarceration and the different effects that it may have with educational outcomes.

School failure undermines a student's commitment and interest in learning. The evidence is clear that poor school performance associates with truancy, and eventually leads to dropping out of school at a young age. When a student comes to reject academic achievement as a goal, socializing with delinquent peers may be their primary objective (Neely & Griffin-Williams, 2013). School is regarded as a central arena for crime prevention and after leaving school, the chances of incarceration increase drastically. Primarily, it is extremely difficult to find a steady job after dropping out of school. Due to the lack of academic skills, and job experience, over half of high-school dropouts are unemployed. This then causes the youth to engage in illegal activities as means of financial gain (Sandahl, 2016).

Literature Review of Methodology

Most of the research on parental incarceration has utilized quantitative methodological approaches. Quantitative studies typically rely on numbers and statistics to generalize about populations. These types of analyses were not designed to address questions related to the lived experience of having an incarcerated parent, and how this phenomenon affects the children and family's wellbeing. However, qualitative phenomenological approaches can help remedy this gap and provide important information based on lived experiences, which can be later explored with larger samples in quantitative investigations. Qualitative research strives to produce meaningful interpretations of phenomena and events. The goal is to make sense of what's going on, reach an understanding of the human experience, and describe this understanding. Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data

(Babbie, 2017). Phenomenological approaches are useful when studying participants from a human perspective and are able to elicit information about people, whom society knows little about (Easterling & Johnson, 2015).

In order to explore the phenomenon of African American fathers' experiences with reentry, recidivism, and family reunification, Skinner-Osei and Stepteau-Watson (2018) utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach. Phenomenology helped the authors gain an understanding surrounding this experience by conducting interviews with participants and emphasizing their descriptions of feelings, understandings, and perceptions. Ten African American fathers participated in the study. The findings indicated the following major themes: self-identification issues, unaddressed childhood trauma, lack of self-esteem, and little self-worth as aspects that may be related to recidivism (Skinner-Osei & Stepteau-Watson, 2018). In addition, family reunification and barriers to reentry became major challenges. These qualitative phenomenological findings were able to shed light on concepts that contributed to these men's higher rates of recidivism and less successful reunifications with their families. The qualitative phenomenological approach provided participants the opportunity to verbally share their experiences. Most incarceration studies are quantitative in nature and do not produce the same outcomes as voiced by those directly impacted by incarceration (Skinner-Osei & Stepteau-Watson, 2018).

There is a lack of exploration of lived experiences in the existing literature regarding children of incarcerated parents. Qualitative interviews can lead to a deep understanding of a social phenomenon. The strength of interviews is that they are a great

method to utilize when little is known about an issue or when detailed insights are required from individual participants. (Sargeant, 2012). Brown (2017) conducted qualitative phenomenological interviews. Brown (2017) interviewed five participants for this study. Two were female and three were male. All participants were between the ages of 17 and 21. All of the participants were currently or formerly involved with the state of Connecticut Department of Children and Families. In addition, all participants had at least one incarcerated parent during their childhood. The findings revealed that the strongest common theme was that all but one of the participants at some point during their childhood had become involved in the juvenile justice system. This qualitative phenomenological approach allowed each youth to express their individual story and highlight the common themes among disadvantaged children with incarcerated parents (Brown, 2017). Through the phenomenological approach, Brown (2017) was able to determine that all participants were exposed to poverty and environments rich in criminal activity. They endured other aggravating factors such as abuse that could also be considered contributing factors in increasing the risk of juvenile justice involvement for children of incarcerated parents (Brown, 2017). It is clear from this study that all of the participants had ACE. However, it is unknown if lack of attachment that might have co-occurred with this incarceration influenced the youth's criminal involvement. This is a point that will be addressed in the current study.

Summary and Conclusions

Attachment with a caregiver shapes a child's empathy and ability to form emotional bonds with others (Stern & Cassidy, 2017). Paternal incarceration separates the father from

the child and disrupts the foundation of a meaningful relationship. Due to substantial challenges in forming secure attachments with the incarcerated father, the child may display adverse emotional reactions, which can interfere with the child's emotional and social development (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011).

Adams (2018) found that fathers who are incarcerated are overwhelmingly fatherless themselves. Research has consistently shown the impact of family transitions on children's behaviors. Children experience many burdens when having an incarcerated father, including shame, stigma, stress, financial strain, and lack of external resources. Changes in family structure have been found to not only impact child well-being, but also the likelihood that children will take part in criminal behaviors (Adams, 2018).

Children of incarcerated fathers can develop unhealthy associations with delinquent peers due to impoverished geographic locations, as a result of a one-parent income, which can lead to criminal activities and involvement in the juvenile justice system (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011). Once a juvenile goes down the path of crime and gains a criminal record it is hard for them to get out of the criminal justice cycle. From the perspective of the intergenerational transmission of crime, childhood mental and behavioral problems can be precursors to serious delinquency and ultimately, adult crime (Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015).

This research fills a gap in understanding the lived experiences of young males who grew up with an incarcerated father by focusing specifically on the attachment deficiencies and strain experienced by these children. There are several studies which have focused on the incarceration of a father and attachment issues among their children

(Adams, 2018; Fairchild, 2018; Galardi, Settersten, Vuchinich, & Richards, 2015; Lee et al., 2012; Oldrup, 2018; Poehlmann-Tynan, Burnson, Runion, & Weymouth, 2017; Saunders, 2017; Shannon & Abrams, 2007). All of these studies reported disruption of some sort in attachment, resulting in insecure or disorganized attachment. However, these studies did not report whether children of the incarcerated fathers had juvenile justice involvement. Furthermore, there have been studies about juvenile justice involvement and incarcerated parents that demonstrated a link between these two aspects (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016; Hannon & DeFina, 2012; Howell, 2015; Kautz, 2017; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Porter & King, 2015; Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015). Similarly, studies have demonstrated a link between juvenile justice and attachment (Barnert et al., 2015; Carlson & Knoester, 2009; Walters, 2016). However, all three phenomena, namely father incarceration, attachment with father in juveniles, and juvenile justice involvement, have not been studied together in a single study. In sum, there is some overlap in studies that have focused on two of these three aspects, parental incarceration, juvenile justice involvement and attachment, but there appears to be a gap in the research findings in terms of having one study focus on all three aspects. In the next chapter, I provide the groundwork for the methodology, discuss the setting, sample, instrumentation, and analysis that was used to carry out the remainder of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experience of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, and how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. A review of the existing literature unveiled a need for further qualitative, phenomenological studies that investigate the adult children's lived experiences surrounding the incarceration of their fathers, their perception of attachment with their father while growing up, and how this influenced their juvenile justice involvement. The strongest predictors of future juvenile delinquency were low parental attachments, the absence of capable guardians, and an unstable family structure (Howell, 2015). Murray and Sekol (2012) found that parental incarceration predicts increased risk for children's antisocial behavior. Will et al. (2014) noted that the experience of parental incarceration places children at risk for later being incarcerated themselves and for increased antisocial behavior throughout their lives.

Existing literature has been helpful in recognizing and forming themes related to behavioral issues and familial and financial strains associated with paternal incarceration (Chui, 2016; Dwyer, 2018; Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011; Hannon & DeFina, 2012; Haskins, 2016; Howell, 2015; Murray & Sekol, 2012; Porter & King, 2015; Shannon & Abrams, 2007; Will et al., 2014). However, there are major gaps in the current literature. This is significantly true when it comes to understanding the reasons why children with

incarcerated fathers have increased juvenile justice involvement. Past literature on attachment has identified the need for further research on the attachment between the child and incarcerated father, and if a lack of attachment is what leads to juvenile justice involvement (Fairchild, 2009; Flight & Forth, 2007; Galardi et al., 2015; Kamptner, Teyber, Rockwood, & Drzewiecki, 2017; Lee et al., 2012; Loper, Carlson, Levitt, & Scheffel, 2009; Oldrup, 2018; Porter & King, 2015; Shannon & Abrams, 2007; Will et al., 2014). First, this chapter will include a discussion of the research design and the rationale, followed by a description of the role of the researcher. Next, the study's methodological plan will be presented, including the population and selection of participants. Issues of trustworthiness and the plan for addressing them within the study are followed by ethical considerations pertinent to this study.

Research Design and Rationale

The central phenomenon that was explored in this study was the lived experiences of male children between the ages of 18 and 25 who grew up with an incarcerated father, their lived experiences of relationships and attachment with their father, and how their experiences with their father contributed to juvenile offending. Based on the identified problem and the corresponding purpose, the research questions for this study were:

1. What are the lived experiences of men in early adulthood with their father who was incarcerated during their childhood?
2. How were son-father relationships and attachment affected by the father's incarceration?
3. How did the father's incarceration influence the son's juvenile crime?

This study used the qualitative method of inquiry. With little specific prior research available, qualitative research was chosen over quantitative, as the research design was exploratory by seeking answers through the narrative of participants. The purpose of this qualitative analysis was to interpret data and the resulting themes and to facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative researchers attempt to understand groups and individuals in their natural settings in order to interpret the meaning that a person places on their own experiences (Babbie, 2017).

Comprehension of a phenomenon or event comes from exploring the totality of the situation. Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data. This can be done through observation, participation, interviewing, and ethnography (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research questions need to articulate what a researcher wants to know about the intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions (Babbie, 2017). Sound research provides knowledge and expertise that can influence the way things are done. The scientific information discovered from the research can be used to provide beneficial information to practitioners and advance the work they do (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The nature of this study was qualitative with a phenomenological research tradition. Phenomenology is the collection and analysis of individual experiences related to a specific phenomenon from their point of view. This approach is used to understand the human factor. It answers questions as to how people experience a phenomenon, and places it into context (Patton, 2015). Specifically, I used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is an analytical approach to qualitative research. IPA provides

comprehension on how an individual, in a particular context, makes sense of the selected phenomenon being studied. Typically, the focus of analysis will be on significant personal experiences, life events, or developments of relationships (Alase, 2017). As I wanted to make meaning of the participants' experiences, this type of analysis was a good fit for this study as it uses a combination of idiographic, interpretive, and psychological aspects (Alase, 2017). Participants in an IPA study must have experiences in common, and the study should be small-scale in nature. The data for IPA analysis was collected through open-ended interviews. Transcripts were then coded in an attempt to make sense of the participants' perception of their own experience. This method helps to enhance the clarity of results and allows scholars to use a wide variety of information in a systematic manner to increase accuracy in interpreting observations. IPA can set the necessary groundwork for establishing a valid understanding of human thinking, feeling, and behavior surrounding the phenomenon (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). This approach is not bound by time or location. The goal was to understand the world through the eyes of the participants who have had direct experience with the topic being studied (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

This qualitative phenomenological approach worked well to conceptualize the participants' lived experience and gauge how growing up with an incarcerated father felt for them, rather than focusing on numerical data (Patton, 2015). Through the phenomenology approach, I conducted semi-structured interviews to gather detailed descriptions of experiences from the first-person point of view. This format allowed me, as the researcher, to gain input from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon

directly. With this approach, I interviewed adults who had a father incarcerated and also experienced juvenile justice system involvement as a child. The phenomenological strategy was chosen as it was best suited to answer the research questions by providing a detailed account of the meaning of the lived experiences of all participants. Their insights on the phenomenon became the source of knowledge (Patton, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research is subjective, personal, and inductive. The researcher interacts with the participants in order to observe emerging patterns. In the tradition of phenomenological research, the primary instrument for collecting data is the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative researcher requires interaction with each participant to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences each participant has (Creswell, 2013). Due to this interaction, my role was that of an observer. As the main instrument of the study, I was responsible for recruiting participants, collecting data, analyzing results, and disseminating findings. I was also the one conducting in-person interviews with participants and analyzing the resulting data, which is common practice when conducting phenomenological research. The interviews were held in person in the neutral setting of a public park and used semi-structured, open-ended questions. These were used to elicit detailed answers, ensure credibility, and trustworthiness.

In qualitative research, the researcher uses naturalistic engagement, meaning that the researcher is physically present with the participants (Babbie, 2017). The researcher is the primary source of knowledge when constructing meaning of a qualitative research project. The way the researcher views the world, and their personal bias can affect the

way that data is explored and interpreted (Laureate Education, 2010). As a result, it is important to understand what experiences and biases one brings as a qualitative researcher that might affect the analysis of the study, as biases can affect observations, documentation, and coding (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2010).

The research standpoint requires the researcher to be neutral and objective. As the researcher, it was important that I committed to critically reflecting on influences in specific context. To help manage my biases, I tried to remain aware of myself. Through self-awareness, I did believe that I held a bias against those who have committed violent crimes against another person or animal. My personal opinion could lead to an inaccurate interpretation of the findings. To prevent this, I properly documented my personal views to ensure biases were kept in check during the study. Keeping a journal allowed me to record my thoughts. These self-reflections were entered in the journal immediately following the conclusion of each interview. A copy of these reflections was sent to my chair after each entry to help me become more aware of my personal biases and challenge them when necessary. During the analysis process, I looked back at my written thoughts to ensure they did not affect the study's findings. This reflective process was key to ongoing conceptual engagement. This is an evolving process, and the researcher should be accountable for engaging in these reflective processes throughout the research project (Laureate Education, 2010).

I had no personal or professional relationship with the participants; therefore, no dual relationship boundaries were crossed. Each participant received a \$10 gift card to Taco Bell as an incentive for participation. All interviews took place in a neutral

environment where I had no active professional role. Prior to interviews, each participant was provided with an informed consent document detailing the background information, procedure, privacy, limits to confidentiality, voluntary nature of the study, and risk and benefits. I was friendly and practiced positive communication skills such as reflective listening in order to build rapport and make the participant feel as comfortable as possible.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Participant selection is vital to qualitative inquiry. The conclusions of the study are determined by the information discovered from the participants in the study. Sampling approaches are key indicators that distinguish qualitative from quantitative methods. Qualitative studies typically focus on relatively small samples that are selected for an indicated purpose (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 2010). I engaged in a purposeful sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling refers to identifying information about a participant that can enrich the phenomena being investigated. This sampling selection allows for a more in-depth study. The method of purposeful sampling selection relies on identifying participants that can bring information to help identify the central importance of the study (Patton, 2015). Through in-depth interviews with participants, themes can be formulated, and shared commonalities between the lived experiences are identified.

The targeted population for this study was male adult participants between the ages of 18 and 25 who had previous involvement with the juvenile justice system and had an incarcerated father for at least 1 year or more during their childhood. This age range

was chosen as these individuals may have more recent memories and views that are helpful to understand these relatively recent experiences. The sampling frame included adults who reside in the United States of America.

For my study, I was not concerned with an exact quantitative number of participants or interviews but was more concerned with reaching saturation, which is the point where no new data is discovered, or if there are new discoveries, they will not add anything to the overall framework (Mason, 2010). In qualitative studies, more data does not necessarily lead to more information. Saturation has gained acceptance as a methodological principle in qualitative research. Saturation refers to accepting the data that was collected and indicating that further data is unnecessary. Thus, more participants do not necessarily equate to more meaningful results. Saturation for a study is dependent upon the research purpose, methods, and questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I chose to interview adult participants instead of children due to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. The IRB states that if vulnerable participants are sought out for recruitment, it must be justified by the research design that will show it can benefit this vulnerable group at large (Walden University, 2018). If I were using children, as they are a vulnerable population, the majority of the IRB must vote that the cost will outweigh the risk and my research has justifiable benefits (Walden University, 2018). Due to these stipulations, I decided it would be more beneficial to select adult participants and have them detail what their lived experiences were like.

Inclusion criteria is defined as the key features that the researcher is looking for in participants that will fit the alignment of the studies purpose and research questions (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Inclusion criteria for my selected study included male adult participants between the ages of 18 and 25 who at the time of the interview, have been adjudicated delinquent by the Department of Juvenile Justice, and also grew up with an incarcerated father for one year or more during their childhood. In contrast, exclusion criteria is defined as characteristics that could interfere with the success of the study. Exclusion criteria for my selected study was currently incarcerated individuals. In order to ensure that each participant fit the inclusion criteria and the exclusion criteria would not be an issue, each participant was provided an eligibility checklist (see Appendix A) prior to being invited to participant in the study.

Instrumentation

Much of qualitative research relies on spoken interviews with participants to gather detailed information regarding the phenomenon under examination (Knox & Burkard, 2009). An interview is a conversation in which the interviewer and participant interact to gain knowledge about a phenomenon that otherwise would not be understood. Through the interview, the participant can express their unique viewpoints and experiences. The participant in a qualitative interview is the expert. They hold the complete understanding of their feelings, thoughts, and lived experiences. Later, through a process of analysis, these spoken words become data, which the researcher interprets and synthesizes into a body of knowledge to make participants knowledge more widely understood (Knox & Burkard, 2009).

All data for this study was collected from the participants in person through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interview questions were established as a data collection instrument. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview ensured that the data collection instrument was sufficient to answer the phenomenological research questions. The format of the interview consisted of open-ended questions and preplanned prompts that offered a plan for data collection while still providing the flexibility needed for an efficient interview. These questions were developed to encourage reflective descriptions, personal interpretations, and a sense of autonomy. The content gathered from scholarly sources for this study influenced the development of the interview questions.

The questions regarding background and primary caregiver were developed from studies conducted by Chui (2016), Adams (2018), Porter and King (2015), and Murray et al. (2012). These studies were able to show how a caregiver can influence a child's living circumstances, attachment with their father, and behaviors. The questions regarding the perceived attachment and relationship with the father were derived from studies by Lee et al. (2012), Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2017), Oldrup (2018), and Saunders (2017). These studies showed links between parental incarceration and insecure attachment.

The question asking about prison visitation was derived from Adams (2018) study. This study's findings indicated that prison visitations could be traumatizing for children and lead to insecure attachment. Questions regarding the father's incarcerations and the perceived effects were acquired from studies by Geller and Franklin (2014), Burgess-Proctor et al. (2016), Khan (2018), and Hannon and DeFina (2012). These

studies focused on parental incarceration and how this life event influenced the child's juvenile delinquency.

The questions regarding juvenile justice involvement and the father's influence were acquired from studies by Barnert et al. (2015), Kamptner et al. (2017), Howell (2015), Carlson and Knoester (2009), Will et al. (2014), and Kautz (2017). These authors were able to look at how a father's incarceration can influence aggressive and negative behaviors in children. Each of these studies had findings showing links between incarceration of a father and children behavioral issues. The question concerning role models was developed based on studies by Swisher and Shaw-Smith (2015), Dwyer (2018), and Walters (2016). These studies looked at how the lack of a positive male role model can influence negative behaviors.

The research questions asking about the lived experiences of the growing up with an incarcerated father, the father-son relationship and attachment, and juvenile crime was answered with the following questions and prompts:

1. Let's begin with you telling me about your background.
 - a. Prompt: Who was the person that did the most to raise you?
 - b. Prompt: How did you get along with the person who raised you?
2. Describe your trust level relationship with your father?
 - a. Prompt: Do you feel that you could talk to him if you had a problem?
3. Would you say that you had a really close relationship with your father, semi-close relationship, or not a close relationship at all with your father growing up?
 - a. Prompt: Why did you select this relationship style?

4. Looking back, what was it like to have your father go to prison?
 - a. Prompt: Did you live with your father prior to the incarceration? Tell me more about this.
 - b. Prompt: What changed in your life following his incarceration?
5. What did his incarceration mean to you?
 - a. Prompt: How close were you to your father prior to his incarceration?
 - b. Prompt: On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) please rate your perceived attachment to your father prior to his incarceration? Tell me more about this.
 - c. Prompt: During his incarceration? Tell me more about this.
 - d. Prompt: After his incarceration? Tell me more about this.
6. Did you visit him your father in prison? If so, what were these visits like? How did these visits make you feel? How did these visits make you act? When you visited your father in prison did you think about committing crimes yourself?
 - a. Prompt: Did you write your father or have regular phone contact? If yes, please explain.
 - b. Prompt: How long was he incarcerated? Did you visit him the full duration of the incarceration?
7. If you didn't visit him ... What was it like to not visit him? How did not visiting him make you feel? Make you behave? Influence your delinquency? Did you think about committing crimes yourself as a teen?
 - a. Prompt: How long was he incarcerated?

- b. Prompt: Did you have any type of contact during the incarceration?
8. What is your perception of how his incarceration affected you?
- a. Prompt: Grades?
 - b. Prompt: School generally?
 - c. Prompt: Living situation?
 - d. Prompt: Behaviors?
 - e. Prompt: Financially?
 - f. Prompt: Family dynamics?
 - g. Prompt: How do you think these changes influenced your delinquency?
9. What do you think others thought about you for having an incarcerated father?
- a. Prompt: How do you think others' opinions of you influenced your criminal involvement?
10. How did you first become involved in the juvenile justice system?
11. Did your delinquency occur during your father's incarceration?
12. How do you feel that your father's imprisonment influenced your juvenile justice involvement?
- a. Prompt: How Do you feel about not having your biological father as a positive male example for either following the law or not following the law?
13. How did having your father at prison and not at home influence the friends you selected?

14. Who else and what else influenced your involvement with the juvenile justice system?

- a. Prompt: Describe how your friends might have involved you in crimes.
- b. Prompt: Describe home or school situations that might've contributed to your involvement in crime.

The interview guide was not a strict protocol, but a flexible guideline that assisted during the interview. To improve the credibility of the interview guide instrument, I had a panel of experts review the appropriateness of the questions. I asked my committee members, who are experts in the field of psychology to review the interview guide and provide feedback to enhance the effectiveness of the instrument. This review by the panel of experts provided the validity check needed to ensure that the content in the interview questions met all requirement needed to gain in-depth information for this research study. To ensure validity, I altered and integrated the feedback received from the committee in order to provide the best interview questions for data collection.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

As the sole researcher for this study, I was responsible for the recruitment of participants, collection, and analysis of data. Prior to recruiting any participants, I obtained IRB approval from Walden University. The approval number for this study was 09-22-20-0735613 and it expires on September 21st, 2021. To reach the population for this study, I posted flyers (see Appendix B) on the social media platform Facebook and in areas such as lobbies of community centers and technical centers. Prior to posting these flyers I called the organization and explained that I was a PhD student requesting to post

flyers to gain participants for my dissertation. I spoke with representatives of each organization to gain verbal approval prior to posting any flyers. Once enough participants were recruited, I went back to the location and removed the flyers. The criteria for participation along with my contact information was included in the flyer (see Appendix B).

When a potential participant made contact, I screened the individual to ensure that they met all the inclusion and exclusion criteria to be eligible for the study before I recruited them (see Appendix A). This included sending the potential participant an email with a checklist. They had the option to respond yes or no to questions on the emailed check list. If they did not feel comfortable with email, I provided my phone number so they could have the option to call me and verbally discuss the details and I would fill out the checklist while talking to the participant so that I could have a record of their eligibility. I asked questions such as their age, sex, if during their childhood their biological father was incarcerated for one year or more, if they had been arrested as a juvenile, and if they were currently in jail or prison. If they fit the age range needed between the ages of 18-25, were male, not currently incarcerated, and had both an incarcerated father during their childhood and experienced their own juvenile justice involvement they would receive a follow up email to invite them to participate in the research study. This follow-up email included an informed consent document. I would send the informed consent at least 5 days prior to the interview, to give the participants adequate time to review the form. They would also be provided my cell number to allow them the opportunity to call me if they had additional questions. After reading the

consent form, the participants then had the ability to email me back with the words ‘I Consent’. This indicated that they agreed to the terms in the consent form and were willing to participate in the study. I printed the consent email and I kept that locked in a filing cabinet in my home office. This will be kept for the allowed time of five years as required by Walden University and then physically destroyed.

I interviewed each participant one time face-to-face. Each semi-structured interview was set to last no more than two hours. With a one on one setting the entire interview was individualized for that participant. Each participant was able to elaborate in their own words, without feeling pressure from other influences. In addition, individual interviews allowed for observations of other cues such as body language and tone of voice (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Each interview was audio recorded with participants’ consent for later transcription. Interviews were held face-to-face at a local public park.

Once the interviews were completed, participants were debriefed and reminded about the intended use of the data and the protection of their privacy. All participants were provided with a list of nationwide mental health services (see Appendix C). After the interview participants were able to ask any questions that they had about the study. I explained to the participants that they would be contacted again through email for member checking. The process of member-checking was utilized to establish credibility of collected data and findings, and to gather feedback from the participants. Following the interview, participants were reached via email to review the researcher’s summary of their interview for accuracy and additional comments. Therefore, confirming the overall

quality, trustworthiness, and credibility of my findings (Mitchell, Boettcher-Sheard, Duque, & Lashewicz, n.d.).

Data Analysis Plan

The first step in qualitative IPA data analysis is to immerse oneself in the data. This involves reading the interview transcripts and journal entries multiple times and listening to the auto recordings (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). The purpose of qualitative analysis is to interpret data and the resulting themes in order to develop an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Saldaña, 2016). The interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim, which assisted in the coding analysis process. Coding is a method of analyzing qualitative data. A code is a research generated construct of a short phrase or word that symbolizes or summarizes assigned portions of data (Laureate Education, 2016). A code captures meaning and essence for a portion of language, or visual data. Ideally, code words identify distinctive parts of the text and compare those to other distinctive features and then combine them together (Laureate Education, 2016). The coding process for this study began by making initial notes on the transcripts. This code word then will attribute to the interpretation and meaning of the individuals experiences.

Next, I identified emerging themes. As a qualitative researcher you are looking for similarities and patterns in the context, and then grouping those together into categories in order to provide an overall comprehension of the phenomenon (Laureate Education, 2016). For this study, I first reviewed each transcript line by line and noted code words or phrases that stood out and appear similar. I then created a category for

these words. A category combines code words that share common meanings, intentions, and attributes. It places them together and labels each category with a word or short phrase. This method of categorizing arranges content of the text into descriptive groups (Saldaña, 2016). Next, I noted common themes within the categories. Major concepts that emerge after categorization, can be used to develop themes. Themes can be created based on one or more categories. A theme is when sections of text are linked through thematic ideas that can capture the participant's experience of their world. A theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection. A theme is basically a phrase or sentence describing the underlining aspect of the phenomena. When a theme is noted, it can transcend into the conceptualization of a theory (Saldaña, 2016). No software was used for the data analysis process.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Quality is fundamental in academic work. Evaluations are conducted to provide confidence in a study's findings (Flick, 2008). Quality in qualitative research is dependent upon trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is a term used to define the credibility of findings and is gained through consistency of data. Trustworthiness can be shown through transparent research steps and research findings (Shenton, 2004).

Qualitative research methodologies are interpretive in nature. Given that fact, there are no standardized methods to ensure consistency across all qualitative studies. However, establishing inter-rater reliability (IRR) is a recognized method of ensuring the trustworthiness of the study (Walther, Sochacka, & Kellam, 2013). For my study, I utilized the (IRR) methods by engaging another doctoral student in reviewing a limited

portion of my data. This 3rd party created categories from the data and then formed resulting themes. I reviewed the themes to see if we both were able to come up with similar sounding themes. This process sought to mitigate researcher interpretive bias (Walther et al., 2013).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the adoption of suitable, well-recognized research methods (Flick, 2008). To be credible a study's measures and tests must be reliable. There must be a clear connection between research questions, methods, data analysis, and results. This linkage can promote confidence that the researcher has accurately recorded the phenomena (Flick, 2008). In order to ensure credibility, I utilized member checking. This is where I emailed each participant a summary of their transcript to ensure that the essence of what the participant was trying to say was captured for verification. If a participant decided that this was not truly what they wanted to say, then changes were made to confirm that the true meaning will be presented in the findings (Flick, 2008). In addition, triangulation was used to ensure this study's credibility. This is when two or more sources or interview questions are used to provide corroborating data to discover as many perspectives as possible (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). For this study, having multiple participants in order to achieve saturation, helped produced triangulation.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances of the same category when duplicated can gain the same results (Shenton, 2004). In

phenomenological studies, findings are confined to the study participants and are not generalized to the wider population. For example, if the steps were repeated in the same context with the same participants, the researcher should obtain similar results. In addition, readers of a study should be able to associate elements of the study to their context and experiences. This proves that the findings of one study can be applied to other situations, verifying the consistency of the data (Shenton, 2004). In this study, I addressed transferability by providing detailed accounts of the lived experiences of adults who as children had and incarcerated father and experienced their own juvenile justice involvement. As the researcher I provided thick descriptions, in order to enable the reader to make their own determinations.

Dependability

Qualitative research strives to produce meaningful interpretations of phenomena's and events. The goal is to make sense of what's going on, reach an understanding of the human experience, and describe this understanding. The researcher is the most important source when constructing meaning of a qualitative research project (Laureate Education, 2010). Due to this, the researchers own personal bias can affect the way that data is interpreted. Thus, indicating the reason why having quality measures are very important. As a researcher, it was my responsibility to truly understand what experiences I have had and biases I bring that might affect the analysis of the study. As biases can affect observations, documentation, coding, and overall results (Laureate Education, 2010).

Dependability of a research study is met if it can be demonstrated that the researcher was careful to make no mistakes in collecting the data, conceptualizing the

study, interpreting the findings, and reporting results (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). To attain dependability in this study, I maintained an audit trail of the personal field notes and interview transcripts, in order to provide transparent descriptions of each research steps taken from the beginning to the end of the research process. This allowed my dissertation committee to review the raw data and analysis process.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to others being able to verify data and its interpretations as accurate and true (Jack, 2006). The findings of the study should be based on the participants' experiences and not the researchers. In qualitative research, the researcher is actively present. This type of study requires considerable reflection on the part of the researcher as they are task with making critical assessments of participant's comments (Jack, 2006). For confirmability, as the researcher I kept reflection journals as they are necessary for a detailed audit. With this review, evaluators can assess researcher bias, and approve or deny the reliability and consistency of the research (Flick, 2008). Reflective journal entries will be used to help crosscheck the data and write the final report of the study.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical principles are designed to govern the practice in order to protect participants' rights and ensure high quality of research. Ethics are an essential part of the research process. Ethics are more than a set of rules, rather they are guiding the entire research study. Ethics exist in our actions, practice, and way of doing things. As a qualitative researcher it is vital to always abide by the ethics codes. This type of research

places the researcher directly with the participant in their world. Due to this, harm and breaches of confidentiality could occur and could be detrimental to the participants (Wolff & Hella, 2018). When conducting qualitative research, maintaining participant privacy can present unique challenges. Maintaining autonomy of participant's identities and confidentiality of participant information are all requirements for the protection of privacy. However, the difficulties inherent in qualitative research can be alleviated by the use of the American Psychological Association ethical principles (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

One of the most important ethical considerations in qualitative research is the use of human subjects. Reducing the risk to harm is a fundamental ethical requirement of all research that is scientifically sound. Risk is defined as the probability of harm (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This can include physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic harm occurring as a result of participation in a research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments. Due to this, ethical problems may arise. All studies involving human subjects must have the approval of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning the data collection. Walden University is mandated to ensure that all studies follow ethical standards and regulations. The IRB wants to ensure that no harm will come upon study participants (Walden University, 2018). Once the participants are carefully selected, I made sure that they are provided with and fully understood the informed consent. This ensured that all participants were well-informed about the purpose of the research, understand the risks

they may face, and understand the benefits of participating. In addition, limits of confidentiality can be found in the consent form. Once the participants agreed to the informed consent, I had to continue to make every attempt to maintain participant confidentiality during the conduct of the research and during the period that the data was being studied, analyzed, and reported. The general rule in maintaining confidentiality in research is that identities cannot be displayed without the participant's consent (Kaiser, 2009). In order to do this for my study, identifiable data contained no names or personal information. Each participant was given an identifier number, only I knew the participants' identities. The consent form was the only form to contain identifying information.

As my study is asking participants to relive hard times in their lives, this may bring about difficult emotions. If a participant became psychologically distressed, I had a plan to immediately stop the interview so that I would not cause emotional harm to the participant. However, this never occurred during the interviews. At the conclusion of the interviews, I gave all participants a list of free nationwide counseling services that they could access if needed following the interview (see Appendix C). All emails were copied to a word processing document with all identifying data removed. All electronic files were password protected and saved on an encrypted removable storage drive. All data used for this study was kept in a secure locked cabinet in my home office. The data will be kept for the allotted time of five years, and then all data will be destroyed through physical destruction. As the researcher, I had no conflict of interests when conducting this study, and no incentives were used for participant recruitment.

Summary

The intent of this research was to gather descriptions of the lived experiences faced by the participants and understand how attachment difficulties due to the incarceration of their father may have led them down the path to becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son, and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. This chapter described this study in detail. Semi-structured interviews and reflective journal notes were used to collect data. IPA was used to analyze the findings. The next chapter will provide a description of the setting where the study took place, the demographics of the studied population, and the data collection process. Finally, the data analysis is described, followed by the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world (Craigie, 2011). Most male prisoners in the United States are fathers, exposing many children and their families to a wide array of challenges associated with paternal incarceration (Emory, 2018). These experiences can have profound implications for children. Many children who are affected by paternal incarceration exhibit similar symptoms as children who have experienced traumatic events (Craigie, 2011). Having a father in jail or prison is associated with more aggressive and antisocial behavior among children (Foster & Hagan, 2013). These aggressive behaviors are more pronounced in boys. Sons may be more sensitive to the influence of their fathers, and thereby be more affected by paternal incarceration (Foster & Hagan, 2013). These acting-out behaviors among boys may be particularly consequential for intergenerational criminal justice involvement (Craigie, 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son, and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. Based on the identified problem and the corresponding purpose, the research questions for this study were: What are the lived experiences of men in early adulthood with their father who was incarcerated during their childhood? How were son-father relationships and attachment affected by the father's incarceration? How did the

father's incarceration influence the son's juvenile crime? The intent was to gain an understanding on adult men's' lived experiences surrounding the incarceration of their fathers and their perception of attachment with their father while growing up.

This chapter presents the findings of the current study. The setting where the study was conducted will be discussed, as well as the demographics of each participant. The data collection process will be described follow by an explanation of the data analysis process. Lastly, the results of the study will be presented.

Setting

The interviews took place face-to-face outside at a mutually agreed-upon public park. The environment was quiet and secure from any interruption or violation of the participants' privacy. No known interruptions occurred during the interviews. The interviews did not take place in an environment where the researcher previously had an active role. A \$10 gift card to Taco Bell was used as an incentive for participation. To my knowledge, there were no known extraneous conditions present that may have influenced participants, nor were there experiences during the interviews that would likely impact interpretation of the study's results.

Each interview was given a 2-hour time slot; however, most of the interviews were completed within the timeframe of 25 to 45 minutes depending upon the length of the participant responses, with the shortest time being Participant 6 (P6) at 25 minutes. P6 would typically provide short one word or sentence answers. The background was quiet, and the audio recordings were clear. No video recording took place.

Demographics

The participants consisted of seven adult men (N=7). All participants identified as men between the ages of 18 and 25. The average age of a participant was 21.4. All participants reported having an incarcerated father for at least 1 year or longer during their childhood and experiencing their own involvement with the juvenile justice system. All participants resided in the United States. All participants could speak, read, and understand English. Data were collected through in person semi-structured interviews. A manual audio recording device was used for recording purposes.

Data Collection

The data and themes appeared to reach saturation with the seventh participant. Therefore, the basis for understanding the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18-25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how that incarceration influenced attachment between the father and son, and how it also influenced the sons' involvement with the juvenile justice system was drawn from in-depth semi-structured interviews of these seven men. At the conclusion of the analysis process, three main themes and 11 subthemes emerged.

Prior to each of the seven interviews, I printed a copy of the interview guide with the list of questions to bring with me. I used this guide to ask the interview questions and take handwritten notes on during the interviews. When a participant made a statement or spoke a word that stood out, I would write this on the interview guide. Each participant's interview guide ended up having several words and statements handwritten on the guide following the interview. After the interview, I looked at the interview guide with the

handwritten notations. I highlighted the most important words. Next, I wrote down my impressions of the participant in a journal. Each journal entry ended up being about half a page. These entries included my perceptions of the participants' body language and my overall thoughts from the interview. No procedures deviated from details in Chapter 3, and no unusual circumstances were encountered during data collection.

Data Analysis

To analyze and code the data I used IPA. This process is detailed by Smith et al. (2012). To begin the analysis process, I transcribed each of the seven audio recordings. This process took time, as I had to constantly pause and rewind the recording to ensure that each spoken word was accurately transcribed. On the typed transcripts, I highlighted the participants' responses and selected a bright color font to have their statements stand out. I left my own text in black. Each transcript was printed and analyzed separately. Then all seven transcripts were analyzed together to see if there were emerging relationships between the datasets. I reviewed each transcript multiple times to ensure that the participant was the main focus of analysis (Smith et al., 2012).

With the transcripts in hand, I again listened to the audio from the interviews. By printing a copy of the transcripts, I was physically able to hold the transcripts, visually able to read the words, and listen to the audio all at the same time. This visualization helped keywords stand out. When a notable word or phrase was spoken, it was highlighted with a yellow highlighter. I used a red pen to make notes on the transcript next to the word or phrase that stood out. I would write a contemplated code word to classify the spoken word or phrase, with an emphasis on statements that had linkages to

experiences, perceptions, and feelings. After this process, I reviewed all of the highlighted words. I reviewed the transcripts multiple times to ensure that important links were not missed. This process helped me to understand each participant and their response.

After a detailed review of the audio, transcripts, and written notations, comprehensive codes were developed. I used an Excel spreadsheet to type up the code words. This helped manage the data more effectively. I entered each participant by their identifier number horizontally. The highlighted sections of the transcript were typed into the table underneath the related participant identification number. I then created another vertical box on the far-right hand side and placed the contemplated code words next to the responses. Despite this being a time-consuming step, it helped to visually comprehend what the participant was saying and allowed me to examine the content and language on an exploratory level.

The next step was to create categories from the identified code words. Categories combine code words that share common meanings, intentions, and attributes (Smith et al., 2012). The created Excel document with participant responses and code words was reviewed. While reviewing this document, I was looking for similarities and patterns in the context in order to provide an overall comprehension of the phenomenon. From this review, I was able to group code words together that had similar meanings and label them with a short word to create distinctive categories. After reviewing the categories, I used strategies including comparing and contrasting, contextualization, and abstraction to identify connections that were directly associated with the lived experiences of the

participants. These connections help to form themes and subthemes that helped with the analysis process. The themes were the outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection. The themes were phrases that were able to describe the underlining aspects of the phenomena from the participant's perceptions (Smith et al., 2012).

The next step was to repeat all of the previous steps to ensure that I retained the most comprehensive data. Lastly, I looked at the patterns that emerged during the interviews and the experiences that were identified through the themes. These patterns and experiences were then analyzed for commonalities and how they related to one another. Throughout the data analysis process, transcripts were kept close and often reviewed. This was to ensure that the emerging themes and subthemes were consistent with the meanings that the participants were trying to get across (Smith et al., 2012). During the review of this data, there were no discrepant cases encountered.

To verify the data in this study, I used member checking, triangulation, and peer review. After I transcribed the interviews, each participant received a summary of their interview via email. They were able to read this document and email me back with questions or concerns. This allowed each participant to make corrections to the summary. Additionally, it helped to provide any clarification that was needed regarding their responses. The process of member checking was done to ensure that participants' responses were captured accurately (Harper & Cole, 2012). Participant 7 was the only participant that emailed back with corrections. Participant 7 wanted to make sure it was clear that they had anxious attachment with their father as a child, but no attachment now.

In addition to member checking, I engaged a former co-worker and PhD student who is currently working on her dissertation at another University to partake in a peer review process. I allowed her to review the collected data to ensure that the results indicated an unbiased analysis. The peer was able to review transcripts. She did not receive any data that would have disclosed the participants' information. This peer reviewed the themes and confirmed that the interpretation made were not biased. This external review process allowed for verification of the research process and findings.

After the analysis of the interview transcripts, three major themes emerged. These themes included: Trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and feeling lost because lack of not having a role model. From these three main themes, 11 sub-themes emerged (see Table 1).

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes Identified Through Data Analysis

Themes		
Trust issues due to feelings of abandonment	Feeling like an outcast	Feeling lost because of not having a role model
Subthemes		
Feelings of sadness due to being placed in foster care as a result of family instability	Feeling judged by family members	Taking the wrong path due to feelings of hopelessness attributed to a lack of guidance.
Unstable living situations	Feelings of anger due to rejection	Criminal involvement because of hanging out with the wrong crowd

Physical abuse by father
that triggered fear

Feeling unwanted due to
lack of family support

Feeling all alone due to
lack of secure attachments
with parental figures

Distressing childhood
experiences due to mother
passing away

Overly trusting the wrong
people

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is vital in qualitative research and was verified in this study by using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Trustworthiness is an essential tool to ensure that the data are assessed appropriately for accuracy. Without confirmation of truthfulness, a study's finding cannot be reliable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Trustworthiness was established using multiple methods, including member-checking, reflexive journaling, and triangulation.

Credibility

Having a credible study is key to establishing trustworthiness. Credibility for my qualitative phenomenological study occurred through prolonged engagement, reflexive journaling, triangulation, and member-checking. To ensure credibility, during each interview I provided enough time to build trust and rapport with the participants. This was done prior to asking interview questions. This prolonged engagement allowed time for me to get to know each participant and their identified population. In addition, after each interview I used a journal where I would write down my impressions and any observations of non-verbal cues. This reflective journaling helped assist in managing any

researcher biases. Triangulation occurred by using seven participants. Having more than one participant created a homogenous sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). All participant interviews were digitally voice recorded and then manually transcribed. A summary of the findings was emailed to each participant for member checking. Credibility was shown when each participant accepted the findings as their own lived experiences of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree in which results can be transferred to another context (Smith et al., 2012). Transferability allows readers to comprehend a portion of text and relate that to their own lives. This allows readers to understand and interpret findings. To enhance transferability, I used thick descriptions of the participants' lived experiences. The exact words used by participants were used in the study, which allows the participants' personality and experiences to be presented. In addition, to support the development of the three themes, 11 subthemes were used to provide more explanation.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data and inquiry process (Houghton et al., 2013). Dependability in research can be met when it is demonstrated that there are no mistakes in conceptualizing the study. To demonstrate dependability a peer review was performed. This process involves having an individual who is not connected to the study, review the outcome to ensure that it is supported by the data. A peer review reviews transparent descriptions of the steps that were used throughout the research process. This included reviews of the transcripts, digital recordings, reflexive journals, and data. A peer

review is used as a as a check and balance system when attempting to establish the dependability of the study (Smith et al., 2012). In addition to this peer review, my committee members also reviewed the research process to ensure dependability within the results.

Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved when the researcher interprets the participant's experiences without adding personal opinions or feelings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Confirmability was established in this study to show that the data and interpretations were true and accurate. To establish conformability, I utilized reflexivity. Reflexivity was shown in this study by using a journal and audio recorder during the interviews. Each individual interview was recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Reflective journals were used during each interview to write down impressions and non-verbal cues. As the researcher, I was able to go back over the transcripts and journal notes to help check biases and gauge the flow of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father, and son and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. Interviews were conducted in person with seven participants. The interviews consisted of a preplanned interview guide that contained 14 main questions and 22 follow up questions developed to respond to the three research questions: What are the lived experiences of males in

early adulthood with their father who was incarcerated during their childhood? How were son-father relationships and attachment affected by the father's incarceration? How did the father's incarceration influence the son's juvenile crime?

All participants sampled were recruited through flyers posted in lobbies of local community centers and technical centers. Advertisements were also posted on the social media platform Facebook. In addition, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling refers to a technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from their acquaintances (Houghton et al., 2013). Through these recruitment techniques, seven participants were located. After consent was received, interviews were scheduled. Each participant was allotted a two-hour time slot for the interview, which was generally conducted within the timeframe of 25-45 minutes, depending upon the length of the participant responses. The interviews were audio-recorded.

After listening to the audio and reviewing the content of each transcript several times, three themes emerged: Trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and Feeling lost because of not having a role model. When identify the themes, I looked for patterns in the responses of the participants. The phrases and words that emerged most frequent and aligned with a specific topic, were included in the study. Sub-themes were identified from direct words and quotes from participants that appeared to identify a feeling or belief but did not stand out as a major theme.

Research Question 1: What Are the Lived Experiences of Men in Early Adulthood With Their Father Who was Incarcerated During Their Childhood?

Theme 1: Trust Issues Due to Feelings of Abandonment.

Regarding trust issues and feelings of abandonment, all participants expressed negative home environments associated with feelings of distrust that led to problems forming positive relationships. In addition, many participants experienced unstable living situations, family instability, and other traumas. Participant 4 (P4) stated, “I was passed around a lot, from my grandma, to my grandpa, to my uncle, everybody,” and Participant 6 (P6) stated, “For most of my life I was in foster care.” These statements supported feelings of distrust due to unstable living situations and constant abandonment. All participants also identified trust issues due to lack of a stable provider in their lives. This then caused them to seek attachments and trust with the wrong people.

Sub-theme 1.1: Feelings of sadness due to being placed in foster care as a result of family instability. Three of the seven participants expressed sadness due to being placed into foster care. Participants used negative terms when describing their home environment growing up. P6 stated, “Growing up I was all by myself, I pretty much raised myself.” P6 detailed situations of neglect and abuse and being placed into foster care at 4 years old due to his mother’s drug use and father’s imprisonment. P6 reported feeling sad as a result of aging out of foster care and missing out on family experiences, “I never had a typical childhood and that sucks a lot.” Participant 3 (P3) also expressed being placed into foster care at a young age due to neglect, “My mother was a drug addict, so I went to foster care for 7 years.” He also expressed not being allowed to live

with his father due to his father's own drug use, "My father was a weed dealer," and "The state would not allow me to see him due to his criminal record." Participant 2 (P2) reported that he got placed into foster care at age 12 due to his mother dying, "When I got placed into foster care, I was really depressed and angry."

All three participants reported not being allowed to see their family members while in foster care. P2 felt that foster care caused him to become separated from his father, "My foster mother wouldn't let me see him because I guess she knew him." P2 then went on to discuss feelings of sorrow due to limited memories of his sister because of foster care, "I can't really remember much of my childhood for the most part with my sister." P6 also reported mourning and separation when talking about his only sibling, "I have a brother, but he got adopted." P3 reported struggles trying to contact his mother while in foster care, "I got a Facebook and found her on there. We talked illegally while I was in foster care, never face to face, but text and phone calls." P3, P2, and P6 all reported loss of family connections due to being placed into foster care. The diminishing of these relationships then caused feelings of loneliness and sadness for the participants.

All participants that reported being in foster care (P3, P6, and P2), felt that this experience was what led them down the path of criminal involvement, because of their lack of family stability. P3 expressed that his juvenile justice involvement was caused by living in foster care, "I got a battery charge because I was in foster care. Yo momma jokes were popular at the time and someone was talking about my mom. And you know my mom was not around, so I beat that kid up in the back of the bus." He also felt changed by foster care, "I have been through stuff most children growing up don't go

through.” P2 also reported being placed into foster care and feeling that this life event caused him to become involved with the juvenile justice system. P2 stated, “I was not like this before I got put into foster care,” and “I was the new kid and everyone was trying to see what I was about.” P6 also felt that his criminal involvement was caused by foster care, “If I had a family to look out for me, I would not have been doing bad.”

Sub-theme 1.2: Unstable living situations. All participants in the current study reported challenging living situations growing up. P1, P3, and P4 reported growing up in an unstable environment and moving from place to place. This caused many challenges and feelings of being discarded. Participant 1 (P1) felt insecure housing growing up due to his father being absent and his mother working all of the time. This resulted in P1 being left with relatives often, “My aunt would babysit me, but I was basically living with my aunt full time.” P3 expressed never having a stable house until his later teens, due to his mother’s substance abuse “I did go from foster care and then place to place. I didn’t have a stable house until I was 15 and moved in with my aunt.” (P4) expressed separation from his brother due to family instability “We were separated a lot because he was living with his grandma on his dad’s side and we had different dads.” He also expressed separation from his mother due to housing issues “I was living with my uncle, my mom didn’t really have a stable house. She would bounce back and forth between there and her boyfriend’s house.” He also stated being moved around often, “My grandpa had a house close to us, I would be brought over there a lot,” and “Sometimes I would stay with my grandma.” All of these participants were faced with challenges of instability, and this prevented feeling like they had a secure environment.

Sub-theme 1.3: Physical abuse by father that triggered fear. P1, P2, P5 and P7 reported witnessing physical abuse perpetrated by their father against a family member. P1, P2, and P5 reported being the victim of physical abused perpetrated by their father. P1, P2, P5, and P7 all expressed being afraid of their father, and, as a result, not wanting any contact with him because of the physical abuse. P1 expressed his fear by stating that “He smacked me and my mom around, so I avoid him,” and “I blocked his number, I don’t want to talk to him ever again.” P2 described a time in his life where he had the option to go and live with his father, and due to his fear, he did not. P2 stated, “I did not want to go with him. Because my mom gave me an option, you can go to the mental hospital and they can figure out what they are going to do from there, or you can go with your dad. And I’m like oh I’m good.” P2 also described a time where his dad began threatening him again at age 17, “Well he said he was going to beat me up and stuff, and I was like that’s not going to happen. I got to a point where I snapped on him. I said you not fitting to be talking to me like this. I’m like you can keep doing what you do, but I promise you it’s not going to end up the same way.” Participant 5 (P5) reported that his abuse got so bad that it caused him to have psychological issues, “He was abusive, he would sexually touch my sister, I was going to the mental hospital because he would beat me and make me want to kill myself... he told me to kill myself, he is a fucked up dad.” P5 explained his fear, “When I lived with him, I had bruises and marks on my body. I looked like a leopard... I was scared of him.” When discussing memories of the father being locked up, P5 expressed feelings of joy, “It was a good thing, I didn’t have to look behind my back and seeing if I am getting hit today.” Participant 7 (P7) stated that he

didn't comprehend the physical abuse because he was so young, "I knew he did bad thing and hurt my mom but, I didn't really understand it... it just made me not want to see him."

P2, P5, and P7 reported a feeling of justice that the father went to prison due to the physical abuse. P2 stated "He was abusive to me and my step-mom, that's what he went to prison for." P5 stated, "I told my mom I was getting abused and she got him arrested. He went for physically abusing me and raping my sister." P7 discussed, "I just have memories of me being 4 and him hitting my mom and me calling 911." All participants experienced some form of physical abuse perpetrated by their fathers. This lived experience caused feelings of fear resulting in avoiding behaviors, such as blocking the father's phone number.

Subtheme 1:4: Distressing childhood experience due to mother passing away.

P2 and P4 reported distressing childhood experienced due to their mother's passing away. P2 and P4 both reported feelings of change and displacement as they were both placed into foster care after their mothers died. P2 reported his distress as "I got angry at my family for not even trying to fight for me." P4 expressed his distress after the passing of his mother due to now facing housing challenges, "I got passed around a lot." P4 also recalled how his mother dying change his family dynamics, "It was a huge thing for my whole family because when she died my uncle, the one I was living with stated doing drugs really bad. He was never the same," and "She was like the tree of the family. Her passing kind of separated everyone."

P4 reported that he felt the biggest contributor to his juvenile justice involvement was his mom's passing, "It was my mom dying. I really had strong emotions to that. It kind of stuck with me. I didn't have anyone, so I did my own thing. I ran away" and "I was on the streets, running away, doing drugs and bad shit. Mom's passing is what started it all." P2 also stated that his mom's passing caused his criminal activity, "I wouldn't have been acting the way I done if I had a mom around to care more about doing right." For both P2 and P4 the passing of their mother resulted in lack of family support and stability. This then caused them to feel distressed and become involved in negative activities as a result of this major loss.

Sub-theme 1:5 Overly trusting the wrong people. All participants reported having trust issues. None of the participants reported being able to trust their family. These personal challenges with trust had many participants trusting people who engaged in criminal activities. P1 reported that "All my friends were bad, but we had a game plan. We had each other's backs. I had so much trust build up they were family to me." P2 stated, "Getting in trouble, it's my own doing and trusting the wrong people at the same time." P5 stated, "I don't know what's up with me and my trust, but I trust everyone." P6 described his trust growing up as "I trusted my friends a little too much," and "They would screw me over and go behind my back."

When asked to explain what trust meant to them, all participants felt a lack of trust for their family. P1 explained, "Trust means I have your back in any situation, if you need to go somewhere, I got you." When P1 was asked if he trusted his family he responded, "No never. No trust at all. I can't rely on them at all." P2 explained, "Trust is

actions, you show me actions to make me trust you. You can't just say something and expect me to trust you." When asked if he trusted his family P2 said "I didn't trust them at all." P2 revealed a memory with his father that made him lose the feeling of trust, "He said he was going to take me out for my birthday, and he didn't. That is when he just disappeared again, I didn't trust him after that." P3 was asked about his trust level with his family on a scale from 1 to 10. He started, "0 because I don't talk to them." P4 recalled a memory with his father that caused him to diminish trust, "He called me one time and he was like, I will give you money and everything. Then he never called me again. I am not going to play a cat and mouse game with him. He knows he has a kid out there and it's like whatever." When asked about who he trusted, P5 explained "I used to trust my mom, but I still hid things from her. There is 0 trust with my dad." When P5 was asked if he trusted his family he stated, "Not anymore. They broke that trust a long time ago." When asked if he had trust with his father, P6 responded, "No, I have no respect for him." P7 described his trust as, "I feel like growing up I was overly trusting and now I have a wall up. Like you can only truly trust yourself."

Multiple participants explained that due to a lack of trust with their family, they started to have more trust in friends. P5 made clear, "The main person I trust out of anyone I know, more than my family members, is my friend Chis. We have been through it. Like if someone's about to shoot me and stuff and I want to live, I trust him with my life." P1 stated, "With me it doesn't have to be blood to be family. It's basically the trust and the way they treat you and you treat them, that's family right there." P4 responded, "My family, they just lie to me. My friends don't." As a result of feeling abandoned by

their family members, participants were unable to form feelings of trust and secure attachment with their family members. Due to this lack, they sought these connections and formed trusting relationship with friends instead.

Research Question 2: How Were Son-Father Relationships and Attachment Affected by the Father's Incarceration?

Theme 2: Felling Like An Outcast.

The theme about feeling like an outcast was developed as all participants felt that they “did not fit in” with their family and were “different” than their family. This experience was felt in the home environment and led to feelings of rejection, being judged, and lack of family support. Responses from P1 such as “They would beat on me because I was different” and “they said we don't like you, when I was 13” helped support feelings of exile.

Sub-theme 2:1 Feeling judged by family members. Multiple participants expressed feeling judged by their family members and this caused them to feel different. P1 expressed his feelings of being dissimilar as, “It's just that I am an outcast to them. I look sort of like my father so. They said because I look like my father, we don't like you.” P3 expressed feeling judged by his Caucasian family due to the fact that he was bi-racial, “In the beginning they would not call me by my given name, as I was named a Jamaican name,” and “They didn't like that my mom made a mixed baby.” He went on to detail memories of being judged by his family, “I went to stay with my grandparents and then me and my grandfather got into it and he called me the N word and stuff and then I had to move out.” P3 also expressed feeling judged by being compared to his father, “My

grandfather would tell me that my dad is a drug dealing piece of shit, and I was going to end up like him.” P4 recalled feelings of being judged when his family would compare him to his incarcerated father, “They would tell me I would end up going to jail like him. And I did.” P4 stated that he started to believe the negative things his family would tell him, “I began to think it was going to be my time sooner or later.”

Sub-theme 2:2 Feelings of anger due to rejection. The majority of the participants reported experiencing anger towards their family members due to feelings of being rejected. P1 expressed not getting along with his family growing up. When asked if they ever got along, he stated, “The thing is, we never did,” and “They all got along, but never with me. So, I just said screw them. I avoid them.” P1 felt rejected by his family due to them being absent from his life, “My mom never really tried to step in. She was just there to put food on the table. Just food on the table and ignore you the rest of the time.” P1 recalled a phone call with his father where he had hope for building a relationship, “I thought it would go different, kind of hoping. But he just stated yelling at me and talking shit about me. It got me upset. I just hung up the phone and blocked the number.” P2 reported feelings of rejected as his father would be in and out of his life, “I was angry. I mean in my head how I would want a family to be, that’s not how my family was.”

P2 recalled a memory with his father that led to feelings of rejection, “One time my dad called me and told me that he was going to come over and bring pizza and presents for my birthday, and he didn’t. I got so mad, like don’t tell me you are going to do something that will take a year to do.” P2 expressed feelings of anger towards his

family that was caused by being placed into foster care, “I was mad at myself and my family. I was more mad at my family for not even trying to fight for me.” P4 expressed feeling forgotten by family members after he was placed into foster care, “I was anger often, over nothing really... I felt like an outsider.” P5 stated feeling rejected by his mother when she began dating, “I use to get along with her, and we would hang out. That is until she got her new boyfriend, that’s when we started separating.” P6 expressed his anger due to feeling of rejection when his father reached out to him via Facebook at age 16, “He messaged me one time, I told him I don’t want anything to do with him. I have no respect for a man that does not raise his kids.” P7 shared a memory when his father tried to come back into his life, “I remember he messaged me on Facebook saying like this is your dad and I love and miss you. And I was like my dad who?” P7 revealed that he did not want a relationship with his father now, “Just because he was out of my life so long and now trying to be a part of it... I felt like it’s too late now.” As a result of perceived rejection by their family members, participants began to feel anger, this anger then resulting in avoiding behaviors of pushing away their family members. Participants declined to have relationships with their family members due to this hurt.

Sub-theme 2:3 Feeling unwanted due to lack of family support. Several participants reported feeling unwanted due to experiences where their family was not there for them. P2 reported feelings of being unwanted when he was placed in foster care as none of his family would take him in, “My grandma was like 80 years old then and my dad was with his new family. So, no one had time for me.” P1 expressed feeling unloved by his family, “The thing is, I was on the streets and they didn’t even care. They didn’t

say happy birthday or anything to me. My siblings didn't even say anything." P3 expressed his feelings of not being able to rely on his family, "If I ever called because I needed money for food or something, they would just yell and curse at me and hang up."

P2 described feelings of being unwanted by his father, "He didn't think I was his, he didn't claim me until I was 3. He never helped with nothing for me." P5 recalled times where his father would say hurtful things to him that would affect his mental health and made him feel unwanted, "He told me to kill myself...you should have killed yourself a long time ago...he would yell at me and be like why are you still alive? This made me have bad depression." P6 expressed his feelings of being unwanted when he was placed into foster care at age 4, "My dad was locked up and my mom was into drugs, so I had nowhere else to go." As a result of having past experiences where their family was unsupportive, this caused participants to feel like they had no one who cared. This led to feelings of being all alone.

Research Question 3: How did the Father's Incarceration Influence the Son's Juvenile Crime?

Theme 3: Feeling Lost Because of Not Having a Role Model.

After developing the first two themes, regarding trust issues and feeling like an outcast, it was clear that all participants felt lost and alone. All participants lacked positive guidance and secure attachments, and this led them to associate with the wrong crowd to feel a sense of belonging. Multiple participants stated that things would have been "different" if they had guidance, and they would not have felt so lost. Many

participants explained their childhoods as raising themselves, being by themselves, and having unstable relationships.

Sub-theme 3:1 Taking the wrong path due to feelings of hopelessness

attributed to a lack of guidance. All participants in the study reported getting into legal trouble as a juvenile and being involved in the juvenile justice system. P1 described his feelings of lack of guidance as not having a stable figure to look up to, “There was no one around, it was all on me.” P2 described his lack of a positive male role model as his father was abusive, “I mean I would want my dad around, but like not in the way he was.” P2 expressed dropping out of school at 15 due to no guidance, “Um I mean I wouldn’t been acting the way I done if I had a dad and mom that would care more about me doing right.” P3 expressed growing up without his father as a male role model, “He is not a father figure. None of my siblings have ever said he is a father figure either.” P3 reported dropping out of school at age 14 due to having no one to ensure he was attending, “I had dropped out of school, no one ever cared.”

P4 reported never having a father figure to guide him, “Boys need another male to look up to. A positive male. Sucked, I never got that. I grew up seeing rappers and guns, a false sense of reality.” P4 discussed how his lack of a positive male role model caused him to lack hope for his future, “It was like the only male role models I had were fucking up and stuff so I thought like damn, I am going to be fucking up.” P4 reported due to these feelings of hopelessness, he decided to drop out of school, “It was the 10th grade. I just stopped going, I didn’t want to go anymore. I thought why I should even try.” P5

reported that after his father went to prison, he started making negative decisions, “There was no one to discipline me anymore,” and “I dropped out at 16 and started using drugs.”

P6 revealed that his lack of guidance changed his view of the world, “I feel like my mentality more than anything changed. It made me see things through a whole another set of eyes sort of speak.” When asked why he felt he got involved in the juvenile justice system P5 responded, “Not having any guidance. I pretty much raised myself. I learned from my own mistakes.” P7 felt that his lack of guidance was attributed to his father’s imprisonment, “Like other kids got to grow up with a father in their lives and I didn’t. I felt like I missed out on the experiences of having a father.” P7 attributed his criminal involvement to lack of a role model, “I never learned consequence of my actions and how it would affect me when I got older.”

Sub-theme 3:2 Criminal involvement because of hanging with the wrong crowd. Due to lack in attachments, guidance, and trust with family members, participants started to view their friends as family. They sought feelings of security through friendships. When asked if he hung out with kids who engaged in criminal activities, P1 stated, “All my friends did.” When asked why he hung out with kids who engaged in those activities, P1 stated, “Because they became family.” P2 expressed getting into drugs due to his friends, “I didn’t start smoking until I was in the crowd I was in,” and “I changed.” P3 reported his criminal involvement started to occur in high school, “I started hanging out with the bad crowd then, they were my people.” P4 reported running away and this caused him to associate with negative influences, “I was on the streets and doing drugs and bad shit. That’s when I met some people. I did whatever I had to do to get by.”

P5 stated that he started hanging out with kids who used drugs due to witnessing his father abuse drugs, “That’s all he did around me.” When asked what he felt influenced his juvenile justice involvement, P5 stated, “Hanging out with the wrong people, that is the main thing.”

Sub-theme 3:3 Feeling all alone due to lack of secure attachments with parental figures. All participants reported not having a secure attachment with parental figures. Participants reported either having no attachment or having anxious or avoidant attachment. This lack of secure attachment left participants feeling alone. Both P2 and P4 reported having no attachment with their mother due to her passing away. P3 and P6 both reported having no attachment with their mother due to her drug use and them being placed into foster care. P1 and P5 reported never having a relationship with their mother despite her being the primary caregiver. P7 was the only participant who reported attachment with his mother.

P1 reported never wanting to establish a secure relationship with his parents, “I had no attachments with my dad, with my mom and other siblings it was avoidant.” P1 went on to describe that his mother was never home, and this prevented a secure attachment, “She had to work three jobs. She was never there. I am glad I did not see her. She never really tried to step in.” P2 explained having anxious attachment with his father, “He would come around, but it was not a stable thing.” P2 reported seeking a father figure and wanting contact with his father despite abuse, “I wanted him as a dad figure, but not a person to come around and just punch me,” and “There was something in me that he was my father regardless.” P2 expressed that due to the lack of secure attachment

with his father he would not call him dad, “I call him pop, I can’t call him dad because I feel like pop and dad are two different titles. Because he didn’t raise me, I can call him pop.”

P3 described lack of secure attachment with his father, stating, “He was never around, as a kid I saw him maybe 4 or 5 times.” P7 was the only participant in the study who reported visiting the father while in prison. P7 reported anxious attachment with his father, “I would sometimes go to the prison and see him. It was scary but I also liked seeing him.” P4 expressed no attachment with his father due to his mental health and jail stays, “He was always in and out of jail and had really really bad mental problems. I don’t talk to him.” P4 expressed feeling all alone due to his lack of attachment, “I was like there is no one that cares. No one was supportive. I was feeling like I would be forgotten about. Nowhere to go. I didn’t have anyone to talk to like that.”

All participants reported never being able to establish a secure attachment with their father as he was absent. All participants described feeling that their lives would have been improved if they had secure parental attachments. P4 stated, “I would probably have went to the military. That’s what I was going for. I was in ROTC. My life would have been a lot different.” P5 and P6 expressed having to find their own path in life due to lack of secure attachments. P2 and P3 reported that after being placed in foster care they lost any family connections and had to fend for themselves. P1 and P7 reported that lack of parental attachment had them seeking attachment with friends.

Summary

The participants in this study consisted of seven adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, identified themselves as having an incarcerated father for one year or more during their childhood and experiencing their own involvement with the juvenile justice system. All data collected for this study was from individual interviews with participants and based of their verbal accounts of lived experiences. The participants were recruited using a recruitment flyer posted in numerous community centers and technical centers, and on the online social media platform Facebook. After the participants gave consent for participation, semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and took place in person.

The interview questions were framed effectively in this qualitative study to gain an understanding on adult men's lived experiences surrounding the incarceration of their fathers' and their perception of attachment with their father while growing up. The interview process concluded with three main themes and 11 sub-themes emerging to answer the three research questions that lead this research study. Major themes identified in the current research were: Trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and feeling lost because of not having a role model. All participants appeared to give personal reflections including detailed disclosures. Their responses provided deep insight into their childhood experiences that shaped their juvenile justice involvement.

In the next chapter, I will provide an interpretation of the overall findings. I will begin with a recap of the introduction, and then the major strengths of this research study along with any limitations will be listed. Lastly, implications for positive social change, recommendations, and conclusions will be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusion

Introduction

The goal of this interpretative phenomenological study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18-25 who, as children, experienced their fathers' incarceration, how the incarceration influenced attachment between the father, and son and how it also influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. As the researcher, I sought to provide an understanding of how the incarceration of the father impacted the attachment with the son, and how this may have influenced the son's involvement with the juvenile justice system. Previous studies examining incarcerated fathers did not explore the child's juvenile justice involvement and attachment with the incarcerated parent (Will et al., 2014). The aim of this phenomenological study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of these individuals.

The seven participants in this study experienced both the incarceration of their father during their childhood and their own involvement with the juvenile justice system. Discussions with these seven participants revolved around three main themes: having trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and feeling lost because of not having a role model. Those three main themes and 11 sub-themes emerged during comparative analysis of the data. Those themes will be analyzed in this chapter in relation to existing literature and research. This chapter will summarize the research results, discuss the limitations of the current study, provide implications of this study's results, and provide suggestions for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

In the literature review section of this study (Chapter 2), I provided evidence of influencing factors that lead to juvenile justice involvement as a result of paternal incarceration. However, my review of the literature on this topic revealed a lack of studies that focused on the three phenomena: father incarceration, attachment with father, and juvenile justice involvement in a single study. There is some overlap in studies that have focused on two of these three aspects, parental incarceration, juvenile justice involvement and attachment, but there appears to be a gap in the research findings in terms of having one study cover all three aspects. The findings of this study are able to extend knowledge by having participants provide their lived experiences with all three phenomena.

All the participants in this study reflected on their experiences growing up with an incarcerated father and the challenges this phenomenon presented in their lives. All participants responded to interview questions that provided detail on how this event shaped their lives and perspectives on attachment. The use of attachment theory as the theoretical framework of this study provided the ability to understand each participants' viewpoint on attachment, based on the influences of their childhood. I will now synthesize the findings presented in Chapter 4 with applicable literature presented in Chapter 2.

Theme 1: Trust Issues Due to Feelings of Abandonment

All participants in this study expressed growing up in a negative home environment with unstable living conditions and a lack of a stable provider. These

findings confirmed existing research that paternal incarceration can disturb many aspects of a child's life, including their financial stability, parental attachment, and housing security (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011). Due to financial issues, participants in this study found themselves living in foster care or with relatives and were separated from siblings. Past studies found that housing insecurity was likely associated with changes in the family's financial situation following the male partner's incarceration (Dwyer, 2018). Mothers with recently incarcerated partners faced odds of housing insecurity that were approximately 50% greater than mothers whose partners were never incarcerated, thus decreasing the well-being of children with incarcerated fathers (Dwyer, 2018; Geller & Franklin, 2014). P4 stated, "my mom didn't ever really have a stable house."

Children who are raised in poverty have a higher rate of exposure to violence due to environmental factors (Howell, 2015). All but one of the participants in this study witnessed physical abuse perpetrated by their father. Three of the participants were the victim of this physical abuse. This abuse caused participants to fear their fathers, and these feelings resulted in participants wanting no contact with the father, which caused avoiding behaviors, for example by participants blocking their father's phone numbers. This then resulted in the loss of paternal attachment.

Participants experienced challenges trusting family members and felt a lack of family support. These perceptions and feelings caused participants to overly trust friends and individuals who engaged in criminal activities. These findings lined up with those of previous studies that showed weakened family relationships and families' increased material hardship were the strongest and most consistent reasons behind children

externalizing and aggressive behaviors (Adams, 2018). Childhood adversity and trauma to the child can result in further instability and create a pathway into the juvenile justice system (Adams, 2018; Dwyer, 2018; George et al., 2010).

Previous studies found that paternal incarceration puts a strain on mothers and has a negative impact on maternal mental health, which can impact the mother-child relationship and overall family functioning. This strain can cause parental custody issues and may have the child entering the foster care system (Adams, 2018). Three of the seven participants in this study reported distress after being placed into the foster care system, and one reported being raised by his maternal grandmother. All three participants in the foster care system reported not being allowed to see their biological family after this placement. Participants reported feelings of sadness and missing out on the family experience. This estrangement caused relationships to weaken and left participants feeling lonely. This study's findings add to Adams' (2018) study, as the placement of two of the participants in foster care was the result of their mother passing away. The loss of their primary caregiver, and their father not being around to take care of them, caused them to become displaced, leaving foster care as the only option. Both participants reported that this major loss and lack of connection with family was what caused them to engage in criminal activities. All participants that reported being in foster care felt that this experience was what led them down the path of criminal involvement. They felt that they had no trust with their foster caregivers, as adults in the past had always abandoned them. This caused participants to feel that they no longer had anyone to hold them accountable or want to do good for.

These findings extend past research by showing how unstable living arrangements felt for children who experienced it. Lack of stability caused participants to have issues forming positive relationships with caregivers. Separation left participants feeling abandoned and diminished trust with their primary caregiver. Physical abuse committed by their fathers cause participants to engage in avoiding behaviors. These lived experiences and feelings of abandonment caused participants to be unable to form feelings of trust. Therefore, affecting the participants overall foundation for establishing secure attachment with their family.

Theme 2: Feeling Like an Outcast

All participants in this study reported experiencing rejection, being judged, and a lack of family support. These experiences caused them to feel different and like they did not fit in with their families. Most of the participants in this study reported feeling anger towards their family members due to feelings of being rejected. Past studies on paternal incarceration (Barnert et al., 2015; Kamptner et al., 2017) confirmed children feeling rejected, and this led to criminal involvement. Children of incarcerated fathers struggle to maintain relationships while the father is incarcerated. This causes many children to feel rejected by the father (Barnert et al., 2015). Participants who reported feeling unloved or neglected lacked motivation to spend time with their families or do well in school, and ultimately, they ended up on the streets or in jail.

It is often difficult for children of incarcerated fathers to reach their father. This distance and inconvenience left many children questioning their fathers' future role in their lives, and many began to emotionally distance themselves (Oldrup, 2018). Findings

in this study confirm these previous findings, as apparent by participants avoiding contact with their fathers and P1 blocking his father's phone number. Due to experiencing rejection by their family members, participants began to feel anger, this anger resulted in avoiding behaviors and pushing away their family members. Participants withdrew from family members due to this hurt. Children of incarcerated parents tend to exhibit internalization that can bring about depression, withdrawals, and externalization (Kamptner et al., 2017).

Several participants in this study reported feeling unwanted due to experiences where their family was not there for them. P4 expressed his feelings of being unwanted as "I was passed around a lot." As a result of having past experiences where their family was unsupportive, participants felt alone. Children of incarcerated fathers are a particularly vulnerable group due to the absence of their fathers and financial struggles of their mothers. Fathers' incarceration imposes burdens on the caregiver pertaining to family problems, finances, legal issues, and social lives (Chui, 2016).

Geller and Franklin (2014) and Chui (2016) found that caregivers of children who have an incarcerated father are vulnerable to psychosocial distress. Caregiver psychological and financial distress directly relates to children displaying externalizing and internalizing problems. These children have higher chances of behavioral problems, mental health issues, education difficulties, and emotional instability than their peers. Feeling like an outcast within their own family was a painful experience for the participants. They felt like no one wanted to bond with them. This caused participants to

internalize and externalize feelings of anger and rejection, causing further psychological distress.

Theme 3: Feeling Lost Because of Not Having a Role Model

All participants in this study felt lost and alone because of not having a positive role model or secure attachment. These feelings led to participants taking the wrong path, as they felt that they had no one to hold them accountable or motivate them to be successful. All participants in the current study reported dropping out of high school. This was attributed to lack of guidance. These findings contribute to past research by Sickmund (2018) and Huynh-Hohnbaum et al. (2015), which found that parental incarceration negatively impacts academic outcomes. Children with incarcerated fathers were found to be at high risk for high school dropout. Risk factors include lack of attention, discipline, and role models (Huynh-Hohnbaum et al., 2015). Approximately one-quarter of children who have an incarcerated parent fail to graduate from high school (Sickmund et al., 2018). When a student rejects academic achievement as a goal, socializing with delinquent peers may be their logical consequence (Neely & Griffin-Williams, 2013).

Due to lack in attachment and trust with family members, all participants in the current study started to develop more trust and attachment with their friends. Despite participants recognizing that these individuals were not the best influences, they maintained these friends as they sought feelings of acceptance and belonging through their friendships. These feelings confirm Fagan and Mazerolle's (2011) findings that

youth are often seeking approval, acceptance, attachment, and status among their peers, especially if they are not receiving this at home.

As their father was incarcerated and their caregiver had less emotional strength to give, the participants often found themselves spending more time with peers. The current findings add to past studies that found that youth who do not have strong bonds with their families or positive role models are more at risk for becoming involved with negative peer activities (Barnert et al., 2015; Khan, 2018). The fear of isolation drives youth to be a part of a peer group, even if this group engages in negative activities. Peers have an impact on the behavior of an individual. Negative influence in a peer group leads to negative formation of character, as the youth spends most of their time with their peers (Khan, 2018). Boys are more willing to engage in risky or delinquent behaviors if their peers urge them to do so. Criminal behaviors are more likely to arise when juveniles are in negative social contexts (Barnert et al., 2015). These children can develop unhealthy coping mechanisms and associations with delinquent peers, which can lead to juvenile justice involvement (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011).

Participants in this study reported having either no attachment, anxious attachment, or avoidant attachment. Not one participant reported having a secure attachment with parental figures. All participants reported never being able to establish a secure attachment with their father due to his absence, leaving participants having a lack in family connections and feeling alone. These results add to previous studies, as they present how not having a secure attachment with family can feel for individuals who

experienced it. Every participant in this study had no attachment with their father and had their own juvenile justice involvement.

Incarceration creates disrupted attachment. The strongest predictors of future juvenile delinquency are insecure parental attachment, the absence of capable guardians, and an unstable family structure (Howell, 2015). The consequences of incarceration on families are numerous and varied and include, weakening of the family structure and obstacles to parental child relating. Having a father incarcerated increases involvement in expressive delinquent behavior because of the emotional strain that may be precipitated by weakened parental attachment (Howell, 2015; Porter & King, 2015; Will et al., 2014).

All participants in this study felt if they had a positive male role model to set an example for them that things may have been different as they would have been shown positive behaviors. Paternal incarceration separates a child from their father figure and limits their connection to a biological male role model. These findings confirm the findings in past studies that found that the incarceration of a same-sex parent has important implications for later role identification. Children are most likely to model members of their own sex. The loss of a same-sex parent impacts emotional and familial strains and these psychological factors can be the basis for children committing delinquent acts (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016; Perry & Langley, 2013). Social learning theory emphasizes that socialization occurs through modeling and reinforcement. Higher levels of contact and closeness lead to more successful modeling and reinforcement. Children who continue to have a close relationship with their fathers were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Galardi et al., 2015).

Walters' (2016) study revealed that same-sex role models are more effective than opposite-sex role models in promoting positive behaviors in youth. Having a same-sex role model predicted what type of peers the youth would befriend. These results suggested that same-sex role models can protect youth against negative peer selection. Same-sex role models do a better job of buffering against crime and delinquency than opposite-sex role models. Carlson and Knoester (2009) found that a positive emotional relationship and strong identification with the same-sex parent have been found to prevent future delinquency in children and adolescents. Having no role model, on the other hand, may provide at-risk youth with the least amount of protection. These studies indicate that role models serve a protective function by keeping youth from associating with antisocial peers and entering delinquent peer groups. Biological male role models are important, particularly for boys, as they play a critical role in the development of healthy psychological well-being.

All participants in this study had both an incarcerated father and juvenile criminal involvement. They also all reported not having secure attachment with their family and grew up without vital bonds or positive guidance. As represented by P6, "I pretty much raised myself". Without a positive role model to guide them down a path of success, participants found themselves following the examples set by their friends.

Theoretical Framework

Attachment theory was the theoretical framework in this study. This theory helped to explain the attitudes and behaviors of research participants. Attachment theory is a framework for understanding the development of an individual's social functioning and

social behavior. It was first developed by John Bowlby (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002). Bowlby was concerned with the closeness and emotional bonds that are developed between children and caregivers. Attachment theory explains how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences subsequent development. Bowlby states that all children have a biologically based tendency to seek attachments and bonds with a caregiver. The presence of this relationship or lack thereof will then be the foundation for the child's own social behavior (Stern & Cassidy, 2017).

Throughout this study, none of the participants reported a secure attachment with the father during their childhood. Six of the participants reported feeling that they had avoidant attachment, and one reported anxious attachment with the father. The lack of secure attachment was caused by being unable to spend quality time with their father. The fathers' forced separation due to imprisonment, and caregivers' unwillingness to engage in bringing the participants to visitation added to the inability to form and maintain a bond.

All participants in this study felt all alone due to not forming a secure attachment with their fathers. Prolonged absences, breakdowns in communication, and emotional unavailability caused participants to feel rejected and abandoned. Due to feelings of insecure attachment, the three participants that were placed into foster care were unable to trust their new caregivers. These participants had a history of abandonment by both their mothers and fathers, and this led them to feel a lack of trust towards adults. Many participants felt that they raised themselves.

Lack of bonds and positive male role models caused all participants to seek the intrinsic human need of attachment elsewhere. That is, it caused all participants to identify more strongly with antisocial peers than their families as the primary attachment figure. These friends provided the source of attachment support that was missing. These associations, combined with the absence of accountability, ultimately led all participants to becoming delinquent and involved in the juvenile justice system. These findings confirm Barnert et al. (2015) study that lack of attention, discipline, and a role model ultimately led youth to engage with antisocial peers and become involve in the criminal justice system. A positive emotional relationship and strong identification with the same-sex parent have been found to prevent future delinquency in children and adolescents. Secure attachments serve a protective function by keeping youth from associating with antisocial peers and entering delinquent peer groups (Carlson & Knoester, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

This study provided valuable in-depth information describing the lived experiences of young adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, grew up with an incarcerated father, for one year old longer during their childhood, and who also experienced their own juvenile justice involvement. Limitations are derived from the fact that this study utilized a qualitative research design. As a result, a limited number of participants were chosen to participate in the study. A quantitative study would have allowed for a larger population. However, using a qualitative method allowed for greater personalized detail on the lived experience than what a quantitative method would have provided.

The race, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, or cultural backgrounds were not considered for participant criteria. Considering these issues could have shed light on the experience of these groups of people, since they may have different or additional challenges in their lives that contribute to criminal involvement. However, conducting the study with a general profile of adult men allowed for the focus to be directed towards the attachment between sons and their incarcerated fathers.

The data collection process may pose another limitation, as the semi-structured interview responses were based on self-reports. Therefore, participants could possibly have, minimized, overstated, or denied certain experiences. However, trustworthiness of the study was supported by saturation, which was found with the seven participants. Common themes emerged from the study, which also supported confirmability. Furthermore, participants seemed willing to share their experiences, suggesting truthfulness. This research study only gained participants from the southeastern United States who frequented a free community center. Due to this recruiting method, these individuals may have all grown up in similar environments and experiences similar situations, therefore this study cannot be generalized to a larger population without further research.

Recommendations

Current research on the lived experiences of adult men between the ages of 18 and 25 who, grew up with an incarcerated father and experiences their own juvenile justice involvement, is very limited. This study's participants reported mixed feelings regarding the incarceration of their father. Some participants reported feelings of justice and others

reported feelings of sadness. These feelings could have been impacted by the type of relationship the participants had with the father prior to him going to prison, or how abusive he was. Brown (2017) study was able to determine that all participants who endured aggravating factors such as abuse were contributing factors in increasing the risk of juvenile justice involvement for children of incarcerated parents. Research focusing on abusive fathers could help determine what types of feelings children had towards his incarceration. If this separation was a loss or a relief, and if his abuse affected their attachment. In addition, only one of the participants in this study reported visiting their father in prison.

Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2017) study was the only study that was located that examined young children's attachment behaviors during jail visits. The results found that behaviors and emotions toward their incarcerated father during visits correlated with their emotions and behaviors with the caregiver who accompanied them. This current study can be replicated with a group of children who had regular contact and, a group who did not, to examine how the populations were affected differently by the incarceration. This is important to identify if prison visitation could help build and maintain secure attachment.

Finally, cultural factors were not addressed in this study. Future studies among specific races, sexual orientation, and other cultural backgrounds may increase understanding of how attachment and criminal involvement is viewed among different ethnicities. Comparisons can be made among the varied demographic to learn how worldviews are shaped from the influence of cultural beliefs. Also, research relating to

certain geographic areas, such as suburban, rural, or other areas may produce interesting findings based on the diverse settings.

Implications

The results of the current study contribute to several implications of positive social change. This research was undertaken, in part, because of the significant gap found in qualitative literature pertaining to all three aspects of attachment, father's imprisonment, and son's juvenile offending. This study adds to the knowledge base of qualitative research concerning the experience that paternal incarceration has on sons, and how that relates to attachment, and their juvenile justice involvement. The results of this study detail much-needed insights into what struggles and challenges children with incarcerated fathers grow up with from their lived experiences. The results have shown that all participants felt a lack of trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and feeling lost because of not having a role model. This led them to feel unmotivated to do well and rely more on friendships to feel attached.

Individual

This study has shown the great need for more resources to be put into place to help these children succeed and the importance of early interventions. All participants in this study reported feeling alone. Many of the participants felt if they had support early on, things would have been different. If services are put into place after the father's incarceration this could help the family process feelings and be linked to needed resources. These services could include counseling, financial assistance, mentoring, tutoring, mental health, and other supportive resources for the mothers/ caregivers.

Family and individual counseling would be very beneficial to address traumas due to physical abuse, the mother dying, and feelings of rejection, being judged, and unwanted by family members. Through counseling, the son's feelings can be processed with the therapist and then addressed with family members. This resource can lead to healing, bonding, fostering trust, and attachment. With financial resources this could help with the limited funds after the incarceration and help to provide for stable housing. As a result, this can help keep the family intact and prevent separation, which caused feeling of abandonment.

Community

None of the participants in this study reported graduating from high school. Mentoring and tutoring would provide beneficial guidance that is needed to stay on the right path and continue with their education. Education could also help deter hanging with the wrong crowd. When a student comes to reject academic achievement as a goal, socializing with delinquent peers may be their primary objective. School is regarded as a central arena for crime prevention and after leaving school, the chances of incarceration increase drastically (Neely & Griffin-Williams, 2013).

Society

Additionally, the findings of the study could inform social service workers of the importance of referring foster children to appropriate therapeutic services. In addition, having training for foster parents on the importance of attachment would be vital. This could help them understand insecure attachment and how to help these children develop attachment with other parental figures in their lives. Three of the seven participant in this

study were placed into foster care. All three reported that this placement was what caused them to engage in criminal activities, due to the lack of family support, guidance, and motivation to do well. Therapeutic services and trained foster parents could help ensure those who have been affected by abuse, abandonment, and trauma are properly treated and prepared to live a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

All of these services could be beneficial to help improve self-confidence, family bonds, teach life skills, encourage education, and deter from future criminal activity. Therefore, these services would help reduce internal and external issues that are linked to paternal incarceration and help deter and reduce children's involvement in the juvenile justice system. This would not only benefit the son and his family, but the community and society as whole, as their will be less crime.

Conclusion

Although current research has explored paternal incarceration, juvenile offending, and attachment, it has not connected all three aspects. Children of incarcerated fathers are the ones who are truly affected by his incarceration. This incarceration affects them in every aspect of their lives from financial, to relationships, to emotional stability. This phenomenon then leads sons to take negative pathways, and end up involved in the criminal justice system, creating a negative cycle of offending. Therefore, it is imperative to understand this population. Will et al. (2014) found that juveniles growing up experiencing parental incarceration experience more childhood adversity, and this adversity is the likely cause of juvenile criminal involvement (Will et al., 2014). Furthermore, the current study showed that young men believe that their juvenile

criminal involvement was due to their feelings regarding lack of trust, limited family support, and insecure attachment as a result of the adversity experienced by paternal incarceration.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis of this research allowed for in depth responses from a specific population. The three main themes that emerged included: trust issues due to feelings of abandonment, feeling like an outcast, and feeling lost because of not having a role model. These themes can serve as additional suggested research for future quantitative and qualitative studies, as well as inform mental health professionals, social service workers, and other community partners on ways to improve resources needed for this population. Future research can include focusing on children who had frequent prison visitation with their father, and families with different cultural variations.

Implications for social change include early interventions aimed at addressing issues and exploring familial attachment. This research provides possible suggestions for policy makers and social services workers that provide direct services to this population. A focus should be on school retention, as the dropout rates for this population are high. In addition, another priority should be on strengthening family bonds, as all participants lacked secure attachments. By engaging families right after the incarceration and providing resources, this can help prevent future issues that are caused by paternal incarceration.

This research highlights a topic that does not get much attention. Ideally, this research will begin to fill the current gap in research on sons with incarcerated fathers, their attachment, and juvenile offending. This current research study will help provide

avenues for social change and develop ways in which support can be employed to serve the affected population, which can have a strong impact on their ability to function in society.

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Appendix A: Eligibility Checklist

Eligibility Checklist

Below I have listed the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study. Please answer yes or no to the following questions by typing your response next to the answer line. When complete please email this form back to me at [REDACTED]. If you do not feel comfortable completing this via email and would like to call me to discuss the questions and verbally provide your response, please feel free to call [REDACTED]. Thank you again for your time and cooperation.

Please answer YES or NO to the following questions:

1. I am a male.

Answer: _____

2. I am between the ages of 18 to 25 years old.

Answer: _____

3. As a child (under 18 years old) my biological father was incarcerated for at least 1 year or longer.

Answer: _____

4. As a minor (under 18 years old) I experienced my own involvement with the juvenile justice system and became arrested.

Answer: _____

5. I am currently in jail or prison.

Answer _____

Appendix B: Recruitment of Participants

Would you like a \$10 Taco Bell gift card?

You are invited to take part in a research study about understanding the experiences of adults who as children grew up with a father in prison.

My name is Amanda Gibson, and I am a doctoral student of Forensic Psychology at Walden University. I am conducting this study for my PhD dissertation. For those interested in participating, the interviews will be conducted in-person or via Skype. The interviews will take no more than two hours. Please email me at

████████████████████ or call by phone at ██████████ for more information.

You may be eligible to participate in this study if you can answer YES to all of the following questions:

- I am a male between the ages of 18 to 25 years old.
- As a child (under 18 years old) my biological father was incarcerated for at least 1 year or longer.
- As a minor (under 18 years old) I experienced my own involvement with the juvenile justice system and became arrested.

All selected participants must meet the above criteria.

If you would like to participate in this study, please email me at ██████████. When I receive your email, I will send you more information on the study along with a consent form.

Appendix C: Counseling Services

List of National Resources**Name****Contact Number****National Suicide Hotline**

1-800-SUICIDE

This is a free, confidential crisis hotline that is available to everyone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Crisis Text Line

Text “HELLO” to 741741

Text hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the U.S.

The National Institute of Mental Health Information Resource Center

1-866-615-6464

This agency will connect you with mental health resources in your area. Speak with a representative from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST

SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline

1-877-726-4727

General information on mental health and locate treatment services in your area. Speak to a live person, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST