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Experiences of Nonincarcerated African American Male Youth With an Incarcerated Male Sibling

Fred Nana Biney
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Fred Nana Biney

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Walden University

2016

Abstract

Experiences of Nonincarcerated African American Male Youth

With an Incarcerated Male Sibling

by

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MS, Southern Connecticut State University, 1998

BS, Southern Connecticut State University, 1994

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services: Criminal Justice

Walden University

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Abstract

Approximately half of all incarcerated individuals in the United States are young African American men. Researchers have documented that nonincarcerated siblings may commit a crime when their sibling is in prison. The current study addressed literature regarding the experiences, and coping strategies of nonincarcerated young African American men who live in the inner city, and have a male sibling in prison. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study explored the lived experiences and coping strategies of African American male youth with a brother in incarceration. Purposive sampling was used to select 3 nonincarcerated African American young men aged 18 to 24 years living in the inner city of a large city in southern Connecticut for in-depth interviews. Overall findings showed that while having an incarcerated sibling was a profoundly negative experience for study participants, and their families, the study participants also developed some positive coping strategies as a result of their experiences. These results could help policymakers, social workers, counselors, and criminal justice professionals understand the impacts of sibling incarceration, and learn how to deal more effectively with youth affected by it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Young African American men living in U.S. inner cities face various challenges, including impoverished living conditions (Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009; Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005; Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005; Kreek, 2011). According to Phillips (2010), gang violence, drug abuse, robberies, and drive-by shootings are also very common throughout most of the communities in which African American youth live. As a result, the mass arrest, and incarceration of young African American males occur in these communities (Kreek, 2011).

According to researchers, the incarceration of a parent or family member is often associated with fear, anxiety, and anger. Sometimes there is also sadness, guilt, loneliness, low self-esteem, emotional withdrawal, antisocial behavior, and poverty (Laing & McCarthy, 2005; Meek, 2008). Various researchers have captured the adverse experiences of young African American men who live in U.S. inner cities (Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009; Ginwright et al., 2005; Hagan et al., 2005; Hay, Fortson, Hollist, Altheimer, & Schaible, 2007; Kreek, 2011; Rios, 2006; Spano, Rivera, & Bolland, 2006; Timberlake, 2007). However, none seem to have addressed the experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth who have an incarcerated male sibling. One of the significant consequences of the criminalization, and mass incarceration of young African American men is the exacerbation of social misery in the inner cities (Hines & McCoy-Holcomb, 2013). Hines and McCoy-Holcomb (2014) observed that in the incarceration process, family

members, especially children, siblings, friends, and the urban community, all become victims.

Gable (1992) and Glaze and Maruschak (2008) found that there are severe adverse effects of incarceration on children, family members, and partners of prisoners. These researchers noted that some people with a family member in prison suffer from loneliness, fear, anger, anxiety, social exclusion, reduced academic performance, and increased antisocial behavior (Gabel, 1992; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

The incarceration of young African American men has racial, and social ramifications for society (Hines & McCoy-Holcomb, 2013; Kreek, 2011). According to Hines and McCoy-Holcomb (2013), African American youth ages 16–24 years are overrepresented in criminal justice systems across the United States. Carson and Golinelli (2013) also noted that the arrest and incarceration rates of young African American males are the highest across all races in the United States. Thus, there is a possibility that nonincarcerated African American men could also become victims of incarceration.

Problem Statement

Researchers have also documented how older siblings can influence younger siblings, especially during the adolescent years (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012). Meek, Lowe, and McPhillips (2010) maintained that nonincarcerated siblings are likely to commit crimes while one sibling is in prison. Lam, Solmeyer, and McHale (2012) also argued that it is possible for siblings to have engaged in at-risk behaviors before one of them went to prison. Meek (2008) found that having an older incarcerated sibling could

influence the behavior of nonincarcerated younger siblings. Murray (2007) and Phillips (2010) noted that having an incarcerated family member or sibling has devastating effects on the nonincarcerated sibling, such as anger, anxiety, and social exclusion. According to Lam et al. (2012), when people are forced to separate because of the incarceration of their loved ones, they become very hostile. Lam et al. further noted that siblings normally have a similar genetic composition that results in their having many things in common.

Schlafer and Poehlmann (2011) found that African American youth who have a family member in incarceration suffer from cognitive changes, social and emotional problems, and other related risky behaviors. Schlafer and Poehlmann also found that the incarceration of a family member affects adolescents' relationships with peers, and teachers as well as their academic motivation, and school achievement.

My study contributes to the literature by providing insights into the experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth with a male sibling in incarceration. This study was significant because, according to researchers, when a family member is in incarceration, those left behind are often sorrowful, and angry (Laing & McCarthy, 2005). Meek (2008) also noted that nonincarcerated siblings sometimes withdraw emotionally, and demonstrate antisocial behavior. Meek et al. (2010) stated that about 80% of individuals in their study said that nobody asked them how they felt about their sibling's incarceration.

Meek (2008) conducted research in the United Kingdom on children ages 9–17 years (mean age 13 years) who had an older brother in prison. There were eight

participants (five females and three males) in the study. Five participants were White, and three were Black. However, Meek's study left a gap in the literature because it did not focus on race or ethnicity; the focus was on adolescence instead. My study fills this gap, as my focus was on nonincarcerated African American men ages 18–24 years who live in U.S. inner cities, and who have a male sibling in prison. My study contributes to the literature because few researchers have studied the effects of a sibling's incarceration on nonincarcerated siblings. Two exceptions are Brown (2003) and Heaton (2014), who included sibling incarceration as part of a wider focus on family members in prison or sibling incarceration from a professional practitioner's perspective rather than focusing specifically on siblings.

Heaton (2014) concluded that future researchers should examine the lived experience of both offending, and nonoffending siblings. Heaton also suggested that siblings should be interviewed to gain a firsthand perspective on the effects of sibling incarceration. However, Heaton did not focus on the offending or the nonincarcerated sibling but instead on practitioners' perspectives. Meek (2008) also noted a need for further studies on incarceration's effect on nonincarcerated siblings. Meek stated that future research should take participants' gender, age, and cultural background into consideration. I advanced Meek's research by looking specifically at African American male youth 18–24 years of age. Meek's and Heaton's studies were similar to mine; however, neither researcher sufficiently addressed the experiences, and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American youth whose brothers were in prison. In other

words, Meek's research was about nonincarcerated children between 13, and 17 years of age residing in the United Kingdom whose male sibling was in prison. Heaton's focus was on nonincarcerated siblings coping with grief related to a sibling's incarceration from a professional practitioner's perspective rather than the sibling's perspective. Thus, there was still a gap in the literature that I addressed with the present study.

Nonincarcerated African American male youth could also end up in prison through an incarcerated sibling's influence (Phillips, 2010). Despite this knowledge, only a few researchers have focused on sibling incarceration, especially in the context of nonincarcerated young African American males (Heaton, 2014; Meek, 2008; Murray, 2005; Phillips, 2010). Besides these studies, I found no other studies on the lived experiences and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American youth whose brothers were in prison. Findings from the present study are significant in that they can inform public policy, and help professionals in the community develop better support systems for young nonincarcerated African American men who have a male sibling in prison. The results of the current study could provide criminal justice practitioners with insights on developing intervention strategies. Additionally, the findings could contribute to reducing the likelihood of incarceration for nonincarcerated African American youth by providing them the knowledge needed to counteract negative sibling influences. Study results could also fill the gap in the literature by providing firsthand information on the lived experience of nonincarcerated African American males 18–24 years, and the strategies they use to cope with having a sibling in prison.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose was to use interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experiences of nonincarcerated African American male youth whose brothers were in prison through in-depth, one-on-one interviews with a purposive sample of participants. I conducted interviews with three nonincarcerated African American youth, which allowed them to describe their lived experiences, and coping strategies regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Question

The research question that I developed as the focus of the present study was the following: How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling?

Theoretical Framework

According to Giorgi (2009), qualitative researchers use a paradigm or worldview to conduct their research. A theoretical framework provides a particular perspective, or lens, through which to examine a topic (Maxwell, 2013). Also, according to Maxwell (2013), a theoretical background could be used to help understand the problem under investigation as it relates to the existing body of knowledge. Accordingly, I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to frame and inform every aspect of my research. The theory also provided a comprehensive explanation of young African American males' current coping strategies.

Although Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed ecological systems theory, he

credited Vygotsky and German-born psychologist Lewin for influencing him to do so. Ecological systems theory emphasizes environmental factors as major determinants of human development. According to this theory, human behavior can be viewed from an ecological perspective or a contextual lens. I used ecological systems theory to help establish a context in the communities where young African American men reside. I also used the approach to highlight common elements existing in inner cities. The items I addressed in this study include high poverty levels, school dropout rates, crime, and violence. I also highlighted ineffective community services and the mass incarceration of African American male youth.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory holds that the environmental surroundings of people, or where people live, influence their biological, psychological, and social development. Bronfenbrenner also contended that children do not grow up in isolation. Bronfenbrenner postulated that there was a set of interrelated systems that guide children in life. These systems include the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem*, and the *macrosystem*.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, social systems have roles, norms, and rules that contribute to a person's psychological development. Also, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory, people face numerous challenges in life, especially during the teenage years. For this reason, Bronfenbrenner postulated that providing young people with a high degree of social, and environmental support would be beneficial.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) also noted that the absence of strong social support systems such

as family, school, peers, church, and neighborhood, in addition to an unstable sociocultural environment, makes it difficult for individuals to make necessary life adjustments. Bronfenbrenner's theory, therefore, suggests that parents must support, and exercise reasonable control over their children to offset the peer pressure they encounter in challenging environments.

I adapted Bronfenbrenner's theory as the framework for this study; I also used studies, and other literature relevant to young African American males' experience (Giorgi, 2009). Additionally, I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory to explain the interrelatedness of environmental effects on African American youth. According to ecological systems theory, human behavior can be viewed from an environmental perspective or a contextual lens (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Also, I used the approach to help establish a context within the communities in which young African American men reside. Further, I used Bronfenbrenner's theory to highlight common elements existing in inner cities. These factors include high levels of poverty; high rates of high school dropout, crime, and violence; ineffective community services; and the mass incarceration of African American youth. I explored the ways in which Bronfenbrenner's four systems affect nonincarcerated young African American males, and the ways in which these young men deal with having a male sibling in prison.

Nature of the Study

IPA is a branch of phenomenology that condenses participants' perceptions of their experiences to understand their shared meaning of the broader phenomena under

investigation (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA constituted the nature of my study. The IPA framework was particularly suitable for this study because of its small sample size. I used a small sample size for this study because it allowed me to explore in detail the participants' views on the topic (Smith, 2011). The approach was useful because it allowed me to understand the meaning of the participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, it helped me maintain a degree of transparency. IPA empowers researchers to balance phenomenological descriptions of participants' stories with insightful interpretations to ensure that they preserve the different accounts. The IPA framework is also useful for answering questions such as those pertaining to the meaning of an individual's or people's shared life experiences.

I used a purposive sampling strategy to recruit the study participants from four inner-city communities in New Haven, Connecticut. I chose purposive sampling rather than mixed sampling because it was useful for selecting members who had firsthand experience of the phenomenon under investigation, and were willing to share their stories (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Smith et al. (2009) noted that it is important to select participants whose experiences are relevant to the study under consideration.

The sample size for this study was three participants, as suggested by Smith (2011) and Smith et al. (2009). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) also stated that having enough informants to create a saturation effect is very helpful at the conceptual level. However, it is less useful in providing practical guidance for estimating a sample size during the data collection phase. Guest et al. noted that during their literature search, they

found only seven studies that provided guidelines for actual sample sizes. My emphasis was on eliciting rich, in-depth information from participants until a saturation point was reached where no other additional useful information emerged (Smith, 2011).

Definition of Terms

African American youth: Defined in this present study as young Black males of African American ancestry or Black American descendants of Africans. The terms *African American*, and *Black* are used interchangeably (Western, 2006).

Exosystem: The *exosystem* contains the links between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role, and the individual's immediate context (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For example, a husband's or child's experience at home may be influenced by a wife, and mother's experiences at work. The mother might receive a promotion that requires more travel, which might increase conflict with the husband, and change patterns of interaction with the child.

Macrosystem: The *macrosystem* is the culture in which individuals live (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Cultural contexts include developing, and developed, or advanced nations, socioeconomic status, poverty, ethnicity, national, and social policies, the child's school, and the parent's workplace.

Male sibling: In this study, male sibling refers to a full biological brother or a biological half-brother. The term does not include an adopted male brother (Richardson, 2012).

Mesosystem: Mesosystems consist of relationships between *microsystems*, or connections between contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Examples are relationships between family experiences and school experiences, relationships between school experiences, and church experiences, and relationships between family experiences, and peer experiences.

Microsystem: The institutions, and groups that most immediately and directly impact a child's development, including family, school, religious institutions, neighborhood, and peers, constitute a microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Assumptions

My general assumption was that locating inner-city African American youths aged 18–24 years who had an incarcerated male sibling would be a difficult task. It was also my assumption that the participants would have the mental ability to remember, recall, and reflect on their emotional lived experiences. Additionally, my assumption was that they would be able to remember, recall, and think about their coping strategies regarding having a male sibling in prison. It was also my assumption that the participants would agree to audiotaping of their interviews.

I also assumed that because I was using the IPA approach, which would give the participants freedom to express themselves, participants would give honest answers to the research question under investigation. My assumption was that if I protected the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality through giving them pseudonyms instead of using their real names, they would also share their lived experiences with me.

Another assumption was that all of the participants would cooperate, and work with me, provided that I reminded them that their participation in this study was voluntary, and that they had the right to stop anytime they wished without consequences. Further, they had the right to refuse any question they deemed inappropriate. My final assumption was that all of the study participants may have experienced the same or similar phenomena.

Delimitations

This study's specific focus was nonincarcerated African American men aged 18–24 years who live in U.S. inner cities, and have a male sibling in prison. African American youth in this age group were chosen for this study because this population has the highest conviction, and incarceration rates in the United States (Carson & Golinelli, 2013). Results of a quantitative study would not be the same as those obtained from this phenomenological study. Findings were based on the interpretation of lived experiences rather than on quantitative analysis.

Other theoretical frameworks might have been useful in explaining the experiences of young African American men but were not selected for this study, including social organization theory, critical racial theory, social evolutionary theory, strain theory, and social learning theory. In particular, strain theory could have been just as applicable as ecological systems theory. I did not select any of these theories because I believed that ecological systems theory was the best fit for this study.

Limitations

There were many potential limitations when this study was conducted, especially within the IPA framework. For instance, with IPA, researchers should be able to extract in-depth knowledge of participants' lived experiences. However, I did not find it easy to get the participants to provide more details on their life experiences or speak extensively on issues they considered very sensitive. Additionally, because I used IPA, the sample size was limited to a small number of participants. Thus, findings from my study might not be generalizable to a wider population.

Phenomenological research is time consuming. With the use of the IPA approach, the dataset becomes very comprehensive (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, I used open-ended questions in this study, which made data collection, and analysis time consuming.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because, to the best of my knowledge, there have been no other studies on the lived experiences of nonincarcerated African American male youth who have a male sibling in prison. The results of this study could, therefore, make a significant contribution to scholarship in criminal justice in many ways. For example, the current findings could be used to influence public policies, and introduce more intervention programs, and some specific social development programs. These programs could help young African American men living in the inner city, especially those with a male sibling in prison. In addition, community leaders, and social service providers could

use knowledge gained from the study findings to develop alternative coping strategies such as afterschool programs, mentorship programs, and job training programs specifically tailored to help families affected by sibling incarceration. The results obtained from this current study could also provide insights, and knowledge to help nonincarcerated African American male youth counteract negative influences from siblings in prison. Thus, the current findings could contribute to reducing the likelihood of incarceration for nonincarcerated African American young men in U.S. inner cities. Additionally, results from the present study could help social workers, mental health workers, counselors, and criminal justice professionals better understand the adverse impacts of sibling incarceration, and help them effectively deal with youth affected by sibling incarceration.

Summary of Chapter 1

Numerous researchers have indicated that young African American men who live in U.S. inner cities face various challenges, including impoverished living conditions (Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009). According to Phillips (2010), gang violence, drug abuse, robberies, and drive-by shootings are very common throughout most of the communities in which African American youth live. As a result, Phillips noted, the mass arrest, and incarceration of young African American males have occurred in these communities. According to researchers, the incarceration of a parent or family member is often associated with fear, anxiety, and anger. Sometimes, there is also sadness, guilt, loneliness, low self-esteem, emotional withdrawal, antisocial behavior, and poverty

(Laing & McCarthy, 2005; Meek, 2008). Various researchers have captured the adverse experiences of young African American men who live in U.S. inner cities (Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009; Ginwright et al., 2005; Hagan et al., 2005; Hay et al., 2007; Kreek, 2011; Rios, 2006; Spano et al., 2006; Timberlake, 2007). However, none have addressed the experiences and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth who have an incarcerated male sibling.

Chapter 2 contains an explanation of the study search strategies, and the literature review. In Chapter 3, the study design, the participants involved, and the procedures employed are discussed.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Incarceration affects thousands of U.S. families every year. Many studies highlight incarceration's effects on the family. However, few researchers have focused on the experiences of nonincarcerated siblings who have a brother or sister in prison (Heaton, 2014). Specifically, of interest to the present study is how nonincarcerated African American male youth cope with a male sibling in incarceration.

Meek (2008), Murray (2007), and Phillips (2010) all noted that having an incarcerated family member has a devastating effect on nonincarcerated family members. Studies have shown that when people are forced to separate because of the incarceration of their loved ones, they become very hostile (Hoffman-Fishman, 1981; Laing & McCarthy, 2005; Meek, 2008). Researchers have also documented how older siblings, in particular, can influence younger siblings, especially during the adolescent years (McHale et al., 2012). Meek et al. (2010) maintained that nonincarcerated siblings are likely to commit crimes while one sibling is in prison. According to Lam et al. (2012), under normal circumstances siblings have a similar genetic composition that results in their having many things in common. Additionally, they may live in the same household or community and meet and make the same friends, especially if they are close in age, and attend the same school. Lam et al. argued that it is possible for siblings to have engaged in at-risk behaviors before one of them went to prison. For this reason, it is likely that nonincarcerated African American youth could also end up in jail through the influence of a sibling in incarceration (Phillips, 2010). In the following sections, I explain

the study's search strategies, and present the theory used as the basis for this study. I further examine the African American male youth environment, and the educational status of African American male youth. Additionally, I discuss the high rate of incarceration among African American male youth. Finally, I talk about African American male youth, and the criminal justice system.

Research Strategies

The information sources used in the literature search included Walden University's Thoreau 360 link database, which was employed for all initial searches to provide a broad range of possible sources. The words searched included the following: *incarcerated, incarceration, nonincarcerated, sibling, brother, at-risk youth, young men, youth violence, imprisonment, prisoner, inner cities, urban area, crime, and ecological systems theory*. The search queries were limited to peer-reviewed, and full-text articles, and additional materials were obtained via a review of references used by other authors. Walden University's online library services provided most of the articles reviewed for this research. Wesleyan University, and Middlesex Community College libraries in Middletown, Connecticut, served as additional sources. The databases used for the literature search included ProQuest, ERIC, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, PsycArticles, Sage, and Academic Search Complete.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 2005) developed the ecological systems theory used as the framework for the present study. Bronfenbrenner credited Vygotsky, and Lewin as

the theorists who influenced him. Bronfenbrenner first introduced social ecology in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, it became a theoretical model based on four environmental systems in which individuals interact: the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the exosystem, and the *macrosystem*.

Although many theories could be used to explain human development, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work is one of the best-known foundations for ecological counseling (Kreek, 2011). Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes environmental factors as playing a significant role in human development. According to Bronfenbrenner, a system has social roles, norms, and rules that may contribute to an individual's psychological development.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that the *microsystem* consists of the most immediate institutions that directly impact a person's development. These include families, schools, religious institutions, neighborhoods, and peers. The human interactions within these institutions constitute an ecological framework (Kreek, 2011). The *mesosystem* consists of the relationships between the microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). The microsystems influence each other; for example, a strained relationship between an African American youth and his family could also affect his relationship with school officials. As a result, the type of relationships that exist in the homes of young African American men could be used to explain the nature of the relationships the youth may have with their school officials, or with those in social settings.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) noted that the *exosystem* refers to the external structures beyond the microsystem, such as social policies, social support, and government structures that can influence or affect an individual's life. For instance, Bronfenbrenner postulated that the high unemployment rates among young African American men in inner cities impacted their economic well-being. Governmental, and social policies such as the "get tough on crime" movement, and the war on drugs increased the number of young African American men in prison (Kreek, 2011). Moreover, governmental, and social structures impact the lives of African American youth in various ways. For example, Males (2011) noted that African Americans are 4 times more likely than Whites to face arrest for marijuana possession. They are also 10 times more liable to go to prison for marijuana-related charges in general, and in California they are 12 times more liable to go to prison for a marijuana offense. As a result, government policies that are tough on drug offenders have led to a dramatic increase in the number of young African American men in the criminal justice system.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the *macrosystem* as the cultural beliefs, societal values, politics, and communication that can affect people's lives. Bronfenbrenner stated that the *macrosystem* affects most African American men because they live in marginalized inner-city communities. The lives of most African American men are defined by poverty, high unemployment, low socioeconomic conditions, and racial segregation (Hong, Algood, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the immediate environment (*microsystem*) and its interrelations with the *mesoenvironment*, and the *exoenvironment* are partly responsible for human development. Societal norms, and governmental policies (the *macroenvironment*) also affect the lives of young African American men.

The Social Environments of African American Youth

As previously discussed, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory posits that adolescent development mirrors the impact of four environmental systems. For example, most young African American men reside in poverty-stricken areas, and attend schools with inadequate resources. Moreover, most of these schools are located in inner cities, where there are high dropout and failure rates (Phillips, 2010). The social environments, or the neighborhoods in which many young African American men live play a pivotal role in the number, and types of opportunities provided to them. Many of these settings have high unemployment rates, and many single-parent households (Livingston & Nihimana, 2006). Phillips (2010) noted that, most significantly, these communities also experience a high rate of incarceration of young African American men.

For example, according to Kreek (2011), African American youth who live in U.S. inner cities are provided poor public services. There is also a lack of community engagement to mobilize young people toward active community involvement. According to Richardson (2012), most African American males do not have adequate male role models in their communities to motivate, and encourage them to do positive things.

Consequently, Phillips (2010) noted that most African American youth find themselves in environments of social disorder.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), the national unemployment rate for African Americans in 2014 was 11.3%, compared to 5.3% for European Americans. The 2014 labor statistics also indicated that young African American men living in the inner-city communities (*microsystem*) suffer from severe unemployment, and lack decent jobs (*mesosystem*, *exosystem*, and *macrosystem*). For this reason, the absence of employment opportunities results in rampant burglary, car thefts, shoplifting, drug peddling, and drug trafficking in inner-city communities (Kreek, 2011). In other words, when there is an economic downturn that produces a high unemployment rate among African Americans, their social conditions, in general, also become worse. As a result, African American youth turn to criminal activities in the inner cities (Livingston & Nihimana, 2006). Spano et al. (2006) noted that because many young African American men engage in delinquent, and criminal behaviors, they face arrest, and incarceration.

In 2012, New Haven, Connecticut, compared to the rest of the state, recorded the highest crime rate (Connecticut Department of Public Safety, 2014). The crime index of the city was 8,500, and in that year the city recorded 17 murders, 58 rapes, 584 robberies, 1,464 burglaries, and 4,440 larcenies. According to a report from the Connecticut Department of Public Safety (2014), of the 21 reported murders, 19 were committed by African Americans. Of the 13 rapes reported in New Haven, 9 were committed by

African Americans; of the 5,752 assaults reported, 3,932 were committed by African Americans. As previously noted, statistics like these reflect the social ecology of nonincarcerated African American youth. The state of the environment of young African American men could be used to indicate their developmental outcomes, especially in New Haven. For example, in 2009, the unemployment rate for New Haven was 11.2%. Moreover, the overall unemployment rate for Connecticut was 7.9%, while the nation's unemployment rate was 9.4% (City of New Haven, 2014). The U.S. Census Bureau (2014) estimated New Haven's population in 2013 to be 130,660; of this, 44.7% were European American, and 34.2% were African American. The Connecticut Department of Labor (2014) also noted that in 2013, the unemployment rate for New Haven was 9.9%, compared to the state unemployment figure of 6.9%.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the *exosystem* includes the environment's socioeconomic context. In that respect, a high national unemployment rate could have a ripple effect on inner-city communities where unemployment is exceptionally high. African American youth are affected when jobs move from urban centers to the suburbs. The ripple effect is a lack of employment opportunities for young African American men (Kreek, 2011). Kreek (2011) argued that the limited employment opportunities in inner cities often result in desperation, and inequality, which in turn create an atmosphere that nurtures illegal activities among the unskilled, and uneducated.

According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2011), only 47% of African American males graduate from high school. Furthermore, the Schott Foundation for Public Education noted that

Black males are more chronically unemployed, and underemployed, are less healthy, and have access to fewer health care resources, die much younger, and are many times more likely to be sent to jail for periods significantly longer than males of other racial ethnic groups. (p. 3)

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2015a), African Americans make up only 12% of the U.S. population. However, they comprised 44% of all new HIV infections cases in 2014. Morris et al. (2014) observed that African Americans were less likely than European Americans to have visited a healthcare facility in a previous year. Morris et al. also noted that 21% of study participants (African American male youth) tested positive for gonorrhea, chlamydia, or trichomonas's, compared to 3% of Whites.

The CDC (2015b) noted that the rate of AIDS infections among African Americans is 10 times higher than the rate among European Americans. Additionally, HIV, and AIDS infections among African American youth are growing at a rate faster than in any other segment of the population. The CDC estimated that HIV will affect 1 in 16 African American men at some point in their lifetimes. In 2014, 44% of all new HIV infection cases were African Americans. Additionally, in the year 2014, an estimated 73% of all new HIV cases among African Americans were men (CDC, 2015b).

According to CDC, in 2013, 3,742 African Americans died of HIV, or AIDS, equals to

more than of all those who died of the disease that year. This information is vital to the present study because many African American young men contract HIV, and AIDS while in incarceration (CDC, 2015b). Additionally, due to the ecological surroundings of many African American males, the CDC noted that African American youth had the fastest growing suicide rate, and the highest homicide rates as victims and perpetrators in 2012.

Researchers have written extensively on the conditions, and the experiences of African American young men residing in inner cities (Aldrige & Daniels, 2001). However, only a few researchers have underscored the impact of family member incarceration on African American young men with a sibling in prison (Gabel, 1992; Murray, 2007; Schlafer & Poehlman, 2011). Meek's (2008) study focused only on the experiences of nonincarcerated younger siblings with an older sibling in prison. My study was meant to fill a gap in the literature by focusing on how nonincarcerated African American young men cope with the incarceration of a male sibling by exploring their lived experiences. This study is important in part because the rate of incarceration among African American men has been reported to be the highest in the nation (Adelman, 2013).

African American Youth and High Rates of Incarceration

Most African American youth live in poverty. This condition has been suggested as the cause of numerous crimes, especially among racial minorities (Spano et al., 2006.). African American men between ages 18 and 24 years face high incarceration rates due to their social environments, and economic status (Richardson, 2012). According to Richardson (2012), much research has underscored the adverse effects of incarcerating

young African American men. Richardson noted that the steep rise in incarceration in African American communities serves as a disadvantage to the inner-city communities involved. According to Richardson, one apparent problem associated with the incarceration of African American youth is that they find it difficult to obtain suitable employment once they are released. Additionally, these ex-convicts become disenfranchised.

The increasing number of people going into prisons has resulted in more prisons being built in every part of the United States (Richardson, 2012). Richardson noted that building more prisons correlates to the mass arrest, and incarceration of young African American men from inner cities. The direct consequence of arresting, and sending more African American youth to prison is the devastation of African American urban communities (Phillips, 2010). Phillips posited that urban communities lose various forms of capital—physical, human, and social—when many African American male youth go to prison. The arrest and overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system correlate to the war on drugs initiated in 1972 by President Richard Nixon (Western, 2006).

African Americans and the Criminal Justice System

The war on drugs is a leading cause of the overrepresentation of African American youth in the current criminal justice system (Western, 2006). Under President Ronald Reagan, the modern war on drugs became more intensive with the appointment of a drug czar to the Executive Office of the President. At the time of this writing, the U.S.

criminal justice system used mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines to ensure that repeated drug offenders are given mandatory minimum terms of incarceration for their drug offenses (Adelman, 2013). According to Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM, 2013), first-time offenders are given 10 years under the mandatory minimum laws for drug trafficking. These laws are applied to offenders for manufacturing, distribution, and possession with the intent to distribute 1 kg of heroin or 5 kg of cocaine. FAMM observed that second-time offenders are given a 20-year sentence. A person who commits the offense a third time is condemned to a maximum of life incarceration. Moreover, these laws stipulate that habitual offenders' sentences must not be suspended. The consequence of mandatory minimum statutes ("Three strikes and you are out!") is the disproportionate, mass incarceration of African American male youth (Adelman, 2013). While there is an association between drug laws, and the high incarceration rate of African American young men in the criminal justice system, other factors have also contributed to the phenomenon.

Adelman (2013) argued that before the sentencing guidelines were imposed, judges treated all racial group more equitably than after the laws were put in place. Adelman also noted that sentencing disparities have been a disadvantage to ethnic minorities. For example, the penalty for possessing 1 gram of heroin is 10 years in prison. However, the possession of 5 gram of crack cocaine could result in an automatic mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in incarceration. According to Adelman, many racial minorities, especially African Americans, are in prison for possessing crack

cocaine, for using crack cocaine, or for dealing in crack cocaine. Adelman also observed that crack cocaine is far more affordable than the refined powdered cocaine. Adelman noted that during the mid-1980s, sentencing of African Americans for illegal drug activity was at an average of just 11% more than that for European Americans. However, by 1990, the drug sentencing rate had leaped to almost 50% of African Americans.

Using drugs could lead to criminal involvement among adolescents living in urban centers (Green, Doherty, Stuart, & Ensminger, 2010). Green et al. recruited 702 African American youths from inner cities to determine whether heavy marijuana use impacted adult criminal involvement. Green et al. also explored whether heavy marijuana use could lead to the perpetuation of crimes associated with drugs, property damage, and violence as well as to arrests and incarcerations. The authors found that heavy marijuana use may lead to drug- and property-related crimes but not violent crimes. Thus, Green et al. suggested that the early prevention of heavy marijuana use among adolescents could potentially reduce drug- and property-related crimes in adulthood. Additionally, Green et al. noted that the significant effects of early marijuana use include an increased risk of committing various types of crimes, and becoming a victim of the criminal justice system. Green et al. also noted that many African American youths go to prison due to substance abuse offenses. For this reason, Green et al. suggested educating African American youth on the dangers of early marijuana use to reduce the incarceration rate.

A similar study conducted by Forsythe and Gaffney (2012) in Australia revealed that a significant number of people arrested by the police had been previously diagnosed

with mental disorders. The authors argued that many people diagnosed with disorders, such as drug addicts, could also become victims of the criminal justice system. According to Forsythe and Gaffney, previous researchers noted that poor mental health is more prevalent among prisoners than among the general population. They also found that poor mental health does not necessarily lead to offending or criminal behavior.

Forsythe and Gaffney (2012) posited that the combination of mental disorder, and substance abuse could potentially lead to criminal activities. Based on this evidence, the authors maintained that there should be specialized problem-solving courts to handle people suffering from mental disorders. They also stated that society would benefit from reclassifying offenders with mental health problems as at-risk offenders. According to Forsythe and Gaffney, the reclassification would enable professionals like social workers, mental health practitioners, and criminal justice professionals to deal effectively, and holistically with the problem, thereby reducing the problem of recidivism.

African American young men encounter numerous challenges in addition to poverty, and drug abuse. For example, young African American men lead the United States in various health-related problem such as HIV, and AIDS (CDC, 2013). According to Richardson (2012), African American male youth also face many health-related challenges, and their school dropout rate is also staggering. Richardson noted that most of the problems African American males encounter relate to their school dropout rates, and the lack of positive role models in urban communities. Thus, the incarceration of African

American male youth could lead to these school dropout rates, and also the lack of male sibling role models.

The Educational Status of African American Youth Living in Inner Cities

On the educational status of African American males, Pettit (2012) noted that she found it easier to locate a young African American man without a diploma in prison than in a workplace. Pettit stated that about 70% of African American youth, especially those who are less educated, and who are unemployed, will be in jail at some point in their lives. Richardson (2012), on the other hand, noted that one of the reasons juvenile delinquency, and crime are widespread in the African American community is the high level of school dropout rates. Richardson added that the easiest way for African American youth to become delinquent, and to live lives of crime was to drop out of school.

The Social Ecology of Many African American Youth

According to Massoglia, Glenn, and Warner (2014), average African Americans living in urban areas also live in communities with high poverty rates. They also live in neighborhoods where the poverty rates are greater than for all but 10% of where urban Whites live. Massoglia et al. found that most African American men live in poor, inner-city communities. Massoglia et al. also indicated that most minority ex-inmates return to more disadvantaged neighborhoods such as the inner city communities than White ex-inmates do. Massoglia et al. noted that most African American children were more likely to have a mother in prison than White children. Also, many schools situated in urban

communities are underfunded. According to Massoglia et al., schools in inner-city communities have low academic achievement levels, which contribute to the cycle of poverty among African American youth. Bronfenbrenner (2005) maintained that it is important for parents to get involved with their children's social, and academic lives, and stated that doing so will ensure that children obtain more parental input, and direction to make up for the lack of structural support in the community.

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), humans go through numerous life changes. For example, he argued that people's environmental surroundings influence their biological, psychological, and social development. Without the necessary environmental support, life transitions become severe.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) also posited that family, school, peers, church, neighborhood, sociocultural, and structural conditions define people. As such, a high degree of parental control is needed to offset the effects of peer pressure for children who live in impoverished environments. According to Spera (2005), ecological systems theory could be used to promote human growth, and development in certain environments where people live. Other researchers have also suggested that parental influence is an important determinant of behavior among adolescents in general, and in young African American males in particular (Hines & McCoy-Holcomb, 2013). According to Spera (2006), parental social control, and involvement could help decrease school dropout rates among African American youth. Also, Spera argued that parental control could help curb peer pressure in inner cities, and keep African American youth away from negative influences.

Hines and McCoy-Holcomb (2013) used ecological systems framework in their cross-sectional study to examine how African American parental characteristics affect the academic achievement of African American youth. The researchers wanted to investigate how environmental factors such as the family structure, church attendance, and parental monitoring contributed to the academic achievement of African American youth. The initial study results indicated no significant relationship between parenting styles, and the enrollment of young African American men in honors courses. However, Hines and McCoy-Holcomb found that African American youth who lived with both parents were protected from harmful influences. The results also showed that a father's educational level tended to affect a son's grade point average. Hines and McCoy-Holcomb suggested that further investigation of African American parenting styles was needed to determine the best parental strategies for young African American men.

Many researchers have posited that positive parental influences could shape African American youth. However, the youth's social environments are also very critical to their social development (Mandara, Murray, Telesford, Varner, & Richman, 2012). According to Mandara et al. previous study findings have indicated that young African American females receive different (and better) treatment than young African American males. Based on that evidence, Mandara et al. conducted a longitudinal study to detect mothers' interactions with their male and female children. The researchers also used a social ecological framework for understanding African American's parenting styles.

The results of the Mandara et al.'s (2012) study confirmed findings from previous studies: African American mothers treat their daughters far better than they treat their sons. Research results also showed that the relationships between African American mothers, and their daughters were far friendlier as well as more considerate, and supportive. The relationships African American mothers had with their sons, however, were not based on reassurance, and nurturing. The study results further showed that African American youth were positively influenced by cordial, supportive relationships with their mothers.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory, Richardson (2012) conducted a longitudinal, and ethnographic study on adolescent violence among inner-city youth. Richardson noted that mass unemployment, poverty, violence, and drug-related crimes were rampant in the environments of African American youth. Richardson also maintained that the mass arrest, and incarceration of young African American men living in these communities is not uncommon. Richardson used a conceptualized framework of social capital and argued that most incarcerated African American males could have served as a social capital for inner-city youth.

In his 3-year study, Richardson (2012) observed, and recorded activities, and violent behaviors among 15 early adolescent African American males attending middle schools. About 80% of the participants came from households headed by single females. Richardson's results revealed that both inner-city African American male adolescents, and their single parents benefitted from Black male coaches. Richardson also suggested

that there is a need to focus on African American male coaches who could be mentors, and also fill various other roles for young African American men living in inner-city communities.

Singh and Ghandour (2012) conducted a study, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory, on neighborhood social conditions, and socioeconomic status. The research also related to the number of times parents reported the behavior problems of their children between the ages of 6 and 17 years. The authors used the impact of neighborhood social conditions, and household socioeconomic status to indicate behavior outcomes in children. Singh and Ghandour associated higher numbers of behavioral problems with children from socially disadvantaged neighborhoods, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. They further stated that improving lower socioeconomic status areas could also address children's behavioral problems. The results of Singh and Ghandour's study also indicated that children from poor or unsafe neighborhoods were 3.1 times less likely to succeed in behavior modification compared to those from communities considered safe.

Experiences of Nonincarcerated Family Members

Previous studies have shown that about 80% of children in the United States grow up with at least one sibling, which suggests that many families could be affected by sibling incarceration (Kothari, Sorenson, Bank, & Snyder, 2014). Kothari et al. also noted that it is more likely for children to grow up with a sibling than a father. According to Glaze and Maruschak (2008), racial minorities, particularly African Americans, are

overrepresented in the imprisoned population, which makes it likely that a disproportionate number of minority children will have a household member in incarceration. Glaze and Maruschak noted that in 2007 African American children were 7.5 times more likely than European American children to have a parent in incarceration. They also pointed out that almost 70% of parents in incarceration reported having a history of substance abuse, and about 48% also reported not having a high school diploma or GED.

Most research on family relationships, and incarceration has underscored the negative effects of having a parent in prison. Murray (2007) noted that having a parent in incarceration could lead a child to experience social exclusion, and that it increased the risk of a child participating in various offensive behaviors. Nicols and Loper (2012) posited that efforts must be made to address the needs of children with incarcerated parents. Nicols and Loper also argued for focusing on the challenges confronting households that experience the loss of any household member due to incarceration. Gabel (1992) observed that most children whose parents are in prison demonstrate fear, anxiety, anger, antisocial behavior, and sadness. Additionally, they suffer from guilt, loneliness, low self-esteem, emotional withdraw, and reduced academic performance. Researchers have also found that African American youth with a family member in prison suffer from cognitive changes, social, and emotional problems, and other related risky behaviors (Schlafer & Poehlmann, 2011). Schlafer and Poehlmann's study also showed that the incarceration of a family member affects adolescents as well as their relationships with

their peers and teachers. Likewise, it affects their academic motivation, and school achievement. The minute parents are in prison; children become exposed to numerous life challenges, and risky behaviors (Arditti, 2005). When parents are in incarceration children are left alone with family members to whom they must learn to adjust. At the same time, they must come to terms with family separation due to the incarceration (Arditti, 2012). Arditti also noted that children whose parents are in prison face social stigmatization, and sometimes find it difficult to get what they want; for instance, emotional support from other family members. According to Glaze and Maruschak (2008), children whose parents are in prison are more likely to come from a minority ethnic group, and may also have been exposed to parental drug usage. Philips (2010) also posited that children with an incarcerated parent, and from an ethnic minority group are also more likely to live in extreme poverty.

Experiences of Siblings

According to Meek (2008), only a few studies have been completed on how the incarceration of a sibling impacts a nonincarcerated sibling. However, Meek observed that a growing amount of literature in this area has primarily focused on the experiences of siblings in adverse situations. Petalas, Hastings, Nash, Dowey and Reilly (2012) also noted that most of these studies included siblings with disabilities, and chronic illness. Although siblings contribute as building blocks of the family structure, researchers have often neglected their dynamic roles, and contributions (McHale et al., 2012). Previous studies grounded in multiple disciplinary perspectives have underscored the complexity

and quality of sibling interactions (Petalas et al., 2012). According to McHale et al. (2012), 82.22% of youth age 18 years, and under live with at least one sibling. McHale et al. found that while Asian Americans and European Americans live with fewer siblings, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans grow up with more siblings.

In a phenomenological study, Cartwright and Henriksen (2012) found that having a male role model was significant to all of their study participants. According to the researchers, many of the participants indicated that the most influential people in their lives were pastors, uncles, and stepfathers. Thus, study findings suggested a critical need for young African American males in inner cities to have positive role models. According to Cartwright and Henriksen, having role models could help African American young men ward off peer pressure, and delinquent behavior as well as encourage a positive attitude toward education.

Sibling Separation Through Incarceration

Incarcerated African American youth can have both positive, and negative effects on their nonincarcerated male siblings due to the empathy some siblings develop for each other (Lam et al., 2012). Research conducted by Kothari et al. (2014) indicated that siblings can influence each other, and are capable of becoming equal partners in committing offenses. Sibling relationships, on the other hand, are characterized by reciprocal social exchanges, especially when their ages are close to each other (Lam et al., 2012). Lam et al. noted that many siblings perceive a brother or sister as the first

person, besides a parent, to whom they can relate. As a result, siblings are willing to share secrets, and many things (both good and bad) together.

A question that remains underexplored is whether the incarcerated siblings of African American young men could have an impact on their nonincarcerated male siblings. Lam et al. (2012) also observed that young people who had a closer relationship with their siblings, on average, reported higher levels of understanding. Findings from prior studies have indicated that siblings could impact each other empathically. Petalas et al. (2012) studied the perspectives of teenage siblings growing up with a brother or sister with autism spectrum disorder. Petalas et al. found that one of the difficulties siblings encountered was the impact of their brother's condition on themselves, and their family. Also, siblings worry about how others negatively react to their brother's condition. Petalas et al. concluded that young siblings impacted by their brother's circumstances should be encouraged to discuss their brother's issues openly.

Sibling relationships are sometimes very hostile and aggressive (Sanders, 2004). Nevertheless, some research has also shown that siblings complement each other while older siblings can control or influence younger sibling negatively. According to Sanders, a sibling's incarceration could be traumatic to nonincarcerated siblings, especially those living in inner cities. Sanders argued that because many siblings form strong attachments to each other, it is possible that the nonincarcerated siblings could face numerous challenges when separation occurs through incarceration.

The Influences of Siblings

Most siblings admire each other. However, they sometimes demonstrate intense love, conflict, and sibling rivalry (Buist, 2010). Greer, Campione-Barr, Debrown, and Maupin (2014) stated that siblings' environmental influences tend to be different based on their peer associations, suggesting that siblings could also be distinct from each other. McGuire and Segal (2012) characterized the differences in sibling intimacy for each other by their level of association with their peers. Greer et al. observed that sibling relationships are significant because they create an avenue for social learning skills, and conflict learning strategies.

Many older siblings have a high degree of control on the psychological, and social development of their younger siblings (Buist, 2010). According to Buist, younger siblings are more likely to be influenced by their older siblings, especially when the older sibling makes criminal behavior appear typical, and decisive. Researchers have found that older siblings do have more negative effects on younger siblings when it comes to delinquent behaviors (Fortuna, Roisman, Haydon, & Groh, 2011). According to Fortuna et al. (2011), older siblings could place the quality of sibling relationship into jeopardy by exerting a strong influence on younger siblings. For instance, the researchers noted that the ages of 18 to 25 years were very critical for African American men because it is a time that leads to self-awareness and exploration. According to the authors, it also marks a period when siblings attempt to establish their greater independence as young adults. During this time of transition, most sibling relationships are transformed. Also, Fortuna et

al. (2011) noted that many siblings move out of the home in a transitional period, which disrupts the natural pattern of sibling relations. According to the authors, during these crucial period siblings also decide whether they will continue to have the same feelings toward each other. Fortuna et al. observed that prior researchers have found that in most cases sibling relationships remain a significant source of family support. The authors argued that siblings tend to lean on each other for various types of assistance throughout the years, even when they choose to separate from their home environment. Fortuna et al. also noted that although siblings depend on each other, and impact each other's lives, researchers have found that older siblings provide more guidance, and support to young adolescent siblings. Additionally, regarding social power in particular, numerous researchers have found that older siblings influence their younger siblings.

Barnard's (2005) research revealed that older siblings encourage younger siblings to abuse drugs. Conger and Reuter (1996) highlighted the ways in which older siblings can influence younger siblings to smoke. Bard and Rodgers (2003) also examined how older siblings' behavior encourages younger siblings to engage in sexual activities. Kornreich, Hearn, Rodriguez, and O'Sullivan (2003) observed that older siblings can affect younger siblings when it comes to physical aggression. Aguilar, O'Brien, August, Aoun, and Hektner (2001) noted that younger siblings quickly imitate the unhealthy behaviors and lifestyles of older siblings. D'Amico and Fromme (1997) found that older siblings contribute significantly toward influencing younger siblings to participate in dangerous behaviors, and lifestyles. Trim, Leuthe, and Chassin (2006) also found that

alcohol usage affects male and female siblings equally. Snyder, Bank, and Burraston (2005) observed differences in sibling influence on criminal behavior. Snyder et al. also noted the differences in activities related to the age, and gender of the sibling involved.

Numerous studies have shown that there is a definite relationship between older sibling influences on younger siblings. For instance, Fortuna et al. (2011), while considering variables such as peer pressure and parental alcoholism, found that an older sibling's alcohol usage also affected and predicted a younger sibling's drinking. However, this prediction became significant only when the siblings were close to the same age, and were of the same gender. Kothari et al. (2014) found that siblings can become powerful role models, and equal partners in delinquent behaviors.

Sibling Incarceration

Past researchers have studied the adverse effects of sibling incarceration. To date, however, only a few have paid particular attention to the psychological impact of sibling separation due to incarceration (Meek, 2008). Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Kalb (2001) focused on the effect of a family member's incarceration (excluding parental incarceration) on youth, and found that the incarceration of any family member, except a grandmother, had a substantial impact on youth arrest rates. The results of Farrington et al.'s research also suggested that the incarceration of a family member negatively affects the entire family beyond just the parent-child relationship.

Meek's (2008) study focused specifically on the experiences of younger siblings between ages 9, and 17 years whose older brothers were incarcerated, and highlighted the

destructive impact of sibling incarceration. In Meek's study, five participants were female, and three were male; five participants were White, and three were Black. Meek noted that participants were not eager to disclose or to discuss any information about their siblings' incarcerations for fear of being ridiculed or because they wanted to protect their brothers' image. According to Meek, the study results also indicated that sibling incarceration affects the younger sibling's school performance.

Summary

Various researchers have examined the adverse effects of family member incarceration. Heaton (2014), Meek (2008), Murray (2005), Nicols and Loper (2012), and Phillips (2010) all noted that having an incarcerated family member, including a sibling, could have devastating effects on the nonincarcerated siblings. Other researchers have also documented the ways in which older siblings can control younger siblings, especially during the adolescent years (East, 2009; McHale et al., 2012). The possibility exists, therefore, for nonincarcerated African American siblings to also become incarcerated as a result of influences from their incarcerated siblings (Lam et al., 2012; Phillips, 2010). In Chapter 3, I present a discussion of the qualitative methodology used to assist in understanding the experiences of nonincarcerated African American youth living in inner cities with a brother in prison.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Exploring the lived experiences of nonincarcerated African American youth residing in the inner cities who have incarcerated male siblings was the focus of the present study. Meek (2008) stated that future research on sibling incarceration should focus on wider sampling techniques that include many participants from different geographical regions, and cultural backgrounds. My research is particularly significant because it is different from previous studies that focused on sibling incarceration, such as those of Meek (2008) and Heaton (2014). The present study differs because the focus was on the lived experiences of African American young men ages 18 to 24 years who live in inner cities, and have a brother in prison. My study is also significant because there are few studies on nonincarcerated African American men whose brothers are in prison. Via in-depth interviews, selected participants were given the opportunity to describe their lived experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation, and to discuss their strategies for coping with these experiences.

Chapter 3 includes an outline of the research and highlights the purpose of the study. I also discuss how data were collected, and analyzed. I describe the study's setting, design, and sampling plan, as well as how I protected participants' rights, and how I addressed issues such as trustworthiness, and verifiability.

Research Design and Rationale

I explored the lived experiences of nonincarcerated African American youth with a male sibling was in prison through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *microsystem*, *exosystem*, *mesosystem*, and *macrosystem*. The broad, overarching research question that helped me to better understand the lived experiences and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth with a male sibling in prison was the following: How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling? Specific questions for the interviews can be found in Appendix A.

According to Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013), a qualitative approach is useful when the variables in a study are not easy to identify. I chose the qualitative approach because the variables in the present study were not easily identifiable. Additionally, a phenomenological study is about being wholly involved in the study to learn more about the phenomenon under investigation. I chose the qualitative approach because the study involved an in-depth investigation of a complex phenomenon involving a limited number of people. Furthermore, I would not have been able to achieve the same results if I had used a quantitative approach. For example, by using the qualitative approach, I was more involved with the participants, and I gave them a larger degree of freedom to express themselves.

The nature of this qualitative study was IPA, which is a branch of phenomenology in which researchers condense participants' perceptions of their experiences to understand shared meanings of the broader phenomena under investigation (Smith et al.,

2009). Because IPA enables the researcher to explore in detail each participant's view of the topic under investigation, it is particularly suitable for studies that use small samples (Smith, 2011), such as my research study. Additionally, the IPA approach is useful when the focus of the study is on understanding the meaning of participants' lived experiences regarding a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). IPA empowers the researcher to balance phenomenological descriptions of the participants' stories with insightful interpretations to ensure the preservation of their different accounts. Further, it helps researchers maintain a degree of transparency. IPA's idiographic approach makes it useful for answering questions such as those pertaining to the meaning of individuals' shared life experiences (Smith, 2011). For these reasons, I considered IPA to be an appropriate framework for this study.

There are other qualitative approaches. These approaches could also have been used to understand the lived experiences, and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American youth who have an incarcerated male sibling. The other qualitative traditions that I examined before settling on phenomenology included ethnographic, narrative, grounded theory, and case study methods. My final selection of an appropriate research design was based on the study's purpose, and on the types of data that I collected.

The first approach that I considered for this study was an ethnographic research design. An ethnographic approach requires that the researcher become a participant-observer in the day-to-day lives of the people being investigated (Houghton et al., 2013).

An ethnographic study could have been useful and appropriate because my study was about a cultural group, and required me to interact with group members as a participant observer. Moreover, an ethnographic approach could have allowed me to understand participants' in-depth histories, lives, religion, politics, economy, experiences, and environments. Using an ethnographic approach could also have allowed me to learn more about the cultural or social groups that are a part of the African American youth experience (Houghton et al., 2013). Therefore, I could have used an ethnographic study. However, this design requires more time for observation, interviewing, and recording specific details.

Another name for the narrative approach is *interpretive biography*, as the researcher relates the stories of others (Houghton et al., 2013). The narrative approach is useful when the study involves human-centered research, as in the case of individual biographies, life histories, and oral memoirs (Houghton et al., 2013). I could have used the narrative approach if I had compelling reasons to select only one individual to study. However, I did not choose a narrative approach for this study because my focus was not on just one person's life history.

Grounded theory is used to generate a substantive theory, and it is also appropriate when the purpose of the research is to develop a theory (Houghton et al., 2013). This theory is similar to phenomenology; the difference lies in the development of theoretical categories aimed at generating theory (Houghton et al., 2013). Grounded

theory was unsuitable for this study because my goal was not to create a theory, given that numerous theories related to African American youth already exist.

Case study is used when an event or a particular situation has occurred within a contextual time span, and is the focus of research (Houghton et al., 2013). The case study approach was not employed because participants in this study shared a single phenomenon or experience of separation from a male sibling who is incarcerated, but not necessarily as a group experience or within a particular time frame. Some of the participants in this study had had a male sibling in incarceration for more than 5 years, whereas others had had a sibling in prison for just over 1 year.

According to Smith (2011), phenomenology allows the researcher to explore, and to capture the essence of an individual's consciousness of an experience (e.g., feelings, sensations, thoughts, and fantasies). It also gives the researcher insight into the meaning of experiences shared by participants. Smith also noted that using IPA approach could help participants to reconstruct their early experiences with their family members, schools, friends, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented all of the findings. As such, before I began the interview process, and particularly as a phenomenological researcher, I addressed all issues relating to legal, and ethical issues, bias, and context concerns to the best of my abilities. First, I sought permission to conduct the study from Walden University's human subjects ethical review board, and

institutional review board. In qualitative research, the researcher often establishes relationships, and sometimes deep friendships, with some participants; therefore, it can become easy for an investigator to cross the boundaries of professionalism to compromise data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). For this reason, I clearly defined my role as the researcher, and the role of the participants, in addition to bracketing my personal feelings. I used journaling to document all of my actions (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I also encouraged the participants to be honest with their responses because I did not want my personal experiences to influence the results. As a Black male who has resided in New Haven, and who has worked with the New Haven Superior Court as a student intern, I was aware of the overrepresentation of African American youth in the city's criminal justice system. As such, I was, and I am, especially sensitive to the issue.

I addressed many ethical issues before starting the study, and at the end of the study. I followed the American Psychological Association's (2013) guidelines on ethics. First, I did not allow any person to be involved in this study without signing an informed consent form. Second, I took reasonable precautions to maintain, and protect the confidentiality of research participants by giving them pseudonyms rather than using their real names. Third, I safeguarded all sensitive information obtained during the data collection process by locking the data with a password in a safe box that I will keep for 5 years after the study is completed before destroying the data. Finally, I included committee review, and member-checking techniques to ensure that I was not the only

person checking my work for biases, and questions relating to ethics (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Participant Selection

Sampling Strategy

I chose a purposive sampling strategy instead of a mixed sampling strategy.

Purposive sampling is useful when selecting participants who meet the criterion of having firsthand experience of the phenomenon under investigation, and are willing to share their stories (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Polkinghorne (1989) noted that it is important to select participants whose experiences are relevant to the study under consideration.

Participants for this study were chosen based on the criterion of being African American males ages 18 to 24 years who had an incarcerated sibling. With the exception of one interview, all interviews were conducted in a private, quiet room in a New Haven public library.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was three participants. According to Smith et al. (2009), one to six participants is appropriate for this type of study. Smith (2011) also suggested that an IPA study should be based more on depth than on breadth. Houghton et al. (2013) also maintained that it is necessary to interview fewer people to ensure that interviews with individual participants are extensive. According to Polkinghorne's (1989) assertion, a broad cross section would make it difficult to identify emerging themes. Guest et al. (2006) argued that having a saturation level in a qualitative study is necessary; however, Guest et al. also noted that saturation level alone could not provide a clue for estimating sample size during the data collection stage. Guest et al. pointed out

that, while conducting their study, a search of the literature yielded only seven articles with actual sample size guidelines. Thus, the rationale for using only three participants in the present study was to elicit rich, in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation until the saturation level was reached.

Guest et al. (2006) posited that the purposeful selection of participants is an important decision point in any qualitative research. According to Moustakas (1994), qualitative research focuses on how to elicit rich, in-depth information about a phenomenon until a saturation point (the point at which additional meaning or ideas are no longer found) is reached. Polkinghorne (1989) argued that a qualitative study is different from a quantitative study, in which the focus is on the probability of sampling. According to Polkinghorne, qualitative researchers select participants purposefully, whereas quantitative researchers select members randomly so that they can generalize the results to a wider population.

Identifying, Contacting, and Recruiting Participants

The participants in the current study, nonincarcerated African American youth aged 18 to 24 years, were drawn primarily from four of the poorest neighborhoods in New Haven, Connecticut. Using a purposive sampling strategy, I posted flyers at strategic locations in the southern part of Connecticut where African American youth are known to socialize (see Appendix B).

To increase sampling rigor, potential participants who responded to the flyer went through a screening process to filter out those who did not meet the criteria, or were not

prepared to share their lived experiences. Those who were chosen were notified by phone, asked to come to the interview location, and invited to sign a consent form upon arrival at the meeting. Each participant also received a letter of participation (see Appendix C) and a \$20 Walmart Supercenter gift card as compensation for participation at the end of the interview.

Data Collection

Biographical data were collected from the participants through face-to-face interviews. I used in-depth, semistructured interviews featuring open-ended questions. Except for one interview, the interviews were conducted in a location (public library) agreed upon by the participants that was free from noise, and distractions, and that ensured participants' privacy. I did only one interview with each of the participants. To collect, and record the data, I used a single-page form with a dividing line down the middle to separate explanatory notes, portraits, and descriptions of the physical settings. This form also contained the icebreaker question I used at the beginning of the interviews, followed by four to five questions. There were also a few subquestions and concluding questions.

The following are examples of the questions I asked participants: Can you describe your experience of having a male sibling incarcerated, and what that means to you? Can you tell me your initial reaction when you finally realized that your brother may spend some time in prison and may not be coming home anytime soon? Can you describe the first time you ever visited your brother in prison? If so, what was the

experience like? How did you respond physically, and emotionally to your brother being in prison? Can you tell me how your family copes with the experience of having an incarcerated family member? One of the subquestions that were asked was as follows: Can you tell me how your brother's incarceration has affected your education, and social life?

I recorded, and transcribed each interview. I took notes, and documented any nonverbal communication to provide details of the environment. All information was transcribed via handwriting, and audiotaping. I also focused on the background information during each interview to ensure that the participant's experience was within this study's context. Additionally, the interviews were designed to function as icebreakers and to build rapport with participants by gathering information beginning with their early lives, and continuing through the present. Each participant was invited to sign a consent form before the interview took place (see Appendix D).

Smith (2011) noted that it is advisable to induce participants to reconstruct their early experiences with their family members, schools, friends, neighborhoods, and workplaces. The data I gathered provided insights on the type of family structure that existed during the participants' childhood, and provided a deeper understanding of how nonincarcerated African American youth experience having an incarcerated male sibling. The interviews also entailed a description of the nature of the study, and allowed the participants to share their personal experiences related to sibling incarceration.

Additionally, I used the interviews to build rapport with the participants by encouraging them to talk freely, and respond to my questions.

During the interview process, I asked the participants about their present experiences, and issues relating to the research question developed for this study. According to Smith (2011), at this point it is important to ask the participants to provide concrete details about their experiences. Thus, I encouraged participants to vividly describe the types of experiences they have endured as a result of having an incarcerated male sibling. I asked the participants to identify or describe the most challenging aspects of having a male sibling in custody and how they have impacted them. I also asked the participants to describe the strategies they have used to avoid incarceration.

Throughout the data collection process, I used an interview protocol to ask each participant a series of interview questions concerning his lived experiences, and the strategies they used to cope with having a male sibling in incarceration (see Appendix A). The number of questions I asked was based on the type of in-depth responses I received. Sometimes I had to ask more questions to get an in-depth response.

Data Analysis

Step 1: Reading and Rereading

I used data analysis procedures recommended by Smith (2011) for an IPA study. In the first step, I read each transcript in its entirety several times to gain a general understanding of the meaning of the participants' experiences. I also listened to the audio recording several times to gain insight before transcription. The goal of the first step was

to understand what type of information the data were conveying. This step also ensured that participant experiences became the focus of the study rather than my views on the participants (Smith et al., 2009).

Step 2: Initial Noting

During the second stage of the data analysis process, I immersed myself by reading the interview transcripts, field notes, and documents several times. Also, I tried to make sense of the data as a whole. Additionally, I made reflective notes along the margins of the transcripts, and the field notes. I also looked for the styles, and the ways that the participants answered my questions. I then began writing my exploratory notes on the transcripts. My goal for using this process was to generate a comprehensive, and detailed comments on the data. Also, I was looking for abstract concepts to help make sense of the patterns of meaning in their data.

Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes

According to Smith (2011), the third stage of the data analysis process deals with developing emergent themes. I used the abstraction approach to develop more similar codes to form *superordinate themes*, which meant that I examined the data several times for similar codes that could be regrouped until I reached a saturation point where there were no longer meaningful codes. I then applied the superordinate themes generated from the process to the interview questions.

Step 4: Searching for Connection Across Emergent Themes

The fourth phase is about categorization strategies like coding, and thematic analysis. Data analysis, at this point, involves generating themes, and pattern regularities. Data were again rearranged into categories to enable comparison in, and between categories. Smith (2011) noted that this stage of data analysis involves interpreting the findings, and making sense of them. I interpreted the data at this point, and made my initial assertions, and conclusions based on insights gained from the participants' lived experiences. I also used the information to describe the coping strategies that nonincarcerated inner-city African American male youth have adopted to avoid incarceration. This stage of the data analysis process also involves representation, and visualization. Thus, I presented the final results in a narrative form of the essence of the experiences.

The Role of Software in Data Analysis and Representation

Data can be overwhelming when the process involves hand coding. Data must also be put together in a comprehensive, and manageable way. According to Houghton et al. (2013), computer programs, and software provide an organized approach for easy, and quick data retrieval. I used NVivo Pro 11(QSR International, 2013) software to manage, analyze, and store all the data I collected from field notes, and the interview transcripts.

NVivo Pro 11 allows a researcher to store memos, and biography data, and quickly generate, and retrieve ideas, statements, phrases, or words (QSR International, 2013). Also, NVivo Pro 11 eliminated the need for me to cut, and paste materials, as is

the case with hand coding. The NVivo Pro 11 system also allowed me to process, and analyze raw data, and the interview transcripts.

Limitations of This Study

Some of the potential constraints, and weaknesses of using a phenomenological design are that they are time consuming, and the data sets are very comprehensive (Smith, 2011). Also, the sample size for IPA is usually very small. For example, for this study the sample size was only three participants, which made the results less generalizable to the general population (Smith et al., 2009). There was a possibility that the relationships I developed with some of the participants may have affected the study results. In other words, some of the participants may have provided answers to satisfy my expectations due to the relationship I developed with them during data collection.

Data collection, and management strategies could pose many ethical, and legal issues when they are not handled well. Thus, I followed all the recommended guidelines for data collection, and management before, and at the end of the study. Another limitation of this study was that the questions posed were open ended. Thus, collecting, and analyzing all the data generated from the transcripts was time consuming. A further limitation was that a phenomenological design is unsuitable for large populations due to its focus on depth rather than breadth. For this reason, I used a limited number of participants for this research, which also made the results obtained less generalizable.

Another major limitation of this study is that I am an African man who has lived in New Haven, where the study took place. I have also personally witnessed the mass

incarceration of African American male youth in the city of New Haven. Also, I have direct knowledge about their overrepresentation in the city's criminal justice system. As a result, it would have been very easy for me to introduce my biases, and opinions into the research. However, before the interviewing process began I wrote a full description of my experiences, thereby bracketing all my past experiences from the participants, and strove for heightened self-awareness. I also ensured that I minimized the effect of my biases throughout all phases of the data collection process. I accomplished this by using the plan, and the strategy recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1999), and discussed by Smith et al. (2009) to ensure quality, credibility, and trustworthiness in the study.

Ethical Considerations With Respect to Participants

First and foremost, I made sure that no person was involved in this study without signing, an informed consent form as specified by the U.S. Department of Health, and Human Services Code (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Reasonable precautions were taken to maintain and protect the confidentiality of research participants. Accordingly, sensitive information obtained during the data collection process was safeguarded. Since this study dealt with delicate issues regarding the African American race, I was very careful not to say anything that participants might interpret as offensive. Finally, because there were questions that related to African American youths' arrests, and incarcerations, preventive measures were taken to not violate the privacy rights of the participants during the interviewing process. The data I collected were, therefore, treated as very sensitive, valuable, and confidential.

I stored the data collected in a safe deposit box, and I am the only person who has access to it. Data will be stored for 5 years after study completion, and then destroyed. I also made all participants aware of the nature of the study, and how it could contribute to social change for inner-city African American youth in New Haven, Connecticut. To uphold ethical considerations, I followed the guidelines of the National Institute of Health Protecting Research Participants Certification (National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research, 2008) during the interviewing process.

Quality, Credibility, and Trustworthiness

In a qualitative study, quality, credibility, and trustworthiness are verified in many different ways. According to Yin (2011), the quality standards established in a qualitative study are not the same as those used in quantitative research. To acknowledge this distinction, and to ensure the quality, credibility, and trustworthiness in the present study, I adapted some of the steps recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Smith et al. (2009). Thus, I engaged in a prolonged study of African American male youth's culture, and behavior. I also developed a rapport with the participants to gain, and earn their trust by building understanding with stakeholders, and everyone else connected to the study. I used persistent observation techniques to investigate, and identify relevant, and irrelevant factors in the data collection process (Smith et al., 2009). I used triangulation to improve the validity of the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted. I also used peer debriefing with neutral peers or colleagues not connected with the study. I engaged in a prolonged study with the participants, and also developed a rapport with them so that I could earn

their trust. I also tried to build some level of understanding with members connected or associated with the study. I used member checks to test the data's veracity, including analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions to ensure accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used thick description to describe the procedure, its context, and the participants in detail so that others could familiarize themselves with the study. I used an audit trail to record raw data for documentation. This included the process of data reduction, analysis, and methodological process notes. I used negative case analysis to investigate and disconfirm data until I was satisfied with the results. I also used a reflective journal to record observations and personal notes to document my thought process throughout the research. Also, I used referential adequacy to store portions of the raw data collected for subsequent analysis and interpretation and for verification of initial study findings, and conclusions (Yin, 2011).

Summary

Exploring the experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth who have a male sibling in prison was the purpose of this qualitative IPA study. In this chapter, I outlined the research methodology, and design. I also described the study's rationale, and its significance. Additionally, I explained the elements of the study design, population sampling, data collection, organization, and analysis. I explained my role as the principal investigator, and described the participants as well as measures I took to protect their involvement in the study.

In Chapter 4, I outline the field data collection process, and data organization, and analysis. I also present findings from the data, and the themes that were derived from them.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

In Chapter 3, I described the research design, approach, and methodology that I determined would best address the research question. I also presented the instrument that was used to generate thick descriptions, and a detailed reporting process. I chose IPA for this study because IPA is a naturalistic paradigm. Additionally, this approach enabled me to study the participants in their environment, and allowed them the freedom to express themselves in whichever way was comfortable for them. According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), interviews are very effective in phenomenological studies because they allow participants to freely share their views and explore their own perceptions. Thomas and Magilvy stated that interviews serve the purpose of probing the meaning that participants attach to the phenomenon under investigation. For the present study, I audio recorded in-depth interviews with three nonincarcerated African American male youth who had a brother in prison. I also used content analysis to analyze the rich, descriptive, and saturated data related to how nonincarcerated male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling.

The participants in this study, nonincarcerated African American youth aged 18 to 24 years, were drawn primarily from four of the poorest neighborhoods in New Haven, Connecticut. To identify the three participants, I posted flyers requesting volunteers at strategic locations in the southern part of Connecticut where African American youth are known to socialize. Then I used a purposive sampling strategy to select the three

participants I believed could provide me with in-depth information on the phenomenon under investigation.

In the present study, I explored the lived experiences, and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth who have a brother in prison. Another important emphasis was identifying intervention strategies that would help young African American men with a sibling in prison. The study results could help criminal justice officials develop specific programs tailored to help both incarcerated and nonincarcerated young African American men. These findings might also help community leaders introduce intervention strategies for helping siblings with an incarcerated brother. Human services professionals could also use the study findings to advocate for appropriate social programs in inner-city communities. These programs could include afterschool programs such as job training, volunteer programs, and community youth leadership programs for African American teenagers, and young men. Special attention could be given to individuals with a sibling in prison. These findings were also meant to bring about social change through current policy and program planning changes. Policymakers might use these findings to revisit previous public policies enacted toward inner-city communities. For example, these findings might help policymakers understand the impact of reducing or eliminating certain social services from inner-city communities where such services might help empower African American male youth.

In Chapter 4, I present the overarching research question, and a table showing participant demographics. I also detail the data collection process, and how the data were analyzed. Finally, I discuss what was discovered in the data.

Research Question

The overarching research question that guided the present study was: How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling?

Participant Demographics

The unit analyses of this study consisted of three participants from New Haven, Connecticut. All of the participants were African American males, and all were aged 18–24 years. Table 1 shows the participants' demographics regarding age, educational level obtained, and employment status. Participants were not asked about their marital status.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Educational level obtained	Employment status
1	20	Did not graduate high school	Unemployed
2	23	Trade certificate	Self-employed
3	24	Graduated high school	Self-employed

Data Collection

Pseudonyms were used to protect study participant's identities: P1 for the first participant, P2 for the second participant, and P3 for the third participant. These pseudonyms are used throughout the remainder of this study. I started the data collection

process by conducting an in-depth, semistructured interview with each participant on one occasion, per IPA recommendations (Smith, 2009). Each semistructured interview lasted approximately 25 minutes to 40 minutes. I recorded all of the interviews, retrieved them from my mini Samsung tablet, and uploaded them to my computer. I then transcribed all of the interviews. I reviewed all of the transcripts for rich, detailed data based on the participants' lived experiences. I retrieved additional data from my field notes, and journal. I analyzed all of the data manually, and by using NVivo Pro 11 software. Many themes, and subthemes emerged during data analysis. However, data analysis reached a saturation point where no other meaningful data appeared.

Circumstances Encountered

Before the data collection process, I recruited participants by posting invitational flyers (see Appendix B). I was surprised that nobody called me during the first week. I also spoke to people who wanted to know more about the study. However, they did not show much interest, especially when they realized that the study had something to do with the incarceration of Black men. For some people, it was taboo to talk about Black male incarceration in their communities.

The first person who called me was a Hispanic man who wanted to know how much money he was going to get paid once he agreed to do the interview with me. I politely told him that the study was about African American men between the ages of 18, and 24 years. Days later, I had another call from someone who described himself as an African American and wanted to take part in the study. I asked whether he had read all of

the criteria specified on the flyer. He said yes. I also asked him if his brother was still in incarceration. He answered no but insisted that his brother had served time in prison for robbery. I informed him that the study was not about people whose siblings had been incarcerated in the past. Rather, it was about people whose siblings were still in prison. The same day, another person called and told me that he was 27 years of age but he wanted to be in the study. I told him that the research participants had to be 18 to 24 years of age at the time the study commenced. He pleaded with me, and stated that he could still act as though he was 24 years of age since he did not need to provide any identification. I told him that the volunteers' ages had to be between 18 and 24 years because they represented the target population for this study.

After finally recruiting P1 as my first potential participant, we agreed to meet at the public library. I had requested, and was given a private room at the public library for the interview meeting with P1. I waited patiently for P1 to show up for the interview. Thirty minutes went by, but P1 did not show up for the meeting. I decided to call him, but before I could call his number, he called me. I picked up the call, and he briefly told me that he was sorry but that he had changed his mind about meeting at the library. I asked him why, but he insisted that if I wanted to do the interview, I had to come to his house. He said that we could use the kitchen because nobody was in the house to disturb us. As much as I wanted to say no, I realized that as long as the location would be free of noise and distraction and it ensured safety and privacy, then we could do the interview there. I

drove to the address he gave me, which was not very far from the library, and I successfully conducted the interview there.

P2 was the second person to call me about participating in the study. He noted that his grandfather had seen me posting the flyer around where they lived, and had asked him to check it out. After reading the flyer, he realized that it was something that related to him, so he decided to call me and schedule an interview. I never had any problem interviewing P2 for this study, and everything went very well.

P3 also called me to participate in this study because he said he was self-employed, and sold insurance policies in the community. Thus, he walks around the community looking for clients to buy insurance, and roadside assistance policies. According to P3, he saw my flyers posted around. He said that after reading one of the flyers, he thought that he could share his experiences of having a sibling in prison with the rest of the world. P3 claimed that he wanted his story to motivate, and help other youth who might be going through similar situations. I never had any problem while conducting this interview with P3. Everything went smoothly, and as planned.

Data Analysis

Inductive Process

I purposefully used the inductive process, and began with myself as a naturalistic or qualitative inquirer. I recruited three nonincarcerated African American men ages 18 to 24 years. The recruited participants were willing to share their lived experiences of having a brother in prison. I recruited the three participants by posting flyers in four

communities in New Haven, Connecticut. Except for one participant whose interview was done at his home, the interviews were conducted at the New Haven Public Library. I used a mini Samsung tablet to record the semistructured, open-ended interviews with the three participants. I uploaded the interviews I recorded with the mini Samsung tablet into my computer. I then imported the file to NVivo Pro 11, and transcribed the data. I used content analysis to analyze the transcript, (contextualize and make meaning) and then generated the data into codes, categories, and themes.

All information collected was analyzed manually, and by using NVivo to generate codes reflecting various topics, and themes. During the manual coding process, I used numbers, and letters to enable easy classification of the data sets. After organizing the data sets, I printed hard copies of the data, and filed them with bookmarks as well as transparent separators for easy identification of themes. Additionally, I used colored markers to make linkages between themes, and topics, which made it easy to conduct the subsequent analysis between the different categories, and themes. This strategy allowed me to create a logical, and systematic flow of analysis, which led to the further understanding of the experiences, and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth with a brother in prison.

According to Bansal and Corley (2011), one dilemma confronting qualitative researchers involves how to conduct manual searches of themes in large amounts of data. To address this dilemma, Bansal and Corley proposed using software that allows faster

searches. NVivo Pro 11 helped with the data analysis, and provided fast, and accurate searches of the data.

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Data Analysis Strategies

Codes were generated in asking the interview questions, and getting each participant's response. The participants were all asked the same, or similar open-ended questions. However, the questions were not asked in the same order for all participants. Some participants were asked more subquestions or follow-up questions to elicit in-depth responses.

The following semistructured interview questions were used in the data collection process:

- Can you describe your experience of having a male sibling incarcerated, and what that means to you?
- Can you tell me your initial reaction when you finally realized that your brother may spend some time in prison and may not be coming home anytime soon?
- Can you describe the first time you ever visited your brother in prison? If so, what was the experience like? How did you respond physically, and emotionally to his being in prison?
- Can you tell me how your family copes with the experience of having an incarcerated family member?

- Can you tell me more about your coping strategies today with your brother being in prison?
- Can you describe how the experience of your brother's incarceration has changed your life?
- Can you tell me if you have ever been incarcerated? If yes, can you describe what your experiences were like?
- Can you tell me what changes have you made in your life since your brother's incarceration?
- Can you tell me what you think can be done to reduce the incarceration of African American male youth within your community?
- Can you tell me if you know any African American youth with a male sibling in prison?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

After the interview session, files were created, and organized to store all of the interview data. I started forming initial codes by reading through the data, and making notes in the margins of the text. I looked for themes, patterns, and patterned regularities in the transcripts (Smith et al., 2009). I also looked for themes, and patterns that related to the study's research question, and the conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2013).

Coding Strategy

Smith et al. (2009) stated that the coding strategy is the process of gathering, and combining data to develop themes, ideas, and categories, which are then labeled to gain

easy access to the information and analysis. Patton (2002) also noted that one challenge of qualitative research is generating large amounts of data. Thus, it becomes difficult to analyze massive amounts of raw data. Additionally, it is very cumbersome to reduce these data significantly and meaningfully without being biased or misrepresenting the respondents' remarks. Thus, I made considerable effort to significantly and meaningfully reduce the data to represent the respondents' factual remarks.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 show how initial codes were developed into themes from the individual transcripts. They are presented by participant.

Table 2

Interview Responses and Inductive Codes From First Participant

Inductive codes	Participant responses to interview questions
Anger	<p>You get mad; I was definitely upset, like you never going to see someone again, that is like someone dying. You know you will really be upset too. I felt real mad, that is. That is the feeling right there. No, it is not okay to be there. It's like it upsets everybody.</p>
Emotional distress	<p>Hmmm, that is a crazy feeling. I don't know how to react to that question.</p> <p>I felt scared, and physically I got scared to at the same time</p>
Personal responsibility	<p>Oh, staying busy, and making sure that to keep my head up straight when he calls me. Maintaining what you do every day, and trying to get to school, trying to get a job, and also trying to do what is right until he comes home.</p>
Positive effects	<p>But it can save your life by being in that prison.</p> <p>You know you could be out here, and some other guy will try to kill you, but if you are incarcerated then they can't.</p> <p>It means to me is like as far as my brother went to jail it was better for him to go to jail than to see him die in the streets. Because he was out there going crazy on the streets.</p> <p>And it's like, wow, you better make a better decision now in life to at least better get out of there and come out at least do better. It's hard though.</p> <p>Well, it changed my life, because it made me want to do better. Made me not to want to be in that situation.</p> <p>I say give them second chances, they should be given more jobs.</p>

(table continues)

Inductive codes	Participant responses to interview questions
Positive role models	If we have more leaders, and more good people around, we would be good. We would be really good. But as far as everything goes right now, we have no hope now.
Incarceration avoidance	This is why a lot of Black men go in and out of prison Oh definitely, a lot of people, it is all over. Oh yeah, oh yeah Oh this is like opening, and closing door, everybody has somebody in prison.
Youth social programs	There should be more activities for the youth out here. No fun activities, I mean nothing in the streets for us to do as Black males. I want to add that I feel like they should put more activities in the streets for the youth so that we would not have problems like this. African American male youth going in, and out of jail ...

Table 3

Interview Responses and Inductive Codes From Second Participant

Inductive codes	Participant's responses to interview questions
Anger	<p>And you start doing other things and you start feeling like revenge. Like you need to revenge on the world basically . . . hmmm . . . that is just how I feel everyday man.</p> <p>You know what I mean I felt real fucking mad. I was done with the world; you know what I mean?</p> <p>There is nothing I can do now, but I am about to get angry at everybody. And everybody is about to get it because I am pissed off now.</p>
Emotional distress	<p>Oh I felt like, hmm, it's the end of the world like you know my boy is gone, damn.</p> <p>As far as being brothers not tight anymore made us even tighter. Oh yes definitely, and as far as not going to school, I did not even graduate. Dealing with that is like not wanting to deal with anything anymore.</p> <p>Hmmm . . . it affected my grades and getting bad grades in school is because I don't have my right hand man with me anymore.</p> <p>When you have someone that you love and everybody love, and the whole family is just like torn apart.</p>
Family responsibilities	<p>Everybody is disconnected, combative, and we are all torn apart when we supposed to come together and get this thing together. And it breaks families up, it breaks relationships up, it just breaks everybody apart.</p> <p>Come on man, everybody gets affected. Come on, everybody got to send money, write letters. Who wants to write letters, and getting letters back and forth? That tears you up too. Oh men those phone calls too, it is kind of crazy.</p> <p>But there is always a problem because we are poor out here, we don't have no money, no jobs, nothing. But we need the help out here, and we have no help at all.</p>

(table continues)

Inductive codes	Participant's responses to interview questions
Positive effects	<p>I found out where he was, I realized that it is a place I don't wanna be. And going to see him there, I definitely don't want to be there anyway. So, that is something that affects me in a way like not wanting to go that route. Not wanting to be that person.</p> <p>Well, I have started working and went back to school, and took up a trade which is HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Condition). And now I am doing landscaping in addition with some guys so during the summers, and winters I am keeping myself busy as possible as I can.</p>
Positive role models	<p>And that is all we need, is like some leaders. If we get some leaders out there; this place would be different. It would be totally different out here.</p>
Incarceration avoidance	<p>I cannot be in this facility like this. I want to be free. You know what I mean, I want to be out here like this. He is not doing what I am doing out here in the street because he is out there.</p>
Family responsibilities	<p>Come on everybody got to send money, write letters. Who wants to write letters and getting back and forth? That tears you up. Oh man those calls they are kind of crazy.</p>
Youth social programs	<p>Everybody just wanna get in groups to walk around the streets. I mean there is nothing out here but trouble out here waiting for us.</p>
Employment opportunities	<p>I think it can be reduced by giving more programs to the kids, and the youth out here which is us. More activities basically to create things to do out here. There is nothing to do out here in [city name withheld] positive, nothing.”</p>

Table 4

Interview Responses and Inductive Codes From Third Participant

Inductive codes	Participant responses to interview questions
Emotional distress	<p>Yeah, you know I don't know where I should really start. It's basically like you got to ask yourself that question in a way. How would you feel if you have a brother in a prison? You know someone that you grew up with, ate with, you were there for each other and being only a couple of years apart</p> <p>What do you make of that? I mean how do you comprehend that? It's like someone squeezed your heart. That is how it really feels like. It literally feels like someone squeeze your heart, man.</p>
Personal responsibility	<p>Yeah, all lives do matter you know. But there is not a lot of fuse when you hear a lot of Black-on-Black crimes. And how is that? People need to focus, let's show everything, yes Black lives matters but we need to stop Black-on-Black killing</p> <p>So you know you don't want to be hanging out with the wrong people and doing drugs.</p> <p>And it feels though that it was getting to him, I can tell. He just realized that for the next 25 years of his life this is where he is going to be because of the decision that he decided to make, and this is what drugs can do to you.</p>
Positive effects	<p>You know what I mean, I just try to educate people even though I am not like an educator but I am trying to do my best to educate people that I meet. Especially among young people that "Don't let the drugs take over you at all."</p> <p>Oh absolutely, absolutely, because I can see exactly that I would have followed that path. I almost was, and that is what I was getting at before. At one point I left drugs took over my life, you know what I mean, but it was something that needed to happen to let me take responsibility.</p>

(table continues)

Inductive codes	Participant responses to interview questions
Youth social programs	Number one making more after-school programs. Because that has falling back a lot. I remember when I was growing up I had an after-school program
Employment opportunities	You got a community of people who say okay, let's do this. There is fundraising slash cookout for people of this community, it doesn't have to say Black communities. Everyone is invited, you know, to get people together
Family responsibilities	But it was very heart warming and heartfelt. I just showed him some pictures and I told him that, hey listen, you going to do this, and do not let this be a dead time for you.
Incarceration avoidance	<p>Yeah, to be honest with you I do know a whole lot of people who are incarcerated and I feel very bad. I just wrote a letter to a friend of mine who just incarcerated.</p> <p>You know, I know people get incarcerated every day, I know that. But to be honest with you I don't even know the statistics because, what I do is I really try to stay away from certain parts that I have no business being there or belonging.</p>

Table 5 shows the initial codes as they were generated from the transcripts, and the number of participants whose comments reflected these codes.

Table 5

Initial Codes Generated From the Transcripts, by Participant

Codes	Participant		
	1	2	3
Anger	x	x	
Emotional distress	x	x	x
Family responsibilities	x	x	x
Positive effects	x	x	x
Youth social programs	x	x	x
Positive role model	x	x	x
Incarceration avoidance	x	x	x
Personal responsibilities	x	x	x
Employment opportunities	x	x	x

The codes shown in Table 5 were regrouped in an analytical order to serve as themes for the data analysis. There were 9 initial codes created; however, they were regrouped to create superordinate themes. As such, the number of codes was reduced from nine to six superordinate themes:

- anger and emotional distress,
- positive effects and personal responsibility,
- positive role model,
- incarceration avoidance,
- family responsibilities, and
- youth social programs and employment opportunities.

From Coding to Emerging Themes—Responses to Interview Questions

All the themes were checked against the wording in the interview transcripts to ensure that they were a reflection of what all the three participants said. For instance, all the participants were asked: Can you describe your experiences of having a male sibling in incarceration, and what that means to you? I also asked follow-up questions based on their responses. The responses they gave were mixed, and some were very revealing. Themes that were reflected in their responses are presented next.

Results from the present study suggested that nonincarcerated siblings were negatively impacted by their siblings' incarceration. The results also suggested that through positive coping strategies nonincarcerated siblings with a brother in prison could be motivated to avoid incarceration and do better in life. The overall findings from the current study indicated that nonincarcerated African American male siblings were profoundly affected by the incarceration of their sibling. However, the results also suggested that the incarceration of their male siblings also had some positive effects, and positive coping strategies.

Responses to Interview Questions

Theme 1: Anger and Emotional Distress

When all the participants were asked how they coped with their brother's incarceration, the answers they provided indicated that they either used anger or emotional pains as coping mechanisms. P1 became angry, and distressed when he was recounting his experiences after visiting his brother in prison. According to P1, "You get

mad, I was definitely upset, like you never going to see someone again, that is like someone dying. You know you will really be upset too, and I felt real mad. This is the feeling right now.”

When P1 was asked how he felt upon realizing that his brother was not coming home soon, he said, “The experience is different because being at a place where your brother has been imprisoned gives you a different feeling. It is a feeling you can’t even describe it because it is terrifying, and scary at the same time.” P1 stated that he felt emotionally troubled when he visited his brother because the place was scary, and not a good place to visit a loved one. He said, “I felt scared, and physically I got scared too at the same time.”

P1 said he copes with his brother’s incarceration by not visiting him a lot because of the emotional stress he undergoes whenever he visits him. P1 said he cries a lot after visiting his brother in prison, and he becomes very sorrowful whenever he thinks about his brother being there. P1 also stated that coping with his brother’s incarceration was very difficult for him. “I cried when I got over there, that hurt, man [looked up, and shook his head with eyes wide open and stared straight into my eyes]. You never wanted to see someone whom you are so tight with in a place like this. In prison, man? It kills you.”

P1 also stated that his heart was broken with grief when he saw his brother behind the prison bars. He felt that the prison environment where his brother is kept looks like a military facility with guards wearing uniforms everywhere. P1 said the reason he avoids

going to visit his brother in prison is because he gets nightmares after visiting him in prison, P1 said one of the ways he copes is by avoiding visiting his brother because it was difficult for him to deal with it the situation.

When P2 was asked how he coped after his brother's incarceration, he said after his brother's incarceration he went through a lot of stress, and also suffered emotionally. P2 said he manages his stressors by avoiding people or by being angry at everyone around him. P2 said there were times when he felt like lashing it out against society, and everyone around him for incarcerating his brother. P2 also said,

Oh, I felt like it's the end of the world, like, you know my boy is gone, damn.

There is nothing I can do now, but I am about to get angry at everybody.

Everybody is about to get it.

P2 added, "I am pissed off now. You know what I mean, I felt real fucking mad. I was done with the world." P2 said he knew it was wrong for him to act that way but he had no other way to cope with life after his brother's incarceration. P2 said being angry is the only option he had left because he believes society had let him down by taking his brother away from him. P2 also said he always feel like revenging his frustration on people. P2 stated that sometimes he copes with his brother's incarceration by publicly venting his anger. He said he becomes easily irritated and distances himself from people.

P2 also said he copes by crying a lot whenever he is alone. "Oh yeah, I cried, I went crazy, I lashed out at people, and almost got myself in a jam. It really affected me a lot." P2 said he was angry and was filled with emotions because his brother did

everything for him. For example, P2 said that coping without his brother was hard for him because his brother was also his role model, and he wishes he could go and take his brother away from the facility. “Personally, I feel neglected and it feels like somebody took my best friend away from me, and knowing that really hurt. I wish I could take him away from the facility by myself.”

P2 added that coping with his brother’s incarceration was tough because it affected his life to a point that he did not feel like going to school again or doing something positive with his life. He said at one point he was mad at everybody, and did not care whether he goes to prison or not. P2 noted that schooling became less important in his life. He avoided going to school, and kept to himself a lot. “As far not going to school, I did not even graduate. Dealing with that is like not wanting to deal with anything anymore . . . Going to jail is a trending thing to do right now.” P2 also said, “I cried when I got there, that hurts, man.”

When P3 was asked to describe how he copes with his brother’s incarceration his responses reflected emotional distress. For example, P3 said, “Yeah, you know, I don’t know where I should really start. It’s basically like you got to ask yourself that question in a way. How would you feel if you have a brother in a prison?” P3 stated that coping with his brother’s incarceration was tough from the beginning, that he was emotionally devastated, and that he blamed himself many times for not helping his brother before it was too late.

P3 said he, and his brother took a bad turn when they started doing drugs, smoking pot, drinking, and moving with the wrong crowd. When P3 was asked how he felt about his brother's incarceration, he said, "Man, my heart broke. How would you feel?" P3 stated that although he cares a lot about his brother but he also tries not to think about him because anytime he thinks about him it breaks his heart. When P3 realized that brother would not come home soon, he said, "Oh man, it was just like the news that I heard when he got arrested wasn't as bad as the news of the judgment." For example, P3 asked, "What do you make of that? I mean how do you comprehend that? It's like someone squeezed your heart. That is how it really feels like. It literally feels like someone squeezes your heart, man."

P3 stated that he became emotionally troubled about his brother's incarceration due to the future plans they have made together. For example, P3 noted that he and his brother had planned to buy houses next to each other in the future, and had planned to raise their families close by each other. P3 stated that he copes with his brother's incarceration by avoiding visiting him in prison. P3 also said he copes with the situation by crying and blaming himself and asking God for forgiveness.

When you go out, and you sit in your car you bow your head down, and ask for forgiveness, you curse yourself, and you blame yourself, and say this is all my fault, and I wish I could have done more.

The responses given by all three participants indicated that having an incarcerated sibling caused anger, and emotional pain in P1, and P2. The experience of having an

incarcerated sibling mostly caused P3 emotional stress. They all indicated that they coped better with the situation by trying to avoid thinking about, and visiting their incarcerated siblings.

Theme 2: Positive Effects and Personal Responsibilities

When all the three participants were asked questions relating to how they cope after their siblings' incarceration, they indicated that they tried to focus on the positive aspects of their siblings' incarceration. The responses they provided revealed that in spite of the adverse effects of their siblings' incarceration, they all felt that their brothers' incarceration also had a positive impact on them, and made them better people. They also said they had developed coping strategies that helped avoid incarceration, and realized the importance of taking responsibility for their lives.

P1 noted that his brother's incarceration was positive because it had positive effects on both of them. When P1 was asked whether his brother going to prison was a good thing, he said, "Well, I am not saying it is a good thing, but it saved his life." P1 noted that he was not saying or suggesting that his brother being arrested, and taken to incarceration was a good thing. P1 added that his brother's incarceration had a positive effect on him (P1) because he was able to change his lifestyle after his brother's incarceration.

P1 said changing his life after his brother's incarceration was very tough but he had to take personal initiatives for him to succeed. For example, he said after his brother's incarceration he started avoiding and distancing himself from people he, and his

brother used to hang around with. He decided to avoid the corner stores where youth converge, and hang around all day doing nothing. When P1 was asked to describe how his brother's incarceration has changed his life, he said, "Well, it has changed my life because it made me want to do better. Made me not want to be in that situation." P1 also observed that his brother's incarceration made him want to do better so that his children would not follow the same negative footsteps like his brother.

P1 said that one of his coping strategies was to do everything in his power to avoid being incarcerated. P1 said that he decided to become successful in life after watching his brother being sent to prison. He said, "Kill everybody with success," which to him means becoming significant in life, and doing very well financially. P1 also started going to school every day, which he saw as a positive way of coping with his brother's incarceration. He also looks for employment to keep his mind and body busy. "Maintaining what you do every day, and trying to get to school, trying to get a job, and also trying to do the right thing until he comes home."

P1 added that he started seeking emotional support from his family by staying close to them most of the time and that he copes with his brother's incarceration by encouraging and motivating his brother.

Yeah, he phones me, and I tell him to keep faith in God because he is going to need God in there; and that is what we believe in so we keep the faith, and we keep hoping that he gets out of there.

P1 said that the coping strategies he developed has kept him from being incarcerated, and he believes they could help other nonincarcerated siblings as well.

P2 said his brother's incarceration has affected him positively, and negatively. On the positive side, P2 noted, "When he first left, and I found out where he was I realized that it is a place I don't wanna be. And going to see him there, I definitely don't want to be there anyway." P2 stated that "So that is something that affects me in a way like not wanting to go to that route. Not wanting to be that person."

P2 also said that his brother's incarceration has helped him change his life for the better. For example, P2 said, "It has changed me for the better. It has changed me to better myself, to not want to do that." P2 observed that because of his brother's incarceration he took steps to not get into trouble such as going back to school, and taking a trade course that could help him secure employment. He also got a job as part-time landscaper with friends who were a positive influence.

P2 said that one of his coping strategies was to avoid confrontation with people so that he may not end up being incarcerated although he admitted that it was not easy for him to entirely avoid trouble or confrontation. P2 said he always makes sure that if ever there was a problem he would not be the one creating the problem. P2 also said after his brother's incarceration he deliberately avoid the corner stores where the youth hang around.

P2 wants his brother to know about all the positive things he was doing outside of prison. "I am telling him all the time that I am doing better, and it's making him think

like when I get out I am going to do better, you know what I mean?” He feels his brother’s incarceration has taught him a lot of positive lessons in life, and he was determined to hold on to them. Before his brother’s incarceration, P2 never gave any thought to his future because he was following his brother’s footsteps. However, after his brother’s incarceration he started taking personal initiatives and also taking full stock of his life.

P3 also stated that his brother’s incarceration has influenced his life positively. He said after his brother’s incarceration he decided to change his life because he realized that he was heading toward the same direction. P3 said when he visited his brother in prison, he advised his brother to equally take advantage of all opportunities in prison to enable him better himself. P3 said that during the short time he spent in jail for a minor offense he took advantage of the opportunities in the correctional facility to read a lot of books, and also learned how to play chess, which he feels has also shaped his character.

P3 said he avoids visiting his brother a lot but he talks to him almost every 2 weeks. P3 also encourages his brother by telling him that he was doing very well, and by staying away from trouble. P3 said his brother was also very proud of his accomplishments, and happy that P3 was distancing himself from wrong friends.

P3 stated he has learned a great lesson from his brother’s drug addiction, and incarceration. One of the coping strategies he has devised is to educate young people on the dangers of drug addiction. P3 said tells people to avoid drugs. “Don’t let the drugs take over you at all. You know I am not gonna lie because at one point I had my share of

drugs.” P3 said that taking more responsibility for his life has been his primary coping strategy after his brother’s incarceration. He started working in the neighborhood mom-and-pop shops, and also began working at various restaurants either as a bartender or a waiter. He also kept himself away from trouble by making himself very busy, and by staying away from places where he has no business being. He also said he did not stick to one crowd for a long time.

P3 stated that he has established his own business of selling insurance policies. He distances himself from negative people by focusing more on his business vision, and keeping close to his family for emotional support. His dream is to own a Fortune 500 company one day so that he could employ his brother when he gets out. P3 noted that, taking personal initiatives was the hallmark of his coping strategies. For example, when P3 was asked whether he receives advice from his brother in prison he replied,

Yeah, yeah, he advises me, but the reason why I made it was because I stayed away from it. I don’t hang out with anybody who has nothing to do with business, making more business, or trying to become an entrepreneur.

The responses given by all the three participants indicated that they were all influenced positively by their sibling’s incarceration. Also, the responses suggested that they realized they needed to take personal responsibility for how they conducted themselves, and they developed positive coping strategies related to their realizing the importance of personal responsibility.

Theme 3: Positive Role Models

During the interview process, some of the responses that were given by all the participants echoed the need for personal role models. The answers also indicated that at one point all the participants coped with their brothers' incarceration by acting as positive role models for their incarcerated brothers. The responses they gave also suggested that having positive role models could help young African American men cope with the incarceration of their siblings.

All the answers given by the members indicated that that they all viewed their incarcerated siblings as bad influences, and negative role models. P1 said his brother was incarcerated because he was doing bad things: "As far as my brother went to jail it was better for him to go to jail than to see him die on the streets. Because he was out there going crazy on the streets." P1 said after his brother's incarceration he realized he wanted to make changes in his life so he wouldn't end up like his brother

I realized that I have to change my life right now because I am not going to see him no more. And it's like, wow, you better make a better decision now in life to at least get out of there, and come out to at least do better. It's hard, tough.

P1 said that after his brother's incarceration he had no one to look up to so he decided to cope with his brother's incarceration by becoming a positive role model for other people. He also tries to be a positive role model for his brother by encouraging his brother to stay positive, and do the right things in prison. He wants to be a positive role

model for his children so that they would not follow the same path that his brother has taken.

P1 feels that having good leaders could motivate young people to take personal initiatives while at the same time help the community in which they live. “If we have more good leaders and more good people, we would be fine.” P1 pointed out that the absence of positive role models could also explain why many young African American males are in prison.

P2 stated that his brother use to be his role model before he was incarcerated. However, after his brother’s incarceration P2 realized that his brother had negatively influenced him. “I looked up to him, and I think he is the man, but I guess what he was doing was not right.” P2 stated that although his brother was not a positive role model however, other youth looked up to him because there were no positive role models in the community to help the youth in a positive way.

P2 noted that after his brother’s incarceration he became worried because he had no one to turn to for help, so he acted out and was angry with others because he lived in a challenging and dangerous community where people always got into fights, and trouble. Thus, he needed to protect himself. “There are a lot of guns out here, and a lot of people are being grinded. They are killing each other, and robbing, and stealing.”

P2 stated that having positive role models could play a major role for inner-city communities, especially during school summer vacations. He said positive role models could keep the youth proactively engaged, and help many nonincarcerated youth in the

inner-city communities. P2 noted that even with fewer positive role models among the youth, these role models; could start transforming the lives of many people in the community. For instance, according to P2, when the youth start seeing someone doing something bad or wrong, they also start doing the same thing. However, when they see that the same person has started doing something positive then everybody starts following that person. “And that is all we need, is like some leaders. If we get some leaders out there; this place would be different. It would be totally different out here.”

After asking P3 a series of question relating to his brother’s incarceration, and his coping strategies, the responses he gave indicated that having good role models would be very helpful. P3’s responses suggested that his brother was a negative role model for him. P3 pointed out that he and his brother started smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol, chasing girls, and hanging out with wrong people before his brother went to prison. “There was a whole lot of stupid stuff going on like trashing things, and throwing trash cans on the streets. And, you know, just mischief stuff.” P3 said he, and his brother totally disregarded authority, and they were very rebellious, especially his brother. P3 noted that his brother did a lot of mischievous things “like spray painting walls, and staying away all night ‘til around 2 or 3 in the morning.” P3 noted that at times his brother would cover his beds with pillows, and sneak out the window, and climb down, and no one would see him.

P3 said his brother’s incarceration affected him to a point that he became shocked just by the thought that he would not see his brother again for another 25 years. He said

from the initial stages the only way he was able to cope was to do bad things like doing drugs, blaming himself, distancing himself from people, and having emotional pains.

I asked P3 how his brother's incarceration has affected his life. He said his brother's incarceration affected him greatly because of the close relationship that they enjoyed together when they were children. P3 said when they were growing up he rather acted as positive role model for his older brother. "Someone has to be the smart one." P3 said, "I was the one who decides not to go through with what they are about. You know, I kept my cool."

I don't want to turn my back on anyone. I go to visit him, but I always remind him that if he hadn't allowed life to take over him he would have been a different person now. Listen, stop with the bullshit you know.

P3 said one of the ways he learned to cope with his brother's incarceration was to become a positive role model, and educate youth about the dangers of drugs. He tells people about how his brother got addicted to drugs, and tried to rob an old lady who fell, and died, which is why he was sent to prison for 25 years. P3 also said he also acts a positive role model for his brother in prison by always motivating and encouraging him any time he calls from prison.

The responses given by all the participants reflected the need for positive role models. The response showed that all the participants did not view their incarcerated siblings as positive role models. The answers given by the participants indicated that all of them viewed their incarcerated siblings as negative role models.

Theme 4: Incarceration Avoidance

When all the three participants were asked questions relating to how they coped after their brother's incarcerations, their responses suggested that they all coped by trying to avoid being incarcerated. Their responses also underscore how mass incarceration has affected many African American households, and the inner-city communities. For example, P1 noted that when his brother was first incarcerated he (P1) found it difficult to cope because there were no positive role models, employment opportunities, and youth social support programs to help him. P1 noted that the lack of such amenities could contribute to incarceration rates among young African American male youth. Thus, P1 said, one way he coped with his brother's incarceration was to make sure that he avoided being incarcerated by doing positive things.

P1 said youth who commit minor offenses should be made to do community programs in the communities instead of incarcerating them. "I say give them second chances . . . I mean nothing in the streets for us to do as black males . . . This is why a lot of black men go in and out of prison." P1 stated that the absence of jobs in the inner cities also encourages crime, which in turn leads to arrest and incarceration. When P1 was asked whether he knows many African American youth with siblings in prison, he said he knows a lot of people and that they were all over. When P1 was asked how serious the situation was, he said it was like the opening, and closing doors. P1 pointed out that everybody in the community has somebody in prison. "Well, it affects families, communities, schools, towns, cities everywhere. You know that is how it is, right?"

P1 noted that it was not easy for him to deal with his brother's incarceration because he became very angry, depressed, he distanced himself from people. But he also developed coping strategies along the way, and one of them way was doing everything possible to void being incarcerated. For example, when asked how he avoids being incarcerated, P1 said, "Oh by not trying to get in trouble, and not trying to get in no trouble." P1 said he does not want to be incarcerated because his brother's incarceration has thought him how he could stay away from being incarcerated.

Made me not want to be in that situation. Another thing is I don't want to see my kids follow the footsteps like that or try to be in that situation. Going to prison, and what not, so I have to do, and have done better.

P2's responses indicated that one of his coping strategies was by doing positive things to help him avoid being incarcerated like his brother. P2 said after visiting his brother for the first time in prison he realized that that was not the place to be so he decided to develop positive coping strategies so that he may not also end up being incarcerated.

I cannot be in this facility like this. I want to be free. You know what I mean, I want to be out here like this. He is not doing what I am doing out here in the street because he is out there.

P2 said one of the motivating factors why he wanted to avoid being incarcerated was because of the prison environment.

Oh the environment is a place nobody wants to see. It's like you are looking at a military place, an armed facility and it is crazy. Nobody wants to be in a place like that. It is terrifying basically; it is terrifying seeing all the guards there like that wearing uniforms.

P2 also said he wanted to avoid incarceration because too many African American youth in his community has been sent to prison.

Everybody around New Haven has someone that is incarcerated. Because that is all that we go through every day. It is either someone going to jail or someone coming right out. And, all my friends have a brother, sister, mother, or father locked up right now. And, they are writing letters, calling back, and forth, and that tears their family apart too. It's just like a revolving door . . . I mean it's like more Black males are in jail and [laughter] it affects us big time because it gets poor, and poorer, sad, and sadder, and dirty, and dirtier.

P2 said one of his coping strategies for his brother's incarceration was doing everything possible to avoid being sent into incarceration.

P3 also pointed out that the only way he could be successful in life was to guide against his incarceration. P3 said the incidence of incarceration were high in his community, and he knows a lot of African American youth currently in incarceration. He also noted that he just wrote a letter, and mailed it to a friend who just got incarcerated. P3 said after his brother's incarceration he realized that he could be next if he does not change his lifestyle. P3 said he developed coping strategies to help him avoid being sent

to prison. P3 said some of the strategies he adopted was staying away from unsafe areas, especially places he has no business going. He said he does not stick to any group for a long time to get into trouble. He instead concentrates on his business, and deals with people who only wanted to be successful in life. He also said he avoids incarceration by telling people the dangers of drugs and how it could lead to incarceration. “Like I said, kind of want people to know that there is a better life out there than standing on a street corner, and doing [selling] drugs.”

The responses given by all the members in the study suggested that they did everything possible to avoid incarceration. All the three participants indicated how incarceration was very rampant in their communities and how they wanted to avoid being among those incarcerated.

Theme 5: Family Responsibilities

When all the three participants were asked questions relating to how their families coped with their sibling’s incarceration, the answers they all gave suggested that their families coped by avoiding the responsibilities that comes with their siblings’ incarceration. For example, all the members noted that their brothers’ incarceration led to disunity. For example, P1 stated that his family rarely wants to discuss his brother’s incarceration because everybody feels differently about it. When P1 was asked how is family copes with his brother’s incarceration he said, “It upsets everybody. You know, he got wife, and kid so it upset them also. It tears families apart. It does.” P1 added, “You do

bad you got to pay for the consequences. So the feeling that they had was do what you do, and do your time. When your time comes you come home when you are done.”

P1 noted that his family copes with his brother’s incarceration by avoiding talking about it. P1 said his family believes that they were not directly responsible for his incarceration so he has to do his term in prison, and when he is done with it he comes home. P1 said his brother’s incarceration has been a deeply contentious issue in the family. P1 said one of the reasons why the family does not like discussing his brother has more to do with responsibilities and that the family was tired of paying for the phone calls. He added that another reason why the family does not talk about his brother much is because once they start doing so it means they have to assume responsibilities, and make trips to the prison to visit him regularly. P1 said his family was upset about his brother’s incarceration because his brother left a wife and child he left behind, and nobody in the family has extra money to help them out. P1 said the family cares a lot about his brother but the only way they cope with his incarceration was not to talk about him, which also meant avoiding the family’s responsibilities to him.

When P2 was asked how his family coped with having a family member in prison he said it was very hard, and nobody wants to take full responsibility of his brother’s incarceration. “Everybody is disconnected, combative, and we are all torn apart when we are supposed to come together, and get this thing together.” P2 stated that most of the family members were tired of sending money, writing letters, accepting collect calls, and visiting his brother in prison. P2 noted that his family copes with his brother’s

incarceration by avoiding talking about his incarceration altogether. All of the family members have been impacted by his brother's incarceration, but P2 believes that most of them want to move on with their lives without even thinking about his brother. P2 said, "Come on everybody got to send money, write letters. Who wants to write letters, and getting back and forth? That tears you up. Oh man those calls they are kind of crazy." P2 noted that everyone in the family was tired of the emotional, and financial burden his brother's incarceration was causing on the family. Because of this, whenever a family member raises a question about his brother it becomes an argument for all of them.

P3 was asked how his family copes with his brother's incarceration. He responded that they were all devastated, especially their mother. His mother tries to avoid the topic altogether because she gets very upset anything they try to talk about his brother. After P3's father died from cancer, and the brother went to prison his mother became very emotional, so talking about his brother's incarceration was like reminding her about her husband's death. P3 said the last time he visited his brother they had a long talk about their family but he said he did not want to reveal what they talked about. P3 said he told his brother that he was there to support him, and all the kids would be there for him.

P3 pointed his brother's incarceration affected his family in so many ways. He said one of the reasons why his family members do not want to get too involved with his brother's incarceration was the family responsibilities involved. Another issue is the emotional pain attached to his brother's incarceration that cannot easily be resolved by just discussing it. For example, P3 said that after visiting his brother he was devastated,

and felt sorrowful for his brother and for himself. P3 said none of the family members have ever visited his brother in prison.

The responses given by all the three participants indicated that they, and their family members cope with their brother's incarceration by avoidance. P1 stated that his family copes with his brother's incarceration by not talking about him. P2 said his family copes with his brother's incarceration in a similar manner. P2 noted that the family does not want to talk about his brother's incarceration because it also involves taking care of all the responsibilities that his brother left behind. P2 said his brother left a wife, and a child, which none of the family members think it is their responsibility. P3 noted that his family copes with his brother's incarceration by not talking about him, and not visiting him in prison.

Theme 6: Youth Social Programs and Employment Opportunities

When all the three participants were asked about how they coped with their brother's incarceration, the responses they gave suggested that youth social programs, and employment opportunities could play important role for nonincarcerated siblings to cope with their siblings' incarceration. P1 stated that the lack of youth social programs makes coping with sibling incarceration very difficult, and said that job-training programs, and employment opportunities could make coping with sibling incarceration easier.

P1 also noted that youth social support programs could help nonincarcerated youth get the necessary support to cope with their sibling's incarceration. P1 said, "We

just need help that is all. Because these kids do matter, we matter.” He mentioned after-school programs, mentoring programs, and job training programs for inner-city youth as things that could help nonincarcerated youth with a sibling in prison cope better. “I mean, nothing in the streets for us to do as Black males.” P1 said coping with his brother’s incarceration was not easy because there were no social programs or social support groups to help him handle his emotional problems. He said that having youth social programs like youth social support group, youth mentoring group, and youth recreational activities in the community could help nonincarcerated siblings, and also help reduce incarceration among African American male youth. P1 also said there were no job opportunities available to help him escape the conditions he was trying very hard to avoid. He felt that job training programs and special employment opportunities could empower the youth to do positive things in the inner city communities.

P2 noted that providing special job prospects for nonincarcerated African American male youth could help them cope with their sibling’s incarceration by keeping them busy. P2 observed that the lack of social programs, and employment opportunities in the inner-city communities contribute to high incarceration rates among young African American men, and that having these programs could help reduce incarceration rates.

I think it can be reduced by giving more programs to the kids, and the youth out here which is us. More activities basically to create things to do out here. There is nothing to do out here in New Haven positive, nothing.

P2 said that when his brother was in incarceration, and he was looking for jobs to keep himself busy it was very difficult, so having special job opportunities for nonincarcerated youth could help them cope better with their siblings' incarceration. "Everybody just wanna get in groups to walk around the streets. I mean there is nothing out here but trouble out here waiting for us." P2 mentioned specific programs that could help nonincarcerated youth with a sibling in prison cope better. P2 noted that providing programs like extra school activities, summer jobs, and programs like "Big Brother," "Youth Skills," and "City Kids" would not only help the nonincarcerated African American male youth but would also help all the youth in the inner-city communities from going to prison. P2 stated that when he was growing up there was a youth program like these in his community to help the youth but it was no longer available.

P3 mentioned the need for youth social programs, and job opportunities to help youth cope better with their siblings' incarceration. Like the other participants, P3 stated that providing employment opportunities for youth in the inner cities could help reduce the high incarceration rates among African American male youths. P3 noted that he had a hard time finding a job when his brother was in prison but that getting a job helped him cope with his emotional problems, and also physically kept him away from bad influences. P3 said that when social programs like after-school programs training, and employment opportunities are provided for the youth in the inner city communities, crime rates could also go down. When P3 was asked what was needed, he said,

More after-school programs. Because that has falling back a lot. I remember when I was growing up, I had an after-school program. And I definitely must say that it helped me out in a certain way. It was a place that had a pool table, and a movie night every Friday. They also had a snack bar, and there was a signing in sheet, and you have to be like a preteen to join.

P3 observed that providing positive community programs, and job opportunities for nonincarcerated African American male youth, and all youth in the community could help them become productive. It could also help them avoid abusing drugs, and could also help them stay away from bad friends and associations.

The responses given by all three participants reflected the importance of youth social programs, and employment opportunities as positive strategies. For example, P1 argued that the absence of community youth programs could also contribute to high incarceration rates among young African American men. P1 noted that the absence of these programs makes coping with a sibling incarceration very difficult. P2 stated that social programs, and employment opportunities could help nonincarcerated youth cope better, and also benefit all the youth in the community. P3 noted that having social youth programs in community, and employment opportunities could reduce the high incarceration rates in the inner-city communities, and help youth develop better ways to cope when their siblings are in prison.

Discrepant Cases

There were many discrepancies in the participant's responses. Some of the responses deviated from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theoretical framework, which anchored the present study. There was also divergence from some study findings reported in the literature as they relate to family member incarceration; specifically, sibling incarceration.

For example, although P1 was angry, and emotionally distressed, which is consistent with what other researchers have found, he also felt that his brother's incarceration had a positive effect on himself, and his brother. When I asked P1 whether he thought his brother going to prison was a good thing, he responded, "Well, I am not saying it is okay but it saves his life." P1 made another profound point when I asked him about his initial reaction when he realized that his brother was going to be in prison for a long time. He stated,

I realize that I have to change my life right now because I am not going to see him no more. And it's like, wow, you better make a better decision now in life to at least better get out of there, and come out at least do better. It hard, though.

This particular finding was very significant because it reveals how some siblings could be affected positively by their sibling's incarceration. This finding was contrary to what has been reported widely in the literature. Most literature on sibling relationships report how siblings affected each other negatively, especially older siblings.

Numerous researchers have indicated the negative effect of incarceration on the nonincarcerated family members. For instance, according to Richardson (2012), African American men between ages 18 and 24 years face high incarceration rates because of their social environments and economic status. However, a statement by P3 suggested that this is not always the case.

Hmm, no, I don't think the environment plays a role, I think the people you hang around with though, does play a role. Because, if you have heard the saying, tell me who your five friends are, and I would tell you who you are? It's the same thing, so that is why I try to keep to myself, and I am very fluid and never stick around too long to a crowd. I just show up to show my respect, just do my business, and I just keep going because that is what it is. At the end of the day that is what is going to help me out. It's about my family, and about my future. It's about doing the right thing.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory holds that a person's family, school, peers, church, neighborhood, sociocultural, and structural conditions defines them. However, P3's response suggested that, in his opinion, the environment does not entirely play a role. He instead felt that the people one associates with plays the significant role. To some extent, I agree with P3's assessment about the limited role the environment plays. Bronfenbrenner posited that a high degree of parental control was warranted to offset the influences of peer pressure for children living in impoverishing environments.

Credibility

To ensure that present study met the credibility requirements as proposed in Chapter 3, I made sure that my research questions were in line with my research topic. I also ensured that my data collection and data analysis were linked to my research questions, and the theoretical framework. Also, I confirmed that the theoretical framework guided the study. I used my knowledge gained in the literature on sibling incarceration to ensure that the outcomes of the current project meet the evidence base of credibility requirements. I used member-check techniques to ensure the veracity of the data, including the analytic categories, interpretation, conclusion, and accuracy. To ensure that future researchers can acquaint themselves with the current study, I provided a vivid description of the procedures used; its context, and the participants in detail. As previously noted, I also used a reflective journal to record all my personal observations, and documented all my thought process throughout the study.

Morse (2015) noted that to assess the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry, rigor, reliability, validity, and generalizability must be substituted with credibility, dependability, and transferability. In this study, all emerging data were contextualized, and compared. Also, all discrepant cases were discussed.

Dependability and Audit Trail

As noted in Chapter 3, the dependability, and audit trail process was meant to ensure reliability through the vigor of the methodology used. I used an audit trail to record the raw data, and the documentation process to ensure dependability. I reduced the

data through an analytical, and methodological process. I made sure that all negative cases were analyzed, and disconfirmed until this was verified. For reflexivity, I used a journal to document my reactions, assumptions, and my personal interpretation of the participants' verbal and nonverbal expressions (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). To ensure further dependability of the study, I used triangulation, meaning that multiple data sources were cross-checked to eliminate intrinsic biases, and to provide a reliable audit trail.

Transferability

The present study's results were significant for the study's sample, specifically nonincarcerated African American male youth with a male sibling in prison. The current study was conducted with limited number of people to ensure that some in-depth responses would be generated to reflect the rich experiences of nonincarcerated siblings whose brothers are in prison. The implications are that the study results would benefit nonincarcerated African American male youth whose male siblings are still in incarceration. Nonincarcerated African American male youth can learn some of the coping strategies that study participants discussed. The knowledge gained from this study could be used by African American male youth to help them stay away from their incarcerated siblings' negative influences. Study findings also contributed to the limited existing body of literature on African American male sibling incarceration. Thus, the findings could benefit human services providers in the criminal justice, counseling, and social services areas, as well as community organizations involved with African

American male youth. The study results could also inform intervention strategies for families with a sibling in prison.

Tracy (2010) also noted that transferability is evident when others can relate or empathize with other people's personal experience. For instance, there was transferability when nonincarcerated African American male youth shared their personal experiences on how it felt to have a brother in prison, and how others were able to relate to it.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the ability to ensure that all data interpretations were created from the raw data obtained in the study. Confirmability is also based on the participants' voices, and lived experiences (Tracy, 2010). The confirmability of this study was established by using accurate data analysis to avoid misrepresentation, and misinterpretation of the data collected. I also bracketed my personal biases during the data collection process to avoid manipulation of the study's final outcomes.

Chapter Summary

My purpose for conducting this study was to explore the lived experiences of nonincarcerated African American youth who had a male sibling in prison through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. The overarching research question used in the data collection was How do male African American male youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling? To answer this question, I presented the demographical data of all the participants involved the study. I discussed all the unusual circumstances encountered during the data collection process. I also showed how I used

in-depth interviews to elicit information from the participants. I also, indicated all the processes involved in analyzing the data. Finally, I presented the results that emerged from the data.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Limitations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

My focus in the present study was exploring the lived experiences of nonincarcerated African American youth who had a male sibling in prison through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. The following broad overarching research question was asked: How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling? The goal was to better understand the lived experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth with a male sibling in incarceration.

Based on a thorough, in-depth, and systematic analysis of participants' voices regarding their lived experiences, the findings from this study are consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The present results also answered the overarching research question. Participant responses suggested that having a brother in prison significantly affected them in many ways. One major finding in this study was that having an incarcerated sibling also positively influenced the study participants. I gave evidence in the data for indication and assertion. Finally, the evidence presented in the data suggested that nonincarcerated male siblings with a brother in prison developed positive coping strategies. These positive coping strategies included going back to school, trying to get a job, being employed, learning a trade, keeping positively busy, and staying away from areas where they were not supposed to go.

The present study's results shed light on what has already been confirmed in the literature on the adverse impact of sibling incarceration. The results of this present study are also in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which was the theoretical framework that anchored this study. Study findings also advance the limited knowledge on sibling incarceration. All of the participants in this study had an older sibling in prison, but the younger siblings influenced their older siblings in prison. Researchers have found that older siblings are more likely to influence the attitudes of younger siblings. For instance, Fortuna et al. (2011) found that an older sibling's alcohol usage also affected, and predicted a younger sibling's drinking. However, this situation is more likely when the siblings are close in age, and of the same gender. Thus, findings from the current study disconfirm those of Fortuna et al. Findings from the present study also affirm the conclusions drawn by Kothari et al. (2014) that siblings could act as powerful, and positive role models while at the same time being equal partners in delinquent behavior.

The overall findings from the current study indicated that nonincarcerated African American male siblings were negatively affected by their sibling's incarceration. The results highlighted what has already been confirmed on the negative impacts of sibling incarceration. To some extent, the current results enhance the body of knowledge on how the incarceration of African American male youth could have a positive effect on nonincarcerated siblings. The current data also add to the body of knowledge by

suggesting that older incarcerated siblings were affected positively in prison by their younger nonincarcerated siblings.

I asked study participants about their experiences, and issues related to the overarching research question. Smith (2011) noted that asking participants to provide actual details about their lived experiences is significant. Based on this guidance, I encouraged study participants to recall vividly, and describe their lived experiences of having a brother in prison. I asked the participants to identify or describe the most challenging aspects of having a sibling in custody and how it affected them. I also asked each participant to describe his strategies for staying away from trouble, and avoiding incarceration.

Based on a thorough, systematic, and in-depth analysis of participant voices of their lived experiences, the present study results were found to be consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. The results also thoroughly answered the overarching research question. In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of the findings, their implications for social change, recommendations, delimitations, and direction for future studies.

Interpretation of Findings

Study findings indicated that having an incarcerated male sibling had significant adverse effects on the nonincarcerated African American male siblings. However, having an incarcerated sibling also had some positive effects, and led to some positive coping strategies. The present study's results underscored the adverse effects of sibling

incarceration. The results also confirmed what numerous researchers have already noted. For instance, because most African American male youth live in poverty, and in socially disorganized areas, they are more likely to be incarcerated because of the conditions existing in these communities (Richardson, 2012). My findings also confirmed Richardson's assertion that African American men between the ages of 18, and 24 years face high incarceration rates because of their social environments and economic status.

My findings are also in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory holds that people face numerous challenges in life, especially during the teenage years. For this reason, he postulated that providing young people with a high degree of social, and environmental support would be valuable. Bronfenbrenner (2005) also noted the need for high social support systems such as family, school, peers, church, neighborhood, and the sociocultural environment to help individuals make life adjustments.

I discovered, and discussed six important themes that answered the overarching research question: How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling? The themes also underscored the lived experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth whose male sibling was incarcerated. However, I discuss the following five themes because they were the most significant:

- Theme 1: anger and emotional distress.
- Theme 2: positive effects and personal responsibilities.

- Theme 4: incarceration avoidance.
- Theme 5: family responsibilities.
- Theme 6: youth social programs and employment opportunities.

Theme 1: Anger and Emotional Distress

Responses by all the participants in the current study indicated that having an incarcerated sibling adversely affected them. They also reported that their brother's incarceration caused anger, sorrow, sadness, and emotional distress. The study results confirm what previous researchers have found regarding family member incarceration, especially sibling incarceration. For example, I asked P1 how he felt when he realized that his brother would be in incarceration for a long time. He responded,

You get mad; I was definitely upset like you never going to see someone again that is like someone dying. You know you will really be upset too. I felt real mad, that is it. That is the feeling right there.

Based on this answer alone, one could conclude that P1 was affected negatively by his brother's incarceration. P2 gave similar responses to suggest that his brother's incarceration had a negative effect on him. For example, when P2 was asked to describe his experience after visiting his brother in prison, he responded,

The experience is different feeling because being at a place where your brother has been imprisoned gives you a different feeling. It is a feeling you can't even describe because it is terrifying, and scary at the same time for someone you know. It is scary; it is not really a good place to be.

P2 also described his experience of having a sibling in prison by saying that it affected him, and affected his brother as well.

Personally, I feel neglected, and it feels like someone took my best friend away from me; and knowing that it really hurts. I wish I could take him away from that facility myself. He does everything for me, you know?

P2 concluded by saying, “Oh man it’s hard not having your brother there when you really need him.”

When P3 was asked to describe how it felt to have his brother incarcerated, he said, “How would you feel if you have a brother in a prison? You know someone that you grew up with, ate with. You were there for each other?” When P3 was asked to further describe his initial reaction when he realized that his brother would be incarcerated for a long time, he said, “Man, my heart broke.”

Gabel (1992) stated that children whose parents were in prison demonstrated fear, anxiety, anger, antisocial behavior, and sadness. Gabel also noted that many of the children suffered from guilt, loneliness, and low self-esteem. They emotionally withdrew, and had academic problems. Sanders (2004) noted that because many siblings have special affection for each other, there is a strong possibility that nonincarcerated siblings will face many social, and emotional challenges when one of their siblings is separated through incarceration. Sanders noted that imprisoning a sibling could have a traumatic, and negative effect on the nonincarcerated sibling. Schlafer and Poehlmann (2011) also found that African American youth with a family member in prison suffered from

cognitive changes, had social and emotional problems, and demonstrated related risky behaviors. Thus, my findings were consistent with what has been reported in the literature.

Theme 2: Positive Effects and Personal Responsibilities

All three participants were asked questions relating to their brother's incarceration and their coping strategies. Their responses yielded the following themes: positive effects, and personal responsibilities. These themes are important because they partially answer the overarching research question: How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling? The themes also underscore the lived experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American male youth whose male sibling is incarcerated.

The positive results of sibling incarceration were a significant discovery. These positive results indicate how having an incarcerated sibling caused the nonincarcerated siblings to develop positive coping strategies. I drew these conclusions based on the responses provided by all three participants in the study. For instance, P1's offered the following response when I asked him how he felt when he realized that his brother would not be coming home soon:

I realized that I have to change my life right now because I am not going to see him no more. And it's like, wow, you better make a better decision now in life to at least better get out of there and come out at least doing better. It's hard, though.

P1's response suggested that his brother's incarceration was a call for him to start taking responsibility for his actions. P1 also understood that he had to find a better coping strategy than what he was getting from his brother.

P1 stated that he had changed his lifestyle by staying away from trouble. I asked P1 how he coped with his brother's incarceration. He responded, "Oh, staying busy, and making sure that I keep my head up straight when he calls me." This response contradicted the findings of researchers such as Sanders (2004), and Schlafer and Poehlmann (2011) that the incarceration of a family member, or a sibling leads to an adverse effect on the nonincarcerated.

P1 developed positive coping strategies to a point where he was able to influence his brother positively behind bars. For instance, when I asked him whether his brother called him from prison, he responded "yes" and said that he told his brother to keep faith in God, for he would need God in there. P1 stated that he was doing his best to ensure that he would not become a victim of incarceration while his brother was away. He stressed the importance of "maintaining what you do every day, and trying to get to school, trying to get a job, and also trying to do what is right until he comes home." P1's response shed light on some of his positive coping strategies, including getting to school, trying to get a job, staying close to his family, and trying to do what was right until his brother comes home.

Another indication that incarceration sometimes has a positive result for both the incarcerated, and the nonincarcerated was evident in a response I got from P1. I asked

him if he thought it was okay for his brother to go to prison. P1 said, "I am not saying it is okay, but it saves his life." In other words, the incarceration was positive because it saved his brother from someone who might want to kill him. I asked P1 again to describe how his brother's incarceration had changed his life. He responded, "Well, it changed my life, because it made me want to do better. Made me not want to be in that situation." P1 added that he did not want to see his children follow in his brother's footsteps. The response clearly indicated that P1 had developed positive coping strategies to avoid going to prison.

I asked P2 how his brother's incarceration had changed his life. He said that when he visited his brother in prison, and realized where his brother had been incarcerated, he felt like never going there. (However, P2 later was sent to jail for few months after having an argument with his girlfriend.) P2 said that he was terrified of his personal experiences of being in prison. I asked P2 about how his sibling's incarceration had affected him positively. His response was "It has changed me for the better. It has changed me to better myself to not want to do that."

P3 stated that when he first visited his brother in prison, he realized that the prison had taken a toll on his brother, and that his brother was now comprehending the full consequences of his actions. P3 said that his brother's incarceration had taught him a lot of lessons, especially about the dangers of drug abuse and addictions. Based on this, P3 now devotes part of his time to counseling, and advising youth on the dangers of illicit drugs usage, and its consequence. He tells people, "Don't let the drugs take over you at

all. You know I am not gonna lie because at one point I had my share of drugs. You know I have done it, but I never let it took over me.”

P3 said that his coping strategies included staying away from drugs, and educating people about drugs, focusing on his family, concentrating on his business, not staying too long with any one crowd, avoiding places he has no business going, and developing his intellect because no one could take that away from him. “They can sell your property, and they can sell that, but they can never sell your intellect. Because that is what you have. Never ever let anyone take that away from you at all.”

Based on P3’s responses, it could be concluded that his brother’s incarceration affected him positively. I drew this conclusion from the fact that his brother was sent to prison because he was trying to rob an old woman to get her money to buy drugs, and then ended up accidentally killing her. P3 learned a valuable lesson from his brother’s incarceration, and after his brother’s incarceration he developed positive coping strategies that included avoiding incarceration.

The results from this study show that all of the participants were negatively affected by their siblings’ incarceration. However, the data also suggested that with the passing of time, all three participants developed positive coping strategies to help them avoid taking the route that led their siblings into incarceration. The positive results of sibling incarceration, and the development of positive coping strategies have not been discussed extensively in the literature. My goal was to fill this gap in the literature, and

contribute to the extensive body of knowledge on sibling incarceration, particularly in relation to nonincarcerated African American male youth.

Sibling relationships have been studied extensively (Fortuna et al., 2011). However, no one has addressed the coping strategies of the nonincarcerated siblings. For instance, Buist (2010) noted that younger siblings were more likely to be influenced by their older siblings, especially when the older sibling makes criminal behavior appear typical, and decisive. However, my findings showed that the nonincarcerated younger siblings positively influenced their older incarcerated siblings. Fortuna et al. noted that older siblings can influence delinquent behavior of younger siblings. Barnard (2005) noted that older siblings encourage younger siblings to abuse drugs. Conger and Reuter (1996) noted that older siblings can influence younger siblings to smoke. Bard and Rodgers (2003) also noted that younger siblings may model older siblings' behavior regarding sexual activities. Kornreich et al. (2003) also posited that older siblings influence physical aggression levels in younger siblings. Aguilar et al. (2001) argued that younger siblings imitate the bad behaviors, and lifestyles of older siblings. However, my results indicated the opposite

Theme 4: Incarceration Avoidance

I asked all the three participants questions related to the incarceration of African American male youth. P1 said he knew many African American male youths with a sibling in prison.

Oh definitely, a lot of people, it is all over. Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh, this is like opening, and closing a door, everybody has somebody in prison. Definitely. It affects families, communities, schools, towns, cities everywhere. You know that is how it is right now.

P2 also said that almost everyone around where he lived knew someone who was incarcerated.

Because that is all that we go through every day. It is either someone going to jail or someone coming right out. All my friends have a brother, sister, mother, or father locked up right now. And they writing letters, calling back, and forth, and that tears their family apart too. It's just like a revolving door, and it's crazy out here.

The above response indicated the magnitude of high incarceration rates in the inner cities of America. I asked P2 how high incarceration rates affect the inner-city communities. He said, "I mean it's like more Black males are in jail, and [laughter] it affects us big time because it gets poor, and poorer, sad, and sadder, and dirty, and dirtier[laughter]." Based on this response, I concluded, or assumed that high incarceration numbers of young African American male youth are destroying urban communities.

P3 also said he knew many people who were incarcerated.

Yea, to be honest with you I do know a whole lot of people who are incarcerated, and I feel very bad. I just wrote a letter to a friend of mine who just got

incarcerated. And I can tell you right now that when he gets out, I would be the only one who have wrote him a letter.

P3 said he knows that people get incarcerated every day but to be honest he did not know the statistics because he tries to stay away from some particular areas of town where he believes might not be safe for him to be there. “And, like I said, kind of want people to know that there is a better life out there than standing around street corners, and doing drugs.”

P3’s response indicated that many African American male youths got arrested for selling, and doing drugs. Massoglia et al. (2014) noted that the average African American living in an urban area also lives in a community with high poverty rate. High poverty rates could lead to high crime rates, and high crime rates could also lead to mass incarceration of African American men. For example, Males (2011) noted that African Americans are 4 times more likely to face arrest for marijuana possession.

The high rate of incarceration among African American young men in the inner cities noted by the study participants is consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner’s theory holds that people face numerous challenges in life, especially during the teenage years. For this reason, he suggested that youth, in particular, should receive social and environmental support to enable them to navigate through life successfully. Bronfenbrenner (2005) noted that the lack of social support systems such as a healthy family, good schools, positive peers, church, safe

neighborhoods, and a constructive sociocultural environment makes it difficult for individuals to make necessary life adjustments.

The responses from study participants regarding incarceration rates also reflected research findings on the social conditions in U.S. inner-city communities. Phillips (2010) noted that most inner-city educational institutions have high dropout, and failure rates. Phillips observed that the social environments, or the neighborhoods in which many young African American men live, play a pivotal role in the number, and type of opportunities provided to them. Livingston and Nihimana (2006) stated that many of these settings have high unemployment rates, and many single-parent households. Kreek (2011) also noted that African American youth who live in U.S. inner cities receive substandard public services. Kreek asserted that young people in these communities were not being mobilized to engage in real community issues. Finally, the national unemployment rate for African Americans in 2015 was 11.3% compared to 5.3% for European Americans (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Thus, the responses provided by all the three participants were consistent with other reports.

Theme 5: Family Responsibilities

I asked all the three participants about how their family deals with their sibling's incarceration. The responses provided indicated that families with incarcerated siblings suffer from family disunity mostly because of emotional, and financial problems. P1 responded,

How does my family feel? Well, everybody has their own feelings, but I guess they don't like the feeling of that you know . . . I know they probably upset like me. But everybody being themselves on that when a family member who is tight to you is gone.

P1's family's response could also indicate signs of denial, grief, and humiliation. When I asked P1 whether his family's response suggested that it was okay for the brother to be in prison, he responded, "No, it is not okay to be there. It upsets everybody. You know he got wife, and kid, so it upset them also. It tears families apart." P1's response was an indication of what happens to many families when a loved one was incarcerated. Sometimes it may not be easy for family members to talk about a member's incarceration because it could bring back bad memories, and it could upset some of them.

Many families also confront financial challenges when they visit their loved one in prison or find sending money, and accepting long distance direct calls from prison a burden. In some cases, the incarcerated family member leaves behind a partner, and sometimes children. For instance, P1's brother was married with a child at the time of his incarceration. Thus, there may be some financial burden on either the wife, or on all the extended family members. P1 stated that the best way his family copes with the situation was to avoid the topic altogether.

P2 also noted that having a family member in incarceration literally destroyed the family. "When you have someone that you love, and everybody love, and the whole family is just like torn apart. Everybody is disconnected, combative, and we are all torn

apart.” P2 added, “Come on, everybody got to send money, write letters. Who wants to write letters, and getting back, and forth? That tears you up. Oh man those calls they are kind of crazy.” P2 noted that because of the emotional, and financial difficulties related to his brother’s incarceration the family handles the problem by simply ignoring it. P2 said his family members were tired of sending money, writing letters, accepting collect calls, and visiting his brother in prison. P2 also noted that his family copes with his brother’s incarceration by refusing to engage in any conversation regarding him.

P3 said his brother’s incarceration devastated his family, especially his mother, and that he does not discuss his brother’s incarceration with his mother. She gets very emotional about it because it reminds his mother of his father’s death. P3’s family also does not discuss his brother’s incarceration because of the financial difficulties involved as well as the emotional pain. P3 added that every time he visits his brother in prison he becomes devastated, and feels sorrowful for his brother, and himself.

Before I even got home I went into my car and cried. I cried, I could not move.

But when I was there I have to be strong for him, though, I could not let him see me like that.

Based on P3’s response, it is safe to assume that many families with a loved one in prison go through similar challenges. Many families also face financial difficulties because of family member incarceration.

Kothari et al. (2014) found that about 80% of children in the United States grow up with at least one sibling, which suggests that many families could, therefore, become

victims of sibling incarceration. Glaze and Maruschak (2008) also stated that racial minorities, particularly African Americans, were overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Thus, mass incarceration disrupts many African American families. Glaze and Maruschak suggested that mass incarceration increases the likelihood that a disproportionate number of minority children will have a household member in incarceration. Murray (2007) agreed that a child whose parent is incarcerated could experience social exclusion, and is more likely to participate in various offensive behaviors.

Nicols and Loper (2012) suggested that families with a member in prison should get more attention because of the numerous challenges confronting them. Schlafer and Poehlmann (2011) observed that African American youth with a family member in prison suffer cognitive changes, social, and emotional problems, and other related risky behaviors. The other problems families face when a member is incarcerated is that sometimes their children becomes exposed to numerous life challenges, and risky behaviors that disrupt family unity (Arditti, 2012). Arditti also noted that children whose parents are in prison face social stigmatization, and sometimes find it difficult to get what they want, such as emotional support from other family members.

Theme 6: Youth Social Programs and Employment Opportunities

When all the three participants were asked about how they coped with their brother's incarceration, their responses suggested that providing youth social programs, and job opportunities could help the nonincarcerated male youth, and all youth in the

inner-city communities. P1 said youth support programs like after-school programs, and job-training programs could help nonincarcerated youth cope better with sibling incarceration, and that job-training programs could reduce high incarceration rates, and empower the youth to do positive things in the inner city communities. P1 said that having youth social programs like youth social support groups, youth mentoring groups, and youth recreational activities in the community could help nonincarcerated siblings, and also help reduce incarceration among African American male youth.

P2 also noted that providing special job prospects for nonincarcerated African American male youth could help them cope with their sibling's incarceration. P2 noted that the absence of youth support programs, and special employment opportunities for the youth in the inner city communities contributes to their high incarceration rates.

I think it [incarceration rates] can be reduced by giving more programs to the kids, and the youth out here, which is us. More activities basically to create things to do out here. There is nothing to do out here in New Haven positive, nothing.

When P3 was asked how to reduce youth incarceration rates, he said,

More after-school programs. Because that has falling back a lot. I remember when I was growing up, I had an after-school program. And I definitely must say that it helped me out in a certain way. It was a place that had a pool table, and a movie night every Friday. They also had a snack bar, and there was a signing-in sheet, and you have to be like a preteen to join.

P3 observed that providing positive community programs, and job opportunities for nonincarcerated African American male youth, and all youth in the community could help the youth be more productive, and help them stay away from drugs, and bad influences.

The responses from the three participants were in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's *macrosystem* refers to the cultural context under which individuals live. The *macrosystem* emphasizes the socioeconomic status of individuals such as poverty, and ethnicity. The *exosystem* refers to the structures beyond the microsystem such as social policies, social support, and government structures that could influence or affect the individual's life. Thus, it could be assumed that many African American young men living in the inner cities do not have the power to actively influence the decision-making process in the community, and beyond because of their socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

High unemployment rates among young African American men in the inner cities that impacts their economic well-being are also in line with Bronfenbrenner's theory. Kreek (2011) noted that governmental, and social policies such as Get Tough on Crime, and the War on Drugs also increase the number of young African American men in prison. Males (2011) noted that African Americans were 4 times more likely to face arrest for marijuana possession, and 10 times more likely to go to prison for marijuana-related charges in general. In California, they were 12 times more likely to go to prison for a marijuana offense than Whites. Thus, there is a need to provide employment

opportunities in African American communities. African American youth should have access to training so they can stay actively engaged.

Study Limitations

The present study had many potential limitations, mainly because I used an IPA approach as the framework. By using an IPA approach, the sample size was limited to a small number of participants (Smith, 2011). For this reason, the number of participants chosen for this study was limited to three. Thus, the results obtained in the current study are universally less applicable and not generalizable to a wider population. Because of the study's sensitive nature, recruiting participants in the African American community was difficult. Extracting in-depth responses from participants about their lived experiences, and getting them to talk about sensitive issues were a challenge. Another major limitation of this current study concerned my personal bias of having worked in the criminal justice system. This affiliation exposes me to the mass incarceration of African American males. The relationship that I might have developed with participants during this current study could also have influenced the results.

Recommendations

Findings from this study were profound, and significant. They could inform public policy, and help professionals in the community develop better support systems for young nonincarcerated African American men who have a male sibling in prison in the following ways:

First, African American male youth with an incarcerated male sibling should have access to counseling because they may have anger issues relating to the incarceration of their sibling. They may also need psychological evaluation for emotional distress, sadness, grief, and sorrow. Second, since drug crimes are among the key reasons for African American male youth incarceration, nonincarcerated African American young men should be educated on the dangers of drugs. They should be encouraged to develop positive coping strategies for avoiding getting into trouble, and being sent to prison. They should also be invited to join community mentoring programs, or after-school job apprenticeship programs in the communities.

Third, nonincarcerated African American young men who may have dropped out of school should be encouraged to go back. If school is not for them, they could also be encouraged to get a basic technical education so they can learn a trade. Fourth, families with an incarcerated sibling should be encouraged to foster a positive environment for the nonincarcerated sibling so that he may not be influenced by the actions of the incarcerated sibling.

I recommend that the criminal justice system use some of the findings from the current study to develop positive intervention strategies for reducing some of the emotional, and psychological problems confronting many nonincarcerated African American young men. I would also recommend that instead of incarcerating many African American young men, some could be given a second chance through a program diversion; that is, a specialized alternative to incarceration. They should also be given a

second chance by allowing some of them to participate in drug rehabilitation programs. This could help many African American families keep their families intact. I would also recommend that social policymakers reevaluate their drug-related sentencing guidelines in light of these current findings.

Finally, I would recommend that city, government, and community stakeholders provide African American young men living in inner-city communities with jobs, and social activities. Providing job training programs to many young African American men, especially the nonincarcerated youth, would also help them develop healthy lifestyles, thereby avoiding incarceration.

Implications

There are many social change implications from the present study. First, findings could bring about social, and racial justice in African American communities by empowering nonincarcerated African American men living in urban communities to develop strategies that could help them avoid incarceration. Second, criminal justice officials, social service counselors, policymakers, and community stakeholders could gain a better understanding of the causes of mass incarceration among young African American men living in the inner-city communities, which could lead to reduced incarceration levels. Third, findings from the current study could help address some of the social problems facing young African American men who live in U.S. inner-city communities. Fourth, the results could be used to train law enforcement agencies to understand some of the causes of mass youth incarceration in the inner city communities.

Which could result in the unwarranted arrests, and incarcerations. Also, the study results could assist law enforcement agencies in cultural sensitivity training, thereby reducing the arrest and incarceration rates among African American young men. Finally, the social change implications that could be drawn from the present study are the reducing of mass arrest, and incarceration of young African American males in inner-city communities, particularly those with a sibling in prison (Kreek, 2011). Thus, it is my hope that these findings add to the existing body of knowledge on the experiences of nonincarcerated African American male youth who have a sibling in prison.

Findings from this study highlight how sibling incarceration negatively impacts the sibling left behind. They also show that in spite of the adverse impact of incarceration on nonincarcerated African American male siblings, they were also affected positively by their brother's incarceration. The nonincarcerated siblings also developed healthy coping strategies after their siblings' incarceration.

The results of this study could also contribute to criminal justice scholarship. For example, the results could be used to inform the design of alternatives to incarceration programs to help reduce the overrepresentation of African American male youth in the American criminal justice system. Finally, the findings could help social workers, counselors, and criminal justice professionals better understand the adverse impacts of sibling incarceration so they can help nonincarcerated siblings effectively deal with sibling incarceration.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. The research method employed provided a comprehensive explanation of young African American males' coping strategies. Bronfenbrenner's theory was used to highlight common elements existing in the inner cities. These factors include the high levels of poverty, crime, violence, and poor community services, as well as the mass incarceration of African American youth. I explored the ways in which Bronfenbrenner's four systems affect nonincarcerated young African American males, and the ways in which these young men cope with having a male sibling in prison. The present study's findings were in line with the theory based on the responses provided by all study participants. This theoretical framework was appropriate, and relevant for the present study. However, I would also recommend that future researchers use different methodology, and conceptual frameworks.

Conclusion

My purpose for conducting this study was to explore, and understand the lived experiences, and the coping strategies of nonincarcerated male African American youth who have a brother in prison. Another important emphasis was on identifying intervention strategies that would help African American men with a sibling in prison. The results suggest that sibling incarceration negatively affected nonincarcerated African American male youth. However, the results also conclusively show that nonincarcerated African American young men were positively impacted by the incarceration of their

siblings. Finally, the key discovery was that nonincarcerated African American male youth with a sibling in prison developed healthy coping strategies while their siblings were in prison.

It is my hope that the study results would contribute to society in many different ways. First, those in the criminal justice system could benefit from understanding some of the causes of mass incarceration of African American young men living in the inner city communities. Second, the results could help city officials, and community leaders know what could be done to reduce mass incarceration in inner-city communities. Third, study results could help social counselors identify the appropriate intervention strategies needed to help the nonincarcerated African American male youth with a male sibling in prison.

Results from the present study could further lawmakers' and policymakers' understanding of challenges in the African American communities. They could also assist in designing legislation, and policies that would reflect the current problems confronting the inner city communities. The results could help all young African American male youth better understand the primary causes of mass incarceration in their communities. Finally, the findings could empower young African American young men living in the inner city communities to develop appropriate coping strategies, and avoid incarceration.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date _____

Location _____

Name of Interviewer _____

Name of Interviewee _____

1. Can you describe your experience of having a male sibling incarcerated and what that means to you?
2. Can you tell me your initial reaction when you finally realized that your brother may spend some time in prison and may not be coming home anytime soon?
3. Can you describe the first time you ever visited your brother in prison? If so, what was the experience like? How did you respond physically and emotionally to his being in prison?
4. Can you tell me how your family copes with the experience of having an incarcerated family member?
5. Can you tell me more about your coping strategies today with your brother being in prison?
6. Can you describe how the experience of your brother's incarceration has changed your life?
7. Can you tell me if you have ever been incarcerated? If yes, can you describe what your experiences were like?

8. Can you tell me what changes have you made in your life since your brother's incarceration?
9. Can you tell me what you think can be done to reduce the incarceration of African American male youth within your community?
10. Can you tell me if know any African American youth with a male sibling in prison?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B: Letter to Participants

27 George Street

Middletown, Connecticut,

06457

October 23, 2015

Name of Participant

Address

Participant City, State, and Zip Code

Dear Mr./Mrs./Miss,

As a doctoral candidate at Walden University, I am conducting a dissertation research project on the experiences of nonincarcerated young African American men aged 18 to 24 years who have an incarcerated male sibling. Many studies have highlighted the detrimental effects resulting from the incarceration of a family member. However, none of the research has addressed the impact of male-sibling incarceration on inner-city African American youth. This study will provide insight into the experiences and coping strategies of nonincarcerated African American young men living in New Haven.

Your participation in this study will provide useful information about this topic. You are qualified to take part in this study if you are aged 18 to 24 years and have experienced separation from a brother as the result of his incarceration. This study will not take much

of your time; however, for me to fully understand your experiences with respect to having an incarcerated male sibling, we may have to meet for an hour on just one occasion. Although the location of the meeting will be one of your choosing, it should be a place with few distractions. The purpose of this meeting is for us to get to know each other and to give you an opportunity to discuss your experience of having a male sibling in custody. All the information gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential.

Please call me so that we may schedule a date and time to meet. My number is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you can also reach me on my cell phone at [REDACTED] or by email at

[REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Fred Nana Biney

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Human Services

Walden University

Appendix C: Consent Form

**How Do Male African American Youth Cope with the Incarceration of a Male
Sibling?**

Walden University

You are invited to participate in a research study of the Experiences of Nonincarcerated African American male youths within the ages of 18 to 24 whose male sibling is under incarceration. You are selected because of your experience of having a brother in prison. This form you are reading is called “informed consent”. The purpose is to allow you to understand this study before you take part. Please read this form, and feel free to ask questions before you commit to the study. My name is Fred Nana Biney, and I am Doctoral Candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand your experience of having a male sibling in custody and your coping strategies. Only three participants would be chosen for this study.

Procedures:

Once you have agreed to be part of this study, you understand that there would be only one interview for approximately one hour.

Here are some sample questions:

1. Can you describe your experience of having a male sibling incarcerated and what that means to you?

2. Can you tell me your initial reaction when you finally realized that your brother may spend some time in prison and not coming home anytime soon?

3. Can you describe the first time you ever visited your brother in prison? If so, what was the experience like? How did you respond physically and emotionally to his being in prison?
4. Can you tell me how your family cope with the experience of having an incarcerated family member?
5. Can you tell me how you coping strategies today with your brother being in prison?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. You have the right to stop participation at any time and your participation is strictly voluntary. No one would hold you accountable for your refusal to continue the study. You can still change your mind later even if you decide to take part now.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. However, you may experience stress, fatigue, or being upset. The study could benefit African American male youth living in the inner cities in general. This study may also help those whose male sibling are in incarceration. During the study if you feel uncomfortable or experience stress at any time you may discontinue the interview. Please feel free to refuse any question that you think may invade your privacy. Should the need arise for you to contact a crisis counselor, please call the following 24hour hotline **1 (203) 789- 8104/ 1(203) 974-7735** for free or a minimum cost to you.

Compensation:

Participants will be given twenty-dollar gift certificate for their time.

Confidentiality:

All information gathered as the result of these interviews would be kept strictly confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. However, should any portion be used for academic purposes all participants would be disguised by changing their names and given them a pseudonym. I would keep all the files locked with a password at all

times, and I would be the only person who would have access. All the interviews would be audiotaped or recorded of your experiences. All the audio recordings would be kept under lock for five years after the end of the study as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Fred Nana Biney. You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at telephone number [REDACTED], or at fred.biney@waldenu.edu. However, if you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. The researcher will also give you a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below

Signature

Date

IRB Approval # 03-04-16-0169570

Appendix D: Invitation Flyer

Do you want to make a difference in your community?

Do you want your voice to be heard?

Then this is your chance

You are invited to take part in a research study:

How do male African American youth cope with the incarceration of a male sibling?

You must be an African American male youth

You must be within 18 to 24 years of age at the time the study will commence.

You must have a male sibling in Prison

If you are interested to make a difference, or knows someone who might be interested in doing so please contact Fred Biney at these numbers:

Main [REDACTED]